1 Jesus' Exorcisms as 'Miracles of the Word'

Authority, silence and liberation in the Synoptic Gospels

1.1 Abstract

The article proposes an in-depth reading of selected Synoptic pericopes in which Jesus' exorcisms are presented as signs of His authority expressed in speech. I adopt the designation "miracle of the word" as a hermeneutical category to describe narratives in which brief, imperative utterances of Jesus function as efficient causes. I subject to detailed exegesis Mk 1:21–28; Lk 4:31–37; Mk 4:35–41; Lk 4:38–39 and Mk 9:14–29, together with relevant parallels (Mt 8:16; 12:28; Lk 11:20; Mt 17:14–21) insofar as they illuminate the texts under study. The analysis focuses on the semantics and function of three key verbs: ἐπιτιμάω (epitimáō; "to rebuke/forbiddingly command"), φιμώθητι (phimṓthēti; "be silent/be muzzled") and ἔξελθε (éxelthe; "come out"), as well as on the concept ἐξουσία (exousía; "power, authority"). I point to analogies in the language of "silencing" in Mk 1 and Mk 4 while avoiding identification of a natural element with a demon, and I distinguish exorcism, healing, and the narrative language of authority. In the pastoral section I formulate principles for responsible reading, emphasizing the priority of medical, psychological and institutional pastoral discernment, and rejecting any "instructions" for private exorcism. A christological synthesis stresses that the efficacy of Jesus' word derives from His person and mission, not from a magical formula.

1.2 Keywords

exorcism; ἐπιτιμάω; φιμώθητι; ἔξελθε; ἐξουσία; miracles of the word; Mark; Luke; kingdom of God; language of authority; pastoral hermeneutics

1.3 Introduction

This study develops and organizes linguistic and theological observations concerning the accounts of exorcisms in the Synoptic Gospels. At the center of attention are the short, performative utterances of Jesus — commands that in the narrative produce an effect without the mediation of elaborate rituals. For describing this phenomenon I use the term "miracle of the word." I employ it as a hermeneutical category: it is not a technical, uniformly defined term in the exegetical literature, but a way of naming convergent literary and theological features: brevity of the formula, directness of the command, immediacy of effect, and focus on the authority of the speaker.

In the article I conduct a careful exegesis: Mk 1:21–28 and Lk 4:31–37 (the exorcism in Capernaum), Mk 4:35–41 (the calming of the storm as a parallel language of authority), Lk 4:38–39 (the healing of Peter's mother-in-law employing the verb "to rebuke"), and Mk 9:14–29 (the exorcism of the boy, with a prohibition on the spirit's return and an admonition about prayer). I take into account parallels Mt 8:16; 12:28; Lk 11:20 and Mt 17:14–21 where they add to the meaning of the texts under consideration. Key Greek concepts are presented with transliteration and basic grammatical commentary, and reflections are situated within the theology of the kingdom of God and the genre contexts of miracle narratives.

A basic methodological assumption is the distinction: exorcism — healing — narrative language of authority. I do not translate Gospel stories into contemporary diagnostic categories, nor do I suggest that disease symptoms or psychological crises are proof of demonic action. The practical implication is

clear: in troubling situations priority belongs to medical, psychological or psychiatric consultations and responsible, institutional pastoral discernment.

1.4 The miracle of the word as a hermeneutical category

- Point of departure: In the Synoptic narratives certain deeds of Jesus occur exclusively through brief utterances: "Be silent!", "Come out!", "Get up!". Such scenes, especially exorcisms, justify speaking of "miracles of the word" — acts in which performative speech becomes an instrument of liberation and a revelation of authority.[1]
- Scope and limits: This designation does not claim the status of a strict technical classification. It is a way of naming convergent literary and theological traits: brevity of the formula, directness of the command, immediacy of the effect, and attention to the speaker's authority.
- Theological consequence: In "miracles of the word" the person of Jesus (ἐξουσία) is decisive, not the "composition" of the utterance. The Gospels do not offer a reproducible technique; they present the sovereign word of the Son.

