THE NATURE AND DEMANDS OF THE SOVEREIGN RULE OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

MARGARET HANNAN

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To the memory of my parents
Phillipa and Vincent Hannan

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PREFACE

This book is an abridged version of my doctoral thesis on the use and meaning of the term ἡ βασιλεία in the Gospel of Matthew. The purpose of the original thesis was to demonstrate that the first evangelist did indeed have a distinctive perspective to offer on the meaning and understanding of God's Sovereign Rule, as was seen by his varied usage of the term throughout his Gospel.

Not only is the content of the message of John the Baptist (3.2), Jesus (4.17), and the disciples (10.7) the proclamation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of the Heavens, but as well, Matthew, in line with the traditional Jewish interpretation of the term, gives it a metaphorical and spatial characteristic by imaging it as a place to which people can gain entrance, refuse to enter, or place obstacles in the way of others entering (5.20; 7.13; 7.21; 18.3; 18.9; 19.23; 21.31; 23.13).

God's Kingdom is also inherited (19.29; 25.34) or sought for (6.33). It is imaged as belonging to the poor, those persecuted for righteousness' sake and children (5.3, 10; 19.14). Scribes can be trained for it (13.52), and people can make themselves eunuchs for the sake of it (19.12). In parables, the Kingdom is compared to a vast variety of well-known household and agricultural objects, and human activities (13.24, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18.23, 20.1; 22.2; 25.1). Finally, Jesus, on the eve of his passion and death, looks forward in hope to once again sharing table fellowship with his disciples in the Kingdom of the Father (26.29 cf. 8.11).

If Matthew formulates Jesus' message, as proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of the Heavens (4.23; 9.35; 24.14; cf. 13.19), it is because the community's subsequent proclamation of the Kingdom consists for him in what Jesus himself had taught (cf. 28.20). Indeed, the sheer weight of material concerning this theme clearly demonstrates that Matthew is convinced that we cannot understand the basic message or purpose of Jesus unless we are prepared to grapple with the mystery and meaning of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν which he proclaimed and taught as εὐαγγέλιον.

Throughout this text, direct quotations from the New Testament are taken from the Revised Standard Version [*The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version*, 2nd Edition, 1971 (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America)]. Those from the Apocrypha and Old Testament, which is referred to throughout this study as the Hebrew Scriptures, are taken from the Revised Standard Version as found in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1973). The Greek Text of the New Testament is that of the 27th Edition of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 8th revised Edition, 1994, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). All other sources are acknowledged at the appropriate places within the text.

While writing is in many ways a very solitary task, books are certainly not produced alone and there are many people to whom I am deeply indebted in the preparation of this book. First, there are the many scholars, authors, colleagues and students too numerous to name, who over many years, have contributed to my own understanding of the Gospel of Matthew and for whom my debts in completing this book will go unpaid.

However, a number of people deserve mention for their support and help along the way. First and foremost I express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to Dr Michael Lattke, Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity Studies in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, for his expert supervision of the original thesis, and also for his hospitality, friendship, encouragement and understanding throughout my doctoral studies, as well as his constant encouragement to prepare this text for publication.

I express my deepest gratitude to Professors Bruce Chilton and Elaine Wainwright who not only examined the original thesis, but also made some very valuable and encouraging suggestions for its publication. To Professor Paul Foster I also owe a debt of gratitude for his very encouraging evaluation of the manuscript and also for his valuable suggestions both to shorten the length of the work and to correct the idiosyncrasies of my style. Any mistakes that now remain in either the text or my argumentation must now be acknowledged as completely my own.

Special thanks are due to my dear friend Sister Monica Flanigan, who was not only involved in proof-reading the manuscript at every stage of its production, but has been a constant support in the ups and down of preparing it for publication. Unlike the householder of Luke's parable (11.5-8), she has opened her door and her heart at all hours of the day and the night to an importunate visitor seeking her aid.

Finally, I offer my thanks to my two families – my sisters, Marie and Judith, and brother, Phillip, and my religious Congregation, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, without whose faith, love, patience and support it would have been impossible to complete a project of this magnitude.

This book is dedicated, in loving memory, to my parents, Phillipa and Vincent Leo Hannan, who first opened for me the Scriptures and established my connections with the Sisters of the Good Samaritan who then saw to it that the process was continued.

