

Authority, Obedience, and the Holiness of God: The New Testament Sense of the Kingdom

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Authority as Concept in Hellenistic and Scriptural Usage

Exousia, which is the [delete] Greek scriptural word for ‘Authority’ illustrates for us the remarkable range of paradoxes contained in this Greek semantical term, for it was also the customary word in Hellenistic texts for legal permission, and thus freedom from constraint.¹ The ancient Greeks used the word *Exousía* to connote the freedom to do a thing, as distinct from the issue of the ability or capacity (*dynamis*) to do it. *Exousía* is thus the authority needful to do a thing. *Dynamis* is the power or skill to be able to do it. In classical literature referring to the acts of kings or gods the two things were often presumed to be one; but not so in ordinary civic life. In Late Antiquity the Roman law codes deduced from this an important cultural distinction that still massively impinges our Christian legal and civic construct: that between *auctoritas* and *potestas*; which we today might translate as the difference between executive power (such as that exercised by the Emperor) and moral authority (such as that claimed by the senate). There is here a sense growing, and it comes more to the fore in Late Antiquity as a result of the widespread dissemination of Stoic ethical reflections on human culture, that ‘might is not always right.’

Nevertheless, besides freedom, or permissibility under term of law, the word also connoted in common Greek discourse in Antiquity, what we today would call ‘The Government’ understood as a system of ordering and commanding; power that is expressed in the *Realpolitik*.² This sense is wholly absent from the Hebrew scriptures, though it reappears in the later epistolary literature of the New Testament. In this

¹ Plato, *Symposium* 182e; *Crito* 51D; *Gorgias* 526A & 461E; *POxy.*, II 237. col. 6. 17; See G. Kittel (ed), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1978), 562-574; H. Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), 236-238.

² Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.135B.

sense of Government Plato defined *Exousía* as the *epitrope nomou*, or the ‘Guardian of Law’.³ Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* describes the ruling body of his day in the very modern sense of ‘Those in Authority’ (*oi en tais exousiais*), which we find exactly paralleled in the New Testament at Mt. 20.25,⁴ though here used with very heavy irony indeed, to correct this notion’s presumption of equating governmental powers with true and rightful authority. The term of *Exousía* in this instance of Matthew’s Gospel is so much in the manner of a severe brake on the Hellenistic political thought of the day that we shall return to see its place in a nexus of other New Testament teachings on the nature of authority, which present it with a decidedly subversive context. Here, in abundance, a biblical sense of *Politeia* clashes prophetically with the *Realpolitik* of occupied Palestine in the time of Jesus; and on that fracture line, we see flashes of a revelation of what it was that Jesus evoked by his prophetic preaching of the advent of the Kingdom of God (*Basileia tou Theou*); and his personal evocation of what that would look like, performatively displayed in his own life as *Tzadiq*, or Holy One, of God; as well as in the demands he made of his disciples in the same cause. To this we shall return shortly.

The Christian Testament is, of course, rooted in the Jewish scriptures most profoundly. The Old Testament saw the issue of ‘Law’ in a distinctly different way to their more civic-minded Hellenist neighbors. For the Jews, Law was the voice of God, the commandment that established the holy covenant between the divine and Israel. Law was the conscience of Israel, its consciousness of God’s overarching judgment on his people as part of the core of what covenant relationship meant: the justice of God’s dominion over the world, and the obedience called for as Israel’s response to that summoning to righteousness as the supreme covenant virtue. As Jesus himself prophetically summed that theology up: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great: this is the first, commandment.”⁵ This is why so much New Testament theology,

³ Cremer, 236; see Plato.

⁴ ‘But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers (*archontes*) of the Gentiles lord it over them (*katakryieuousin*), and their great men (*megaloi*) exercise authority over them (*katexousiazousin*). It shall not be like this among you.” See also: Mark 10: 42 & Lk. 22.