1.5 Background of biblical "rebuking": from the Old to the New Covenant

In the Greek Bible (the Septuagint) God's "rebuking" is often an image of His rule over chaos and adversaries. In many passages the LXX represents the divine word as "chastising" or "restraining" hostile forces opposed to the created order. The Synoptics, when portraying Jesus, consciously employ akin language when they present His commanding word toward demons and elements. This does not imply identity of natural elements with demonic beings; rather it shows that the same divine prerogative — establishing order by word — operates in Jesus' mission.[2]

1.6 Mk 1:21–28: the Capernaum exorcism as the inauguration of "teaching with authority"

- Context: Sabbath teaching in the Capernaum synagogue opens the sequence of miracles in Mk 1. The crowd reacts not so much to the content of the catechesis as to the "novelty" of its quality: "He was teaching them as one who had authority (ἐξουσίαν), and not as the scribes" (Mk 1:22). The appearance of a man "with an unclean spirit" is immediately linked to that teaching — a spiritual conflict erupts in the space of the divine word.[3]
- The demon's speech: "What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are: the Holy One of God" (Mk 1:24). The recognition is theologically accurate but comes from a hostile sphere and is immediately nullified by silencing.[3]
- Three-part formula: "καὶ ἐπετίμησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ" (Mk 1:25). The verb ἐπετίμησεν (aorist of ἐπιτιμάω) here does not signify an emotional reprimand but an effective, authoritative prohibition. Then follows an aorist imperative in the passive voice φιμώθητι ("be muzzled/

[1]Novum Testamentum Graece: Mk 1:25; 9:25–29; analysis of the forms ἐπετίμησεν, φιμώθητι, ἔξελθε and μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς. See also Mt 8:16 in the presentation "λόγῳ" as a summary of Jesus' exorcisms.

[2]Novum Testamentum Graece: parallels Mt 8:16; 12:28; Lk 11:20. The motif "finger/Spirit of God" directs the interpretation of exorcisms toward a theology of the kingdom rather than techniques (see also the general idiom of "rebuking" in the LXX).

[3]Marcus, Joel. Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 27), especially the notes on Mk 1:21–28: the unity of "teaching" and "power," the sense of silencing the demon and the function of ἐξουσία in the inauguration of Jesus' activity.

be silent") and the imperative ἔξελθε ("come out"). The sequence — first the deprivation of voice, then departure — corresponds to the logic of protecting the person from demonic appropriation of interpretive control over the situation.[1]

- Effect and reaction: The spirit "shook him and, with a loud cry, came out of him" (Mk 1:26), and those present comment: "A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him" (Mk 1:27). Mark deliberately links teaching (διδαχή) with the exercise of power (ἐξουσία) — two aspects of the same reality of the kingdom.[3]

1.7 Lk 4:31–37: Luke's redactional profile and emphasis on non-harm to the person

Luke, by rearranging the order of events relative to Mark, redactionally composes a "day in Capernaum" (Lk 4:31–41). In his account of the exorcism the essential core coincides with Mk 1, but Luke adds: "and having thrown him down in the midst, the demon came out of him without harming him (μηδὲν βλάψαν αὐτόν)" (Lk 4:35). This addition emphasizes that Jesus' intervention, though violent toward the spirit, is beneficial and safe for the person. This is an important trait of his theology of healings: the operation of power does not violate the integrity of the sufferer but restores it.[4]

1.8 The language of "silencing" in Mk 4:35–41: analogy without identification

- Description: When a storm threatens the boat, "Jesus, having been awakened, rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the wind and said to the sea, 'Σιώπα, πεφίμωσο' (Be silent! Be muzzled!)." The calming occurs immediately.[5]
- Analogous language: Mark consciously uses words related to those appearing in the exorcism (ἐπιτιμάω; cf. Mk 1:25) and forms akin to "muzzling" (πεφίμωσο — perfect imperative from φιμόω). The function of this analogy is to reveal the same ἐξουσία of Jesus over that which overwhelms and endangers human life: over the unclean spirit and over chaotic element. The literary analogy, however, does not justify equating the element with a demon; Mark does not demonize nature but affirms the Son's dominion over creation.[5]

1.9 Lk 4:38–39: "rebuking" the fever and the distinction between exorcism and healing

- Use of ἐπιτιμάω: "And bending over her [Peter's mother-in-law], he rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the fever and it left her; and she rose immediately and served them" (Lk 4:39). The use of the same verb as in the exorcism does not mean that illness is identified with a demon. It is a common language of authority: Jesus' word establishes order both toward spirits and toward bodily suffering.[4]
- Ontological difference: In exorcism the addressee is a personal agent (an unclean spirit); in healing the good of bodily/psychic health is restored. Luke distinguishes these spheres and does not blur the boundaries, although he articulates their common denominator: the efficacy of the Lord's word.