ABBREVIATIONS

I. *Periodicals, Series, and Encyclopaedias*

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972–)
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
AusBR	*Australian Biblical Review*
BAGD	Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. William Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn, 1958)
BDF	Friedrich Blass, A. Debrunner and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961)
Bib	*Biblica*
BiTod	*The Bible Today*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	*Bible Review*
BSt	Biblische Studien
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Monograph Series
CJR	Christian Jewish Relations: A Documentary Survey
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica, New Testament
CNEB	*Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible*
EDNT	Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (eds); *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–93
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpTim	*The Expository Times*

GNS	Good News Studies
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
IBC	*The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Address of His Holiness John Paul II and Document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Boston: St Paul's, 1993
IBS	*Irish Biblical Studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JTSA	*Journal of Theology for South Africa*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, Robert Scott and H. Stuart Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 9th edn, 1968)
NCB	New Century Bible
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum*, Supplements
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NTT	New Testament Theology
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
PNTC	The Pelican New Testament Commentaries
PRS	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBLSBS	SBL *Sources for Biblical Studies*
ScEs	*Science et esprit*
SE	*Studia evangelica*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SKK	Stuttgarter kleiner Kommentar
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTU	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt
SPCS	Sacra Pagina Commentary Series
TD	*Theology Digest*
TDNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans by Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

ThEv	*Theologia evangelica*
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TTod	*Theology Today*
TWAT	G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H. J. Fabry (eds), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament.* Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1986
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WW	*Word and World*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

II. *Ancient Texts*

A. *Biblical Books and Apocrypha*

Old Testament

Gen.	1 Kgs	Eccl. (or Qoh.)	Obad.
Exod.	2 Kgs	Song (or Cant.)	Jon.
Lev.	1 Chron.	Isa.	Mic.
Num.	2 Chron.	Jer.	Nah.
Deut.	Ezra	Lam.	Hab.
Josh.	Neh.	Ezek.	Zeph.
Judg.	Est.	Dan.	Hag.
Ruth	Job	Hos.	Zech.
1 Sam.	Ps. (pl. Pss.)	Joel	Mal.
2 Sam.	Prov.	Amos	

New Testament

Mt.	2 Cor.	1 Tim.	2 Pet.
Mk	Gal.	2 Tim.	1 Jn
Lk.	Eph.	Tit.	2 Jn
John	Phil.	Phlm.	3 Jn
Acts	Col.	Heb.	Jude
Rom.	1 Thess.	Jas	Rev.
1 Cor.	2 Thess.	1 Pet.	

Apocrypha

1 Esd.	1 Esdras	Sir.	Sirach
2 Esd.	2 Esdras	Bar.	Baruch
Tob.	Tobit	Ep. Jer.	Epistle of Jeremiah
Jdt.	Judith	1 Macc.	1 Maccabees
Wis.	Wisdom of Solmon	2 Macc.	2 Maccabees

B. Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and Early Christian Literature

Jub.	Jubilees	Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Odes	Odes of Solomon	Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles

C. Josephus

Ant.	Antiquities of the Jews
Apion	Against Apion
War	The Jewish War

D. Mishnaic, Talmudic, and Other Rabbinic Literature

The conventional sigla are used:
(*m.* = *Mishna, t.* = *Tosefta, b.* = *Babylonian Talmud, y.* = *Jerusalem Talmud)*

Abot	'Abot	Ned	Nedarim
Ber	Berakot	Pes	Pesahim
Erub	Erubin	Sanh	Sanhedrin
Git	Gittim	Shab	Shabbath

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction
Today, there is a general consensus among New Testament scholars that the theme of the imminent coming of the Kingdom is central to the preaching of the historical Jesus. Evidence for this is found in the texts of the synoptic Gospels and other New Testament writings where the Greek phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ or its Matthaean equivalent ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν occurs some seventy-five times. In the Gospels, the phrase itself always occurs on the lips of Jesus,[1] who is engaged in either proclaiming the imminent arrival of God's βασιλεία or is involved in explaining the nature of it to his disciples and to the crowds.[2] He also points to his own acts of healing and exorcism as a sign of its presence (Mt. 12.28; Lk. 11.20).

However, despite the acceptance by most modern-day interpreters of the New Testament, that the origin and central content of Jesus' proclamation and teaching is actually determined by the Kingdom of God,[3] critical inquiry into the use of the term is essentially a modern or post-Enlightenment phenomenon.[4]

It is possible to trace the history of the various interpretations of God's sovereign rule from the Fathers of the Church to modern times, as did Ernst

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1.   The one notable exception is in the Gospel according to Matthew, where the first use of the Greek phrase ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν is placed on the lips of John the Baptist (3.2).