⁵ Mt. 22 37-38.

especially that of the great evangelist John, turns on the notion of Judgment (*Krisis*) in the here and now of the dawning Kingdom.⁶
The Authority of the Unutterable Name

For Jesus, the command of the Law is not something to demonstrate God as one of the mighty of this world, a *Megalos* who makes others cower into obedience. On the contrary, the fulfilling of the will of God for the world is the source of the joy of Israel: its prayer and its glory. In this sense God's *Exousia* is manifested in the world in a brilliantly clear fashion by those who render obedience doxologically to God as a response to their apprehension of his *Exousia* impinging on the world order. Angels do this completely and instinctively in heaven, the Eighth Aeon or the Age of the Kingdom. Meanwhile the *Tzaddiqim*, or saints, try to represent it on earth. It may well be a reason (among others) why Jesus insisted on celibacy and dispossession for his travelling apostles (the *Shaliachim*) who were sent to declare the imminence of the *Exousia* of God's Kingdom in Israel; and this on the grounds of angelic *mimesis*, namely that they would be 'as the angels are in heaven' who 'neither marry nor are given in marriage.'⁷

This mirroring of the holiness of the divine *Exousia* through obedience is the fundamental intellectual and literary structure of that prayer which so quintessentially sums up the doctrine of Jesus on the Kingdom: 'Our Father in heaven, may your Name be hallowed, may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'⁸ This is the hallowing of the Name (the *Shem Qadosh*): not merely our 'giving glory' to God, but more fundamentally Israel's entering *into* the Glory of God, the *Shekinah*⁹ presence, or as it was known in the Greek,

⁶ *Krisis* - as the New Testament renders that idea: a fundamental term to connote covenant theology, as both eschatologically and Christologically charged, throughout John's Gospel.

⁷ Mk.12.25. The theme of cultic celibacy (temporary or permanent – the former being the case for several of the original apostles) is reflected also in the angelic doctrine found at Qumran – where community members evoke the eschatological tension of the final confrontation with evil by means of cultic celibacy in direct mimesis of the warrior angels of God sensed by the community to be rousing themselves for cultic battle with the forces of the Beast (Imperial Rome).

⁸ See Mt.6. 9-13.

⁹ The *Kabod* or overarching sense of God's 'weighty' glory had, by the Late Antique period, been more commonly rendered in Jewish mystical thought by the notion of the *Shekinah* presence: that immanence of God among Israel which dwelt in the Temple, and in the saints, and was present 'wherever two or three were gathered in his Name.' In the *Shekinah* theology of the time of Christ 'Sophianic' themes gathered from Sirach 24 (as witnessed in the Prologue to the Gospel of John which essentially rewrites ch. 24 around

the *Doxa Theou*. Each part of this tripartite doxology of the Lord's Prayer becomes a declaration of 'The Glory' precisely because it is an admission of the Fatherhood of God, and the attestation that this Fatherly providence is the source of his *Exousia* over the world. In other words the prayer's opening redefines the dominion of the Kingdom (its *Krateia*), precisely as the Fatherhood of the Holy One over Israel; the sensing of his providence through the action of his Holy Name. The impact of the holiness of the *Shem's* startling revelation, is that which moves Israel towards heartfelt obedience. The order of this movement of revelation and apprehension is not incidental it is critical; an axiom, and three consequences:

*Aboun de bashmayore: Nethqadash shemork,
Tithe malkuthork,
Nehwe tsebyonork.*

Each one of these tripartite invocations following the recitation of the Name: (may *your* heavenly name - that is as our Father - be hallowed on earth; may *your* type of heavenly *basileia* arrive on this earth, may *your* holy will which is performed exactly in heaven be done here on earth) – each of these three clauses, is not a new thought, but a reiteration of the selfsame concept of *Doxa*, divine glorification, where the hallowing of the *Shem* (a task done supremely by the angels in the Eighth age) is, in the present Seventh age of obedient discipleship, capable of being done by mortals on earth, who even with tongues of clay mimic the angels, the 'Watchers' as they were known, by giving *Doxa* and trying to fulfill the Name on earth – since naming God as Father immediately affirms those around you to be brother and sister.

The second, equally tripartite, but mirroring stanza of the Lord's prayer, of course, demonstrates how those tongues of clay shall actually demonstrate the *Doxa* that they sing: namely, by allowing God to provide enough bread for the day only and, from that consequent sense of sufficiency, thus to be enabled to share bread with those around (a merciful provision to others which arises from the abandonment of the

the Incarnation narrative) and 'Temple-holiness' themes (again as exemplified throughout the Johannine Jesus-Temple Christological theme) have coalesced to make a dynamic basis of the doctrine of God's presence and his revelation in Israel. For the New Testament *Shekinah* theology is a profound, and very early, manner of articulating Jesus' unique relationship with the Holy Name.