[4]Johnson, Luke Timothy. The Gospel of Luke (Sacra Pagina 3), commentary on Lk 4:31–39: the redactional "day in Capernaum," emphasis on non-harm to the person ("μηδὲν βλάψαν αὐτόν") and the distinction between exorcism and healing under a shared language of authority.

[5]Marcus, Joel. Mark 1–8 (AB 27), commentary on Mk 4:35–41: the parallel language of "rebuking" and "silencing" toward element and demon; the theological sense of Jesus' dominion over chaos without demonizing nature.

1.10 Mk 9:14–29: the boy's exorcism, prohibition of return and the requirement of prayer

- Context: The scene follows immediately after the Transfiguration. The dispute of the disciples with the scribes and the disciples' helplessness highlight in contrast Jesus' authority.[3]
- Addressee of the command: Jesus addresses directly "an unclean spirit, mute and deaf" (πνεῦμα ἄλαλον καὶ κωφόν), forbidding both its continued presence in the boy and its return: "ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι· ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν" (Mk 9:25). This is the most developed imperative form in Jesus' exorcisms, combining the command to go out with an indefinite prohibition of reentry.[1]
- Faith and prayer: After the event Jesus comments on the disciples' helplessness, pointing to the need for prayer (and — in some manuscripts — fasting): "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer [and fasting]" (Mk 9:29). In Mark's narrative the emphasis falls not on technique but on orientation to God, without which the disciples' participation in the spiritual struggle lacks power.[1]
- Hermeneutical note: The descriptions of the boy's behaviors (falls, convulsions, crying) are not to be transposed onto contemporary diagnostic grids. The evangelist interprets the situation theologically; contemporary practice must respect the autonomy of medical disciplines.

1.11 Parallels and Synoptic additions

- Mt 8:16: "He drove out the spirits by his word (λόγῳ)." In this laconic summary Matthew underlines that in exorcisms there is no ritual or material medium — there is a word endowed with authority.[2]
- Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20: "If I cast out demons by the finger of God (Lk) / by the Spirit of God (Mt), then indeed the kingdom of God has come upon you." Here exorcisms are explicitly interpreted as a sign of the eschatological coming of the kingdom. The concern is not the effect of practices but the presence of God's power in the Son's mission.[6]
- Mt 17:14–21: Matthew's parallel to Mk 9:14–29 preserves the essential sense (an exorcism against a "spirit") and also links the disciples' effectiveness to faith and prayer, although his redaction formulates this in a somewhat different grouping of motives.[2]

1.12 Key Greek words: semantics, grammar, theology

1.12.1 ἐπιτιμάω (epitimáō) and ἐπετίμησεν: "to rebuke / to forbid decisively"

- Range: The verb covers reproving, chastising, forbidding and restraining. In Jesus' mouth it acquires the power of a law-constituting command that results in the subjection of the addressee — the spirit (Mk 1:25), an element (Mk 4:39) or an illness (Lk 4:39).[1]
- Function: It is not an emotional expression of anger but an enforcement of ἐξουσία. When Mark says Jesus "rebuked" the wind, he does not assert that the wind is a personal demon; he indicates that the Lord's word restores order where destruction threatens.[5]

1.12.2 φιμώθητι (phimṓthēti): "be silent / be muzzled"

- Grammar: Aorist imperative, passive voice, 2nd person singular of φιμόω ("to put on a muzzle, to close the mouth"). Literally: "be muzzled."[1]

[6]Twelftree, Graham H. In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians, chapters on Jesus' exorcisms and their relation to ancient practices; emphasis on Jesus' personal authority and on interpreting exorcisms as signs of the kingdom's arrival (Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20).

- Narrative function: Depriving the demon of speech prevents it from shaping the interpretation of the situation and from "performing" as an unwanted witness. In the christological plan it protects the mystery of Jesus' person, which is to be revealed according to God's timing, not by the enemy's whisper.[3]

1.12.3 ἔξελθε (éxelthe): "come out"

- Grammar: Aorist imperative 2nd person singular of ἐξέρχομαι. In Mk 9:25 the command is accompanied by a clause forbidding return (μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς), which emphasizes the cessation of the spirit's power over the person and the establishment of a durable protective boundary.[1]
- Theology: The leaving is non-negotiable; there is no ongoing "procedure." The sovereign word of Jesus immediately restores freedom.