2.   Where possible the Greek term ἡ βασιλεία will be used throughout this work instead of Kingdom as better expressing the notion of the sovereign power of God exercised on behalf of the Chosen People in fidelity to the terms of the covenant made with them at Sinai. This term also gives expression to the notion of the reciprocal nature of obedience and loyalty demanded of those who are recipients of this activity. At times God's sovereign power or God's sovereignty or God's βασιλεία will be used, if appropriate, instead of 'kingdom' or 'kingly activity' in an attempt to overcome the gender biased connotations of 'kingdom' or 'kingly power'. Exceptions will include literal translations of βασιλεία logia and quotations from other sources.

3.   Ulrich Luz, 'βασιλεία', *EDNT* 1 (1990), pp. 201–5.

4.   Bruce C. Chilton, 'Introduction', in Bruce Chilton (ed.), *The Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 4.

Staehelin in his monumental work.[5] However, it was not until the late nineteenth century that a truly critical inquiry into the meaning of the term was begun. Since then, there has been a plethora of scholarly books and articles on the subject of God's βασιλεία which have explored both the background and the meaning of the phrase. Most of these studies have concentrated on homogenizing a broad selection of βασιλεία logia taken from the synoptic Gospels into a single picture of what Jesus understood by the term. However, this scholarly pan-Synoptic approach has not achieved the hoped-for results. This is verified, on the one hand, by the elusiveness of a stable consensus of what Jesus meant by the term and, on the other, by the continuing and often heated scholarly debates which engage those who continue to use this approach.

A possible, but largely ignored, solution to this *impasse* was initiated in the early sixties of last century with the introduction of redactional or compositional criticism. This hermeneutical tool proved to be the harbinger of a variety of literary-critical methodologies which followed in its wake. Redaction criticism arose out of the unsolved and perhaps unsolvable problem of the interdependence of the synoptic Gospels.[6] In its initial stages, redaction criticism sought to discern the theology and intentions of the individual evangelist or New Testament writer by observing the manner in which they edited their sources. Most of the early redaction critics used a 'horizontal methodology',[7] based on the Two Source hypothesis.[8] To understand the theology of Matthew

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5.   Ernst Staehelin, *Die Verkündigung des Reiches Gottes in der Kirche Jesu Christi* (7 vols. Basel: Reinhardt, 1951–65). A more modest attempt to trace the history of interpretation was undertaken by Johannes Weiss in *Die Idee des Reiches Gottes in der Theologie* (Giessen: Ricker, 1901), but together with his earlier study, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Richard H. Hiers and David L. Holland (eds and trans.); Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); and Albert Schweitzer's, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Black, 2nd edn, 1963), it was to inaugurate the modern study of the theme. See also Benedict T. Viviano, *The Kingdom of God in History* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1988), which gives a concise history of the Christian Church's interpretation of the phrase 'the Kingdom of God' from Gospel times to the present day.

6.   While the literary dependence of the synoptic texts has long been recognized, the problem of identifying the original sources of the tradition defies resolution. Given the conjectural nature of all the hypotheses involved and the paucity of controllable data, it seems wiser, at this stage, to treat these sources as parallel developments of a widespread 'Jesus tradition' in different parts of the Roman Empire. See Richard France, *Divine Government: God's Kingship in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SPCK, 1990), p. 4, who proposes the existence of a number of written and oral sources which were subject to a good deal of cross-fertilization among the various communities of the Jesus Movement of the early first century and who attributes the literary dependence of the synoptic texts to this cross-fertilization process.

7.   William G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Matt 17.22–18.35* (AnBib 44; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), p. 7, was the first to use this term.

8.   This hypothesis proposes independent use by Matthew and Luke of two distinct sources in the writing of their Gospels, the Gospel of Mark and Q or Quelle (source). The latter is a no longer extant collection of sayings or teachings of Jesus to which Matthew and Luke both had access, but which was unavailable or not used by Mark in the composition of his text.

and Luke, it was considered necessary to separate tradition from redaction by noting any differences between the two texts and in any similar texts found in Mark.[9] Redaction criticism's major contribution to biblical hermeneutics consisted of alerting exegetes to the value of recognizing each of the evangelists as an individual communicator or theologian, rather than just a collector or editor of sources.