need for stockpiling against an uncertain future¹⁰). In other words the name encourages an abandonment to the provident dominion of God himself, which (as the prayer teaches) becomes the remission of sins in the community and the dawning of reconciliation and justice. The prayer, of course, says this more elegantly and simply: ‘Give us our sufficient bread for this day (*epiousios*), and forgive us our offenses as we forgive, and do not put us to the test but save us from the evil one.’ We lose much of the sense and impact of the latter when we translate generically and say: ‘deliver us from evil,’ whereas the text means precisely: ‘save us from the evil one’; the *Gbr*, or Strong One (as in that ‘strong one’ who gives superhuman power to the demoniacs in the New Testament narratives¹¹) whose forced dominion on this earth stands in direct opposition to the fatherly *Basileia* of the Holy One. The dominion of the *Gbr*, whom the New Testament calls the ‘Prince of this world,’ is truly a *Krateia* or oppressive domination, and its brutality forces men and women to its will in disfiguring and demeaning ways. This way of creating a kingdom matches the powers of the great ones, the *Megáloi* of this world, who through all the ages have laughed at the thought of a fatherly providence being possible in this world’s *Realpolitik*.

Even so, ‘it shall not be so among you.’ For it must be different among those who have heard and seen the mystery of the revelation of the Name, and thus sensed what is the Kingdom of God in the Holy One Jesus. Here, the New Testament teaches, the might of God is manifested in the Holy One’s inability to be conquered by opposition; and his own chosen Holy One’s inability to be crushed by brutality. The Glory is not separate from the Cross, does not come in spite of the Cross, as the apostles John and Paul so eloquently taught, following Jesus himself; rather the Glory of God shines out from the Cross: a theme the Orthodox iconographers have long remembered, so frequently inscribing the *titulus* of the painted Orthodox Cross not with *Isous Nazarenos Basileus ton Ioudaion*, but rather with the simpler statement of truth: *Basileus Doxes*, the King of Glory.

Such is the complex sense of that simplest of all prayers given to the Church as its heritage of the Kingdom. This is the deeper sense of covenantal obedience that underlies Jesus’ own understanding of what *Exousia* signifies: the nearness of God as provident Lord, who calls out to his faithful to trust in that providence wholly, and from that freedom to

¹⁰ An evocation of the trust the Israelites ‘ought to have had’ in the desert for the God who provided them with manna enough for their pilgrimage. See Exod. 16.35; Deut. 8. 16-17; Ps.78.24; Jn.6.49.

¹¹ See Mk. 3.27; and Mk. 5. 1-4.

share resources in a New Age, the ever-fresh eschatological *Aion*, where Justice and Mercy shall meet in the drawing close of the ethos of the Next Age, and this conflicted present age: where angels and mortals can nevertheless sing the same song of merciful *Doxa* of the Lord who commands compassionate *Hesed* to Israel as the essence of his Dominion, and the core manifestation of his *Exousía*: ‘On earth as it is in heaven.’ It has been a considerable mistake, I think, that so much of twentieth-century biblical theology divorced the consideration of Jesus’ message of the Kingdom from the concept of the manifesting of the holiness of the Name (*Shem Qadosh*) which is apparent in the concept of the *Exousía*, often thereby failing to see how profoundly Jesus was discoursing about the nature of Providence in his Kingdom utterance,¹² because it was so often led aside by speculations on cosmological metaphysics.

When the Christians of the late first generation theologized about the nature of God’s Authority, they almost entirely referenced the Jewish scriptural heritage through the medium of the Greek, Septuagintal, translation of the Scriptures; not the Hebrew text. In the Septuagint, the Hebraic term for Authority, *Mem’sholoh*, is rendered consistently as *Exousía*, especially signifying the rightful dominion of God: the Kingdom where his authority holds sway. The concept of the *Exousía* cannot be separated from that of the Kingdom. At its heart is the notion of the true Israel, on whose praises the Almighty is enthroned, as the Psalmist has it in that very prayer which was on the lips of the dying Jesus.¹³ God’s glorious *Exousía* may be an authority flouted by men, but

¹² It would be a long task, but easily done if we had the time here, to demonstrate the fundamental way the Parables of the Kingdom almost all rest upon the issue of God’s fatherly providence to Israel, which once seen and accepted, results in the mutual gift within Israel of forgiveness, and sharing of goods. To take only a few examples: the Parable of the Sower is really a story of how God makes the fields give forth such a vast harvest that we should not be parsimonious (in sowing, or reaping, or distributing). The vastness of His providence startles the recipient into doxology of his goodness and into a trust that a generous response to God will not go amiss. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is really more rightly conceived as a Parable of the Prodigal Father, whose overflowing love and generosity startles the sons into a new realization that compassion is the only foundation for true existence, and the proper hallowing of the name of God; the Parable of the Lost Coin, is again fundamentally a tale about the illogical but wonderful surprise of how God so values forgiveness and reconciliation (‘finding the lost and small’) that its joy initiates the Kingdom celebrations, and canonizes reconciliation as a dominant kingdom ethic.