1.12.4 ἐξουσία (exousía): "power, authority"

- Relation to teaching: In Mk 1 the juxtaposition of "teaching" and "power" fuses the term ἐξουσία. The crowd recognizes that Jesus' teaching is not merely transmission of content but a revelation of dominion that, in the exorcism, is effectively "carried out."[3]
- Christology: Jesus' ἐξουσία is not derivative from technique or ritual mediation — it issues from His person and unity with the Father. That is why His words are not "formulas to be repeated" but gestures of sovereign presence of the kingdom.

1.13 Why does Jesus silence demons even when they speak the truth?

- Doubtful credibility of testimony: The truthfulness of content (e.g., "Holy One of God") does not make the demon a credible witness. Recognition of the truth requires faith, not hostile recognition. Therefore Jesus interrupts this quasi-apologia.[3]
- Rejection of manipulation of the name: In ancient imaginations "naming" could suggest control. Silencing prevents the impression that Jesus' mission could be assimilated to ensembles of magical practices.[6]
- Chronology of revelation: Especially in Mark, full understanding of the messiahship will come through the cross; Jesus will not allow a demonic "confession" before the cross to shape the picture of His identity and mission.[3]

1.14 Exorcism and ancient exorcistic techniques

- Contrast of forms: In the ancient world elaborate incantations, appeals to names and intermediate powers, rituals and gestures were practiced. The Synoptics present Jesus acting without recourse to an external formula: "Be silent! Come out!" — and it is so. This distinguishes Him fundamentally from the milieu of magical practice.[6]
- Efficacy from person, not from formula: The lack of "technique" does not imply scarcity of means but sovereignty. The Gospels consistently point to the Son's authority rather than to repeatable procedures. In the early Christian tradition the memory of Jesus as exorcist served as a reference point for understanding baptism, prayer and the Church's ministry against evil — always with emphasis on orientation to God, not on magical means.[6]

1.15 Forms of miracle narratives and "miracles of the word"

Form critics have noted that a substantial portion of the miracle tradition in the Gospels takes the shape of short stories culminating in an effective command. In this family of "command miracles" exorcisms are paradigmatic: the narrative runs toward the imperative and its immediate fulfillment, followed by the witnesses' reaction.[7] The category "miracle of the word" simplifies this observation: the core of the narrative is the power of the word, and the aim is the revelation of the kingdom and the liberation of the human being.

1.16 The word, revelation and the silence of the demon

1.16.1 Silence as expression of the authority of the word

In the exorcism scenes of Mark and Luke the silence imposed on the demon does not function as a mere narrative element but as a concise capture of the dynamic of Jesus' authority over the powers of evil. In Mk 1:25 Jesus "commanded him, saying: Be silent and come out of him," and the analogous formulation in Lk 4:35 displays an identical strategy of action: Jesus does not argue with the spirit but utters a word that has immediate effect. This word as a performative act — insofar as by its utterance a change in reality occurs — is key to the christological understanding of these scenes: Jesus appears here as the one in whom God's authority and nearness are revealed, not merely as a teacher[1]. The very act of silencing the demon signals that opposing powers are overcome not by theological debate but by the presence and authority of the Word which in the narrative discloses the activity of the kingdom.

1.16.2 Limits of the motif of the messianic secret

Interpreting the demon's silence solely in terms of Mark's "messianic secret" is useful but requires a critical caveat. In Mark this motif appears repeatedly and helps explain why Jesus restrains public disclosure of his identity: he protects audiences from incomplete readings of the messianic role, divorced from the way of the cross and resurrection. Yet reducing every act of silencing to a strategy of secrecy overlooks other textual layers: there is also a soteriological message that true revelation of the Messiah occurs progressively, in concrete signs that foreshadow the kingdom of God. Moreover Luke less frequently stresses secrecy, showing a more explicit dimension of Jesus' mission and emphasizing the efficacy of his word against evil spirits — which indicates that the demon's silence is not a univocal literary program but a multi-layered theological trope ordering both christology and eschatology[4]. Finally, one must remember that the "secret" interpretation should not lead to simplifications: it is neither an excuse for trivializing the real human situation of those encountered, nor — importantly — a justification for affirming practices that exclude the community's responsibility toward suffering.