However, the disadvantage of using the 'horizontal methodology' soon became obvious. Reliance on the Two Source hypothesis inevitably raised serious questions about identifying the redactor's activity with any confidence or conviction. It also prevented the exegete from effectively isolating the author's own compositional material and deriving from it his particular theological viewpoint.[10] Indeed it soon became evident that parallel texts, which used different words and syntax in recording the same or similar thoughts, words and deeds of Jesus, did not necessarily testify to common literary sources. Rather they could be attributed to parallel versions, either written or oral, which the Gospel authors had intentionally and creatively arranged and fashioned to give expression to their theological purposes.

With the refining of the methodology came the realization that the intention of the writer could be perceived not only in the redactional residue, but also in the selection, placement and editing of the traditional units of the material. Emphasis thus shifted from the identification of specific sources to the evangelist's skill as a writer not only to access the traditional sources available to him, but to plan, organize and compose his text around his own distinctive theological viewpoint. As David E. Garland comments, the evangelists not only passed on the primitive tradition, they also interpreted it.[11]

Redaction critics' insistence on the evangelists as skilled authors, who recast the traditions and interpreted them for the benefit of their own communities, led to the introduction of new methodologies. These included both broadly based literary approaches to the Gospels and sophisticated sociological analyses of the Gospel communities.

However, while both redaction and literary critics recognized that composition and structure were key to interpreting an author's theological viewpoint and intent, this insight was rarely utilized in exploring how an individual evangelist presented his own particular theological understanding of the nature

9.   The unknown author of the Gospel according to Matthew will some times be referred to as 'the author' and sometimes by the abbreviated form of Matthew. This usage does not imply acceptance of the traditional position that the Gospel was written by the disciple Matthew (9.9; 10.3). It is merely convenient shorthand for referring to the author of this Gospel and to his theological perspective. This principle applies equally to references made to the authors of the Gospels according to Mark, Luke and John.

10.   This is seen in the vast number of commentaries on both Luke and Matthew, which identify material peculiar to a particular Gospel with the hypothetical sources known as L and M, rather than attribute this material to the author who wrote the Gospel.

11.   *The Intention of Matthew 23* (NovTSup 52; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), p. 5. See also William G. Thompson, 'Reflections on the Composition of Mt 8.1–9.34', *CBQ* 33 (1971), pp. 365–88 (365).

of God's sovereignty.[12] Redaction critics' failure to explore Matthew's particular understanding of Jesus' teaching on this topic is surprising for a number of reasons. First, the author's meticulous concern for composition and structure, particularly the ordering of his text around the five or more great discourses in which he details Jesus' teaching on God's βασιλεία to his disciples and the crowds, has long been recognized.[13] Second, when redaction or compositional criticism was first introduced, the Matthaean text was often used as a means of demonstrating this approach.[14]

Even a cursory reading of the Matthaean text reveals that the theme of ἡ βασιλεία is central to this particular Gospel. Close examination of the text confirms the impression that this particular evangelist was convinced that Jesus was possessed with a message concerning ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Not only did he proclaim it, perform acts of healing in its name, explain its nature and demands in discourse and parable, but also called and trained disciples to ensure that this message would be perpetuated after his death. The text states explicitly that Jesus *discipled* the twelve for ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (13.52) and also commissioned them 'to disciple the nations', so that the good news of God's βασιλεία, and all that he taught concerning it, would be proclaimed to the end of time (28.19-20). Indeed, Matthew's Gospel states emphatically that we cannot understand Jesus' basic message or purpose unless we are

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12.   Those who undertook such a study usually concentrated on the Gospel according to Mark. See Aloysius M. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1972); Werner H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) and France, *Divine Government*. Various reasons were offered for this choice. France, *Divine Government*, p. 4, argued that Mark, as the first Gospel to be written, was more likely to contain the earliest or the 'most primitive' account of the teaching of Jesus. Others choose Mark because the smaller number of references to the term ἡ βασιλεία offered a more manageable exegetical task than that required to analyse the more numerous references found in both Matthew and Luke. It is also a commonly held view that the length and structure of the Markan Gospel lends itself more readily to narrative analysis. Exploration of the theological significance of the βασιλεία in Matthew has been limited to articles that deal with a limited selection of texts or works which explore selected βασιλεία logia that are clearly related. See, for example, Warren Carter, 'Narrative/ Literary Approaches to Matthean Theology: The "Reign of the Heavens" as an Example (Mt. 4.17–5.12)', *JSNT* 67 (1997), pp. 3–27 and 'Challenging by Confirming, Renewing by Repeating: The Parables of the "Reign of the Heavens" in Matthew 13 as Embedded Narratives', *SBL Seminar Papers* (1995), pp. 399–424; Thomas Ray Wolthuis, 'Experiencing the Kingdom: Reading the Gospel of Matthew' (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Duke University: 1987); Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of the Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).
13.   William D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), p.14, describes this Gospel as 'an architectonic grandeur ... Its different parts are inseparable like those of a well planned house'. See also Graham Stanton, 'Matthew as Creative Interpreter of the Sayings of Jesus', in Peter Stuhlmacher (ed.), *The Gospel and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 257–72 (257).
14.   Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 2nd edn, 1982).