¹³ Ps. 21 2-4 (LXX): ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? You are far from my plea and the cry of my distress. O my God, I call by day and you give no reply; I call by night and I find no peace. Yet you, O God, are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.’

in the Kingdom it is honored: performed exactly by the angels, and with heartfelt obedience by his saints. *Exousía* stimulates *halakha* – how to walk aright; this in turn defines who can or cannot venerate the Name, confess God as Father and Lord. The Septuagint, therefore, gives the word the burden of signifying how the authority of God connects with his right as King over his dominion.

In the Septuagint *Exousía* is also a word that has a profoundly legal usage, heavily colored by the identification of Law as Torah, and chiefly connoting the sense of having the right from God to do something; or having the legal right under the terms of the Jewish Law for a certain conduct ¹⁴ which prescribes what are the boundaries of the true Israel – moral not merely geographic. It is chiefly in this sense too that we find the word associated with Jesus’ ministry of preaching and exorcism in the Gospels. In its precise reference to the Torah, *Exousía* signifies God’s rights over the chosen people who signal their allegiance by the observance of his Law and by their veneration of the Name. On other occasions, however, especially in the Psalms, the word refers to God’s supreme rights as Lord (*Basileus*) not simply over Israel, but over the entire Universe, even though many a lesser power (*Dynamis*, *Ischys*, *Kratos*) might contest or stand against the *Pantokrator* in the short term. When the entire Cosmos is in ‘right order’ it naturally sings out the glory of the Name: a theme that underlies much of the beautiful nature poetry of the Psalms and Wisdom literature. Late prophetic literature expresses this idea classically in the following terms taken from Daniel 4.27: ‘The Lord lives in heaven and his authority (*Exousía*) holds sway over all the earth.’ It is in Daniel too that we first see clearly how the term *Basileia* (or Kingdom of God), can effectively stand in for the notion of *Exousía*: God’s moral right to have the obedience and glorification of the whole world, but above all that of Israel. We should note here, however, that *Exousía* is the term that carries *Basileia tou Theou*; it is not the other way round. We cannot understand the *halakhic* implications of the idea if we have not understood the theological premise behind the axiom; we cannot initiate the *politeia* of the Kingdom if we have not first glimpsed the *doxa* of the holiness. We have no hope of understanding Jesus as social reformer if we have not first gained a glimmering of what he was as *Tzaddiq* (or Holy One) of God, preeminent among the *Baal Shem*, lordly masters of the Holy Name. In its own use of *Exousía*, therefore, the New Testament, with no small degree of conscious subtlety, makes the distinction between what underlies the true dominion of the world,

¹⁴ See Tobias 2.13 ; see also this typical usage applied in Halakhic disputation by Jesus in Mk.2.24-26; 3.4; 6.18; 10.2.

and that which is apparent to observers looking at mere current political conditions. The Lord of Israel has *Basileia* and *Exousía* (the right of dominion rooted in creation ordinances), whereas kings and nations have *Dynamis* and *Krateia* (the right of present might).

The Power of the Name to Command and Bring Into Being

I would like now to look a little more closely at some New Testament instances of the teaching on Authority, and will do so briefly with predominant reference to the exorcism material. The same attention, for completeness' sake, ought to be given in reference to the parabolic material, to the Johannine theology of Jesus' *Exousía* as *Krites*, or judgement-initiator, and not least to the Sophianic material of the Lord's Discourses. But to do this would amount to a hefty book not a keynote address; and so one small excavation trench will have to suffice as an indication of the need for a larger consideration. Moreover, the nexus of related issues – the *Exousia* of God manifested in the Church, the Johannine eschatology in larger scope, and the role the overlapping of the eschatological *Aeons* plays – all deserve a profounder consideration. For what is at stake here is a much more diverse understanding of the issues surrounding the *Exousía* of the Kingdom for Orthodox ecclesial understanding than often emerges from the reading of other exegetical sources and traditions. I would like to position my own trajectory, if we continue the analogy of setting off with a scholarly 'research-trench' on this topic, by naming my course as the 'Performative Significance of the Holy Name.' If I were to say at the outset, according to rabbinic tradition, one ought not to be on the ground while reciting even the *Qadosh* (the holy) part, let alone the Name itself, (in other words the early rabbis used to jump in the air while reciting Isaiah 6.1 so as to mimic the angels) we might get a sense of how to approach the issue of the holiness of the Name as a fundamental aspect of the Kingdom theology; and one I feel that has suffered some neglect. Our present scope, following the lead of the evangelical narratives, will focus more nearly on the demonological aspects involved in the power of the Name, though I trust we will immediately recognize the mirror aspect of how this doctrine somehow begins and ends in the Eschatological Eighth Age of the bodiless powers – be they good or evil. The insight of 'the powers' is meant to instruct us: we cannot ignore them by 'demythologically' excising them from our discourse.