1.17 Exorcisms as signs of the nearness of the kingdom

1.17.1 Exorcism as sign of royal rule

Matthew and Luke recall Jesus' exorcisms in the context of declarations about the coming of the kingdom of God. In Mt 12:28 and the parallel Lk 11:20 Jesus asserts that when he casts out demons "the kingdom of God has come to you," which clearly links exorcistic action to the eschatological arrival of a new reality.[2] This verbal connection requires reading exorcisms as signs — not accidental manifestations of miraculous

[7] Theissen, Gerd. Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition, analyses of the forms of miracle narratives, including short pericopes culminating in an effective command ("command miracle"), which supports the heuristic category "miracle of the word."

power but purposely placed elements in the narrative testifying to renewal inaugurated by Jesus. In this sense exorcisms are not a private technique for restraining spirits nor an anecdotal component of wonder-working; rather they are a component of the mission through which Jesus reveals the coming rule of God and overcomes the evil that resists the created order.

1.17.2 Binding the "strong man" and the order of the kingdom

In the image of "binding the strong man" (Mk 3:27) we find a metaphor that complements this eschatological message: to plunder a strong man's house one must first bind him. In the Synoptic context this does not describe an exorcistic technique but indicates the logical sequence of the Messiah's work — before a full cleansing of human space from the influence of evil is possible, the forces that control it must be weakened and immobilized. This language points to awareness of a cosmic conflict but also to certainty of victory; Jesus is not one among many exorcists but the initiator of an intervention aimed at transforming the whole structure of reality. Hence the study of exorcisms in the Gospels should concentrate on their theological and missional function rather than on reconstructing "methods" — they testified to the presence and activity of the Kingdom which, in the person of Jesus, enters the world.

1.18 Contrast with ancient practices and limits of analogy

1.18.1 Personal authority versus instruments and formulas

In the ancient world numerous practices and rituals aimed to act upon the spiritual sphere: magical formulas, amulets, spells and medico-ritual procedures. It is important, however, to distinguish these instruments from the mode of acting attributed to Jesus in the Gospels. In Mark, Matthew and Luke the central element is the person of Jesus and His authority, which does not rest on a magical spell or talisman but on the power that reveals God's rule. This personal "speaking" of Jesus — His command and injunction — is not merely a technique; it is an enactment and revelation of the Messiah's mission. Consequently, analogies with ancient practices must be formulated with caution: one may point to external resemblances, such as the presence of spoken formulas, but for the evangelists it is the person of Jesus and His relation to the Father that ultimately gives meaning to the action, not ritual engineering or an ensemble of means.[6]

1.18.2 Limits of comparisons and the research agenda

Attempts to identify Jesus directly with exorcists or magicians of the period are risky and, from a textual perspective, require caution. The aim is not a simple opposition between all ancient religions and Christian tradition, but a precise indication of difference: in the Gospel tradition exorcisms serve the revelation of the kingdom by a person whose identity and mission are theological and salvific. At the same time the scholar should avoid simplistic dichotomies — many religious phenomena of antiquity have internal complexities and local variants — and should rather pose questions about social, narrative and theological functions of practices than about a straightforward classification as "magic" versus "revelation." Such an approach permits study of similarities and differences without reducing Jesus to cultural categories that fail to capture the specificity of the evangelists' portrayal of his authority.[67]

All these aspects — the demon's silence, exorcisms as signs of the coming kingdom, and the difference between Jesus' personal authority and the ritual practices of the ancient world — cohere into a consistent theological perspective: exorcisms in the New Testament are elements in the narrative of God's rule, of the overcoming of the power of evil and of the gradual revelation of the Messiah, who acts not as an operator of a technique but as a Person acting with his own authority.[68]

1.19 Distinction: exorcism — healing — language of authority

- Common denominator: In each of these spheres the Lord's word is central as an instrument of ἐξουσία. Hence in Lk 4:39 the "rebuke" concerns a fever as in Mk 1:25 it concerns a spirit.[4]
- Difference of object: Exorcism addresses a personal spirit, healing restores the good of bodily/psychic state, and the language of authority more broadly describes how Jesus establishes God's order (also over the elements).
- Hermeneutical responsibility: Descriptions of symptoms in exorcism narratives cannot be retrofitted as contemporary clinical diagnoses. The theological reading does not replace medical diagnosis, just as medical diagnosis does not settle spiritual questions. Hence the practical rule of priority for specialist consultations.