prepared to grapple with the mystery and meaning of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν which he proclaimed and taught as εὐαγγέλιον or good news.[15]

Further evidence that ἡ βασιλεία or the sovereignty of God is the central theological concern of the Matthaean Gospel is seen in the evangelist's frequent use of βασιλεία logia throughout his text. Indeed, of all the synoptic writers, it is he who uses what could be considered βασιλεία terminology most freely. Scholars, who adhere to the Two Source theory, attribute fifteen of the author's uses of the term to his redaction of traditional material. However, on thirty-six other occasions the evangelist intentionally inserts the term either into traditional material or includes it in passages peculiar to his text. Indeed, Matthew frequently uses βασιλεία logia to structure and unify his narrative so as to develop his particular theological stance concerning Jesus' message of God's sovereignty. Therefore, as God's βασιλεία is both a prominent theme and the central theological concept of the first Gospel, its author's use of the term constitutes a serious topic for research and analysis.[16]

Aims of this Study
The purpose of this study is to explore the distinctive theological perspective of God's sovereignty, as the author of the Matthaean Gospel reveals it in the structure and composition of the various parts of his text. It is argued that a study of one evangelist's peculiar voice, regarding his interpretation of Jesus' message of the good news of God's βασιλεία offers an opportunity of overcoming the present confusion concerning the meaning of this term in contemporary scholarship.

Methodological Considerations

The initial step in exploring this author's distinctive theological perspective regarding Jesus' proclamation of and teaching on ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν necessarily requires both the establishment of a framework within which interpretation can take place and a set of presuppositions that constitute a starting point. It is these presuppositions which determine the questions and methods needed to glean information from the text.[17]

The basic premise of this study is that structure and composition are fundamental in determining Matthew's particular theological understanding of Jesus' mission to proclaim and teach God's βασιλεία. Thus any interpretive approach must take into consideration the structure of the Gospel as a whole, as well as the structure of each of its various components.

15. Mt. 4.23; 9.35; 24.14.
16. The use of the term 'first Gospel' is used in the traditional sense of referring to its position as the first of the canonical Gospels and makes no claim about priority of composition. Any references to the first evangelist are also used in the same way.
17. See the discussion on the choice of methods and a methodology in Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp. 111–14.

Overall Structure of the Matthaean Text

The structure of the Matthaean Gospel has been a subject of scholarly research since the beginning of its long history of interpretation. This has produced numerous theories, but very little consensus among scholars.[18] Indeed the search for a master plan or blueprint for the whole of the Gospel continues to be the subject of scholarly research and debate. This is seen in the number of books and articles that continue to be written on this topic and the lengthy discussions on both structure and genre that appear in any sound commentary on the Matthaean text.

The only agreement among scholars is that the Gospel is cast in the form of a story or biography of Jesus, whose various parts are carefully interrelated, and 'whose narrative proportions follow a rough chronological sequence'.[19] The notion that the author structured his text on a chronological sequence – birth, mission, death and vindication – should not be lightly dismissed. Indeed, what appears to be a simple sequence of the events of Jesus' life serves the author of the first Gospel as a highly effective structural framework for the Gospel as a whole.

Having established this sequence, the evangelist turned his attention towards selecting what he needed from the tradition for his own particular theological purposes and recasting this material in a new context. The final product resulted in a skilfully crafted and interrelated sequence of discourses, episodic narratives of Jesus' mighty works and controversies with the religious leaders over the correct interpretation of the Law. This sequence is deliberately framed with a prologue and an epilogue also based on the traditions. The former firmly establishes Jesus' place in the history of Israel and his identity as Messiah and agent of God. The latter recounts the events connected with his death, his vindication by God by being raised from the dead, and concludes with the glorified

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18.   Donald Senior, *What Are They Saying about Matthew?* (New York: Paulist, 1983), pp. 16–27; David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