The sharpest of what we might call the New Testament Christological passages relating this idea of the *Exousía* is found in Mt. 7. 28-29:¹⁵ “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” The juxtaposition here of the dramatically powerful word ‘astounded’ (*exepléssonto*) with the notion of *Exousía*, is quite deliberate. This is not simply polite astonishment at how able he is as a teacher, or how bold as a reformer, it is something far more: a coded reference in the apocalyptic literature of the era to the state of existential awe, akin to panic almost, that falls upon a mortal who witnesses the passing of the seventh age into the eighth age (or in other words a mortal who witnesses a mighty act of God that is invested with the charism of God’s own holiness). The awesome fear that arises in mortals witnessing immortal phenomena (divine teaching in this instance, but usually powerful acts such as the exorcisms or healings) is due to the strong possibility that their life force will be extinguished in the act of observing what transpires, the ‘passing by’ of the Name. The boundary between the ages has been breached. The veil has been lifted: there is danger of the *Shekinah* light being seen by eyes that are perhaps not necessarily pure enough¹⁶ to be able to see it safely. In this awesome moment, the next age has rushed into this one: those who are not possessed of divine *dynamis* stand literally in mortal danger.

This important apocalyptic theological theme goes back to the archetype of the Sinai epiphany where Moses begs to be able to see God but receives the definitive answer: “No mortal shall see the face of God and live.”¹⁷ It is taken up, after the account of the epiphany to Manoah in Judges 13.20-22, to be the root of the more widely known archetype of the vision of the angelic being in Daniel 10, which stresses the prophet’s loss of the vital force¹⁸ as he sees the epiphany of a Son of God, and thus enters into the interstices between the seventh and eighth ages. Then, the angel has to touch the failing mortal and encourage him with what soon

¹⁵ Parallels in Mk. 1.22; Lk. 4.32; see also Mk. 1.27.

¹⁶ See Mt. 5.8 in the context of what we have suggested above, regarding Jesus’ meaning behind Mt. 22. 37.

¹⁷ See Ex. 33.18-20; Ex. 3.6; also Deut. 5. 24. The notion of not being able to ‘see and live’ is also strongly present in the Jacob epiphany at Peniel (Gen. 16.13; Gen. 32. 30), which John’s Gospel uses in a striking *midrash* in Jn. 1.18, & 1. 51 (the latter instance plays on the underlying Hebraic metathesis between Jesus as the ‘Son of Man’ (*Ben Adam*) and the ‘Stone of Blood’ (*Ebn Dam*) (c.f. ‘Stone of anointment’ Gen. 28. 11-18 & 35.14.) or Holy Place of the Temple where God’s *shekinah* dwells: the sacrificial rock that typologically conjoins Bethel and the Jerusalem Temple in one place of focused *Shekinah* presence in the holy of holies).

¹⁸ Dan. 10.17-19.

became formulaic words: ‘Do not be afraid. Peace be with you,’¹⁹ which we recognize, of course, from the Resurrection narratives²⁰ where they serve the same purpose: averting the mortality that follows on divine epiphany [delete .], and starts with the feeling of awe and trembling. This state of awed bewilderment (the *exopléssonto* of the Gospel (Mk. 1.22), is the evangelical manner of referring to the ethos of epiphany; as too as the many references to *thauma* (Mk. 1.27), awe or wonderment, or even fear (*phobos*; Mk. 4.41) that falls upon the beholders when they witness the powerful deeds of Jesus, and with growing awe sense, often unwittingly and uncomprehendingly, the divine *Exousía* that informs them. It is their encounter with the *Exousía* of the Eighth Age, God’s own dominion, that enfolds the mortals in awe that they have entered into the domain of the bodiless powers.