1.20 "Teaching with authority": coupling didactics and liberation

In Mk 1:21–28 the exorcism is not a marginal incident but an extension of teaching. "A new teaching with authority" is teaching that not only explains God's will but executes His rule over opposing powers. This coupling will recur: in Lk 4 Jesus proclaims that the Good News is for the poor, and then his word actually liberates (exorcism) and heals (Peter's mother-in-law). In both cases the point is the same — the eschatological coming of the kingdom evidenced by the commanding word.[4]

1.21 Pastoral implications of silence and departure

- Silencing for the protection of the person: φιμώθητι is not violence against the human being but protection of his voice and identity. Jesus "cuts off the microphone" of the intruder so that the person ceases to be an instrument of foreign speech.
- Prohibition of return: "And never enter him again" (Mk 9:25) indicates the durability of liberation. Exorcism is not a momentary "suppression of symptoms" but the establishment of a new spiritual situation whose guarantor is the Word.[1]
- Community and prayer: In Mk 9:29 prayer appears as a dimension of the disciples' participation in Jesus' mission. The point is not technique but relationship to God — the Church does not substitute a "method"; it lives by prayer and sacraments in which Christ acts.[6]

1.22 Principles for responsible pastoral reading

- Priority of medical and psychological diagnosis: Intense symptoms (convulsions, screams, unconsciousness, atypical behavior, fever) require in the first instance medical consultation and — if necessary — psychiatric/psychological assessment. Gospel narratives do not provide a key to contemporary etiological diagnosis of symptoms.[4]
- Distinction of levels: The theological description of exorcism in the Gospels concerns the revelation of the kingdom of God and the liberation of the person. It should not be conflated with clinical descriptions of disorders. Pastoral care must respect the autonomy of medical sciences and collaborate with them.
- Avoidance of sensationalism: The tone of the Gospel narratives is simple and sober; the emphasis is on the good of the person and the revelation of Jesus' authority. Pastoral communication should guard against theatricalization and proliferation of stories that arouse fear or fascination with evil.

[8]Witmer, Amanda. Jesus, the Galilean Exorcist: His Exorcisms in Social and Political Context, introduction to the social and political dimension of Jesus' exorcisms in Galilee; interpretation of them as a challenge to forces of oppression and a sign of a new divine order.

- No “private instructions”: Jesus’ words are not formulas to be repeated in order to obtain a “guaranteed effect.” The Church regulates the ministry of exorcism and discerns it institutionally. Lay advice should not be given nor schemes of action proposed outside competent ecclesiastical structures.
- Protection of dignity and the good of the person: Every pastoral intervention must serve the suffering person, protect his privacy and integrity. Luke’s narrative — “without harming him” — constitutes here a normative reference point.[4]
- Formation and cooperation: Priests and ministers should be formed in distinguishing cases requiring spiritual intervention from those primarily demanding medical therapy. Ongoing interdisciplinary collaboration and obedience to ecclesial procedures are recommended.
- Theological language and realism of faith: Parallels Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20 teach that exorcisms are signs of the kingdom’s arrival. They are not, however, to be used as “evidence” against someone — they certainly should not be used as a tool to stigmatize the sick or those in crisis.

1.23 Conclusion

The analysis of Synoptic accounts of exorcisms, from Capernaum to the valley after the Transfiguration, reveals a coherent logic of “miracles of the word.” The verbs ἐπιτιμάω, φιμώθητι and ἔξελθε disclose how the Gospels tell about Jesus: his command is an act; his silencing restores the person’s voice; his “come out” introduces the space of freedom. Juxtaposition with the silencing of the storm and the “rebuking” of a fever shows that we are dealing with one and the same ἐξουσία over what threatens life — personal evil, suffering, chaos. Matthean and Lukan parallels (Mt 8:16; 12:28; Lk 11:20; Mt 17:14–21) confirm that exorcisms are understood as signs of the kingdom’s coming, not as magical practices.

In christological terms these texts testify that the efficacy of Jesus’ word does not derive from the linguistic form itself — it is not a “mechanism” — but from His person. The word works because it is spoken by the One who is the Holy One of God and Lord over creation. Pastorally this imposes on the Church the requirement of prudent reading: care for the person’s dignity, priority of medical and psychological help, avoidance of sensationalism, and rejection of private “instructions” for action. Exorcism in the Gospels is a judgment on evil and a merciful liberation of the person; it remains one of the privileged loci of the kingdom’s revelation that “has come to you” (Lk 11:20).

1.24 Notes

1.25 Bibliography

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