Marks’s account of this in 1.21f. gives it a revealing context in the form of the exorcism of a demoniac in Capernaum. Mk 1.21-22 more or less reiterates Matthew’s situation: the teaching (*didache*) is what causes astonishment (*exopléssonto*) in the hearers. But then he introduces a dittography of the same idea at 1. 27-28, and in between (a classic if simplistic Markan editorial structure) inserts an intervening episode to illustrate dynamically and graphically the import of what the manifestation of the *Exousía* implies. Here in the casting out of the demon in the Synagogue (the very place where the name must be hallowed above all) the Servant of the Prince of the World is forced to confess Jesus as the Holy One of God. We thus have the hallowing of the Name given us as a mystical demonstration of what the Kingdom is that is ushered in by the *Shem Qadosh*. We note, at least we do if we pay attention, that the crowd attendant in the Synagogue sees all this transpire, but as mortals they are simply not able to register it. Mark has the crowd emerge from the Synagogue as if the exorcismic manifestation of the Holy Name had ‘passed them by’ (‘to pass by’ is an important New Testament pun with the double meaning of parallel movement, and also of epiphanic revelation). They do not seem fully to see or hear it, and emerge saying to one another: ‘Here is a teaching that is new. He gives orders even to unclean spirits who obey him.’ The reason for this un-hearing of the Holy Name, of course, is the fact that the *Tzaddiq* of God commanded the Demon not to manifest the Name to the mortals in the room: a device that so many scholars after Wilhelm Wrede have been led down the road to call the ‘Messianic Secret’, when it should rather, I think, have been located in the domain of the *Baal Shem* a key device of

¹⁹ Dan 10.18.

²⁰ See, Jn 20.19, 21, 26 for instance.

the theology of the Kingdom not a later Christological redaction. Here, in the exchange between those who live in the ambit of another age, with other discourses invisible and inaudible to ‘those who are on the outside’²¹ the force of the eschatological *Exousía* is manifested in a way more profound than the audience imagines: the complete casting down of evil. The Power of the Name has the energy to bring into being and to cast out. It not only expels evil, and darkness, but in the act initiates the creation afresh in primeval light: ‘Let there be Light’ – is the initiating command of the *Basileia tou Theou*.

A similar theological play on the force of the *Exousía* hidden in plain sight is apparent in the subtle irony of Matt 8:5-13, the healing of the Centurion’s slave, where the Roman Commander (the symbolic outsider *par excellence*), glimpses the power of the Name and reacts to it with the words: ‘I too am a man under authority. I have soldiers under me and I say to one: Go! and he goes.’²² His faith, or rather we should say his startling capacity to recognize the power of the Name²³, puts Jesus himself into astonishment (*thauma*). This time Jesus has received the force of the Name returned on him in all its surprising holiness, and it causes his ecstatic utterance: ‘Amín, I say to you, I have not found faith as great as this in anyone in Israel.’ The manifestation of the Name in this instance prefigures the inclusion of the world into the holiness: ‘Many will come from East and West to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, at the feast in the Kingdom.’²⁴ This act of power manifested in the Name’s healing and reclaiming to Israel of the dying slave of the Commander (an invocation of the Name issued by Jesus out of his ecstatic reaction to the faith of the Centurion) is clearly in the same category of thought as the demonic exorcisms. Both things: healings and exorcisms, have the same signification in the New Testament world, though we moderns have often separated them. Both sickness and demonic oppression²⁵ belong to the *Krateia* of the ‘Prince of this World.’ Release and Glory belong to the Kingdom where God’s Holy Name is present, uniting men with angels and driving out the forces and traces of the *Krateia* of the present age. This is why, for example, so

²¹ Mk.4.11.

²² Mt. 8.9 ; see Lk. 7.8;

²³ Because the evangelist’s own redactive interests have turned this episode for the reader into an issue of faith initiating the gentile mission.

²⁴ Mt. 8.12.

²⁵ Sickness being one form of demonic oppression over mortality, since death was brought into this world as part of the ‘envy’ of the Evil One. Heb. 2.14.

many of the evangelical instances of the use of the word *Exousía* belong to the instructions Jesus gave about exorcisms to his disciples.²⁶

In the epistolary New Testament literature this theme is strongly evident also. It may well be the case that the earliest missionary evangelists structured the delivery of the kerygmatic preaching in the Agoras of the ancient cities by first preceding it with demonstrations of their exorcistic ability. This would explain why so much of the canonical Gospels grows out of a veritable instruction pamphlet lying underneath it as a literary substructure on how to complete ‘difficult’ exorcisms (such as that of the deaf, or the dumb), where this important material remained more than anything else in the original Aramaic, resisting translation to the Greek. *Exousía* among the Apostolic generation is the authority which the knowledge of the Name confers to accomplish the evangelization by demonstrating the liberty of the New Dominion in symbols of healing.

Now, of course, the Name that pronounces the unutterable Name is that of the Risen Jesus, the name which is ‘exalted over all other names.’²⁷ In this exaltation of the name Jesus, the final doxology Paul presents in his Philippians hymn (and does so *circa* the 50’s of the first century in quoting a hymn which he already knows is more ancient than his own mission to Philippi) shows us how the Name Jesus has merged in the glory of the *Shekinah* with that of the Lord, for: ‘At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus the Christ is Lord, into the glory (*Doxa*) of God the Father.’²⁸ In the first generation of the Church, using the Name graphically demonstrated the dispelling of evil forces and served as the first act (a preliminary *Didache* as it were) to the kerygmatic preaching of the Apostolic generation. The Kingdom’s power is manifested in healing, before it was explained in its greater import.

Similar context is shown in that extraordinary hymn to the Glory of the Name in Ephesians 1.18-23, which sets out for us a considered New Testament doctrine of how Christ’s victory was manifested by God giving to him the *Exousía* of the universal Kingdom beginning with the conquest of the evil powers but running out to the Church as the vindicated place on earth where the Two Ages collide in a permanent capacity for offering glory:

²⁶ See: Matt 10: 1; Mk. 3.15; Mk. 6. 7; Lk. 4. 36; Lk. 9. 1.

²⁷ Phil. 2.5-11. See *ibid.* 2.9.

²⁸ Phil. 2.10-11.

May he enlighten the eyes of your mind, that you may know the richness of the glory (*doxa*) of your inheritance. . . and the immeasurable greatness of his power (*dynamis*) in us who believe, according to the force (*kratos*) of his great might (*ischyos*) which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule (*arche*) and authority (*exousía*) and power (*dynamis*) and dominion (*kyriotes*), and above every name that is named, not only in this age (*Aion*) but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, his body.’

Here we see the emergence of *Exousíai* (Authorities) along with Rulers, Powers, Thrones, and Dominions, as actual titles for categories of (evil) spirits in the nascent New Testament demonology²⁹. All the titles denote *Krateia*, oppressive domination. The Name of God alone has the force of true *Basileia* and it is manifested cosmically in the Risen Christ among his Church in the world, which now occupies an interstitial condition held in both sites, through the act of *Doxa* which constitutes its being ‘In Christ’.

Colossians 1.11-20 expresses the same dynamic sense of the Kingdom when it effectively renders the above in credal form, turning it more specifically as a doxology of the Name and saying:

May you be strengthened with all power (*dynamis*), according to the power (*kratos*) of his Glory (*doxa*), for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the governance (*exousía*) of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom (*basileia*) of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities (*exousíai*) - all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead,

²⁹ Exousia (an ‘Authority’) actually seems to have been a term invented at this time by Christian exorcists developing the theology of the Kingdom through exercising the power of the Name in their ministry of *didache*. See 1 Cor. 15. 24; Eph.1.21; Eph. 3.10; Eph. 6.12; Col.1.16; Col. 2.10.15; 1 Pet.3.22.

that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This remarkable proto-creed of Christendom demonstrates to us how the Kingdom has been given to the Son. It is his Name that now commands, and in commanding reveals the light of the glory of the revelation of the New Age.³⁰ His name is caught up in the glorious light of the praise of God the Father or, in other words, is in the *Shekinah* light itself, becomes the holy place of the *Shekinah*, and thus serves as the mediator of all other cosmic praise of God. His name thus shares the attributes of the Unutterable Name of the Father: it is Creator (*Ktitor*), Beginner before all things (*Arche*),³¹ Icon of the Invisible, First-Born (*Prototokos*), Head of the Body (*Kephale*). It is this selfsame doctrine that the evangelist John never tires of repeating: every instance of the appearance of the word ‘authority’ in his Gospel, returning to the same doctrine that there is but one *Exousia* of Father and Son.³² In a very short space, both chronologically and intellectually, the doctrine of the Name that was first expressed as an aspect of the early demonology that itself served to illustrate the manner in which the Kingdom’s *Exousia* was manifested among mortals, has risen up to the full heights of a cosmic Christology of Glory.

Conclusions

What can we deduce from this relatively short survey of the meaning of Authority in the foundational texts of our Orthodox Church? It is not easy to synopsise such profundity of revelatory insight in a short space, but it seems to me first and foremost that when the New Testament, following Jesus, discourses on the nature of the Kingdom, it begins in this psychic sensing of the Authority or *Exousia* of God among mortals, and demonstrated in the bodiless powers alongside mortals. The two aspects are important and cannot be dissolved. One: that the doctrine of the Kingdom flows out of the sensing of the *Exousia*, not the other way round: and this because the Kingdom itself is a manifestation of the Power of the Name, an aspect of Kingdom theology that has not been

³⁰ See Mt. 28.18.

³¹ See also Jn. 1.1.

³² See John 5:27; John 5:30; Jn. 7:17-18; Jn. 8.28; Jn. 12.49; Jn. 14.10; Jn. 16.13.

sufficiently studied in many modern approaches to the signification of *Basileia* in the time of Jesus, but which, for the Orthodox is at the heart and soul of what its meaning is: fundamentally an epiphany of the *Doxa* of the Living God. Two: because the juxtaposition of the reaction of the bodiless powers (angels and demons) to the Power of the Name, alongside that of mere mortals is the primary device with which the New Testament explains the significance of the Kingdom. If we insist on demythologizing the bodiless powers out of the equation, we cannot understand that by this means the ancient theologians are trying to explain to us that the Name, and its Kingdom, cannot be seen by everyone. It is not a construct given to all: it is rather a mystery of the unpronounceable *Shem* that is only given to the saints, those *Baal Shem* who are led into the capacity of that mystery by their Lord Jesus, master of the name, who entered into the Name as the essential part of that victory which constituted the Kingdom's manifestation on earth. The Church is clearly presented, therefore, as the abiding *locus* of that tension where the Seventh Age co-exists with the Eighth. This is not to say that the Church is the Kingdom pure and simple. But it is Church precisely because it is caught up into the Eighth Age even while chanting the Glory of the Name with tongues of clay, in the company of those who sing without bodies. This, for me, indicates that the Church begins its confession of the Kingdom out of the proclamation of the Name; centers it in its Doxology. The Kingdom cannot be separated from the Church; it comes into being as the Church itself comes into being: namely, when the Glory is actually proclaimed. Finally, to me it signifies loud and clear, in the teaching of Jesus himself (in his re-shaping of the prayer we now call by his name), that the mystical seeing and uttering of the Name is the comprehension that the Fatherhood of God is arrived at through the mercy of philanthropic commitment to our brothers and sisters 'in the Name'. The Church's capacity for the recital of the name is thus intimately tied to its capacity to be the place of reconciliation, atonement, and mercy which the Lord modeled when he told his disciples what the secret name was, and how its power changed the vision and reality of the world.

It is, then, not a simple doctrine of ecclesial authorizations (or how authority should be exercised in the Church through history) more a mystical doctrine of the fundamental shape of the Kingdom of God among us. But it does suggest that the root of all legitimate authority in Christ's Church is dependent on conformity to the glory of God, by assuming 'the mindset (*phronema*) that was in Christ'.³³ That is to end by

³³ Phil.2.5.

stating an obvious point: nevertheless one that should never be forgotten: because to forget it means that we might conceivably elevate in Christ's Church models of authoritative governance that assume *Krateia* is the standard norm for godly governance, and forget the Lord's own warning: 'But it must never be like this among you.' I end with another reminder which this doctrine of *Exousía* gives to the Church: that those of us who represent Christ's authority today, and have thus been given the apostolic task in our own generation of proclaiming the Kingdom, and explaining its import,³⁴ must of necessity know the mystery of the Name which we assume, in whose Name we act. It is not enough, if it ever was, simply to repeat the tales of the Kingdom, or stories of the presence of God. What is being offered to us in our foundational scriptures is that those who stand with Christ, in that trembling eschatological interstices we call the Church, need to leave the ground while shouting out the threefold *Qadosh* of the angels. For the Name of God demands that we enter into it in awe to experience its *dynamis*, not stand on the sidelines of commentary like some post-modern paralytic, waiting for someone to carry our pallet into the water.

³⁴ For Jesus gives his authority as a charism to his Church (Luke 4:6; Luke 4:32; Lk. 10:19) but will not share it with those who claim authority yet cannot demonstrate true knowledge of the Name from their lives (Matt 9:6-8; Mk. 2.10; Lk. 5.24; See also: Mt. 21.23- 27; Mk. 11.28;-33; Lk. 20. 2-8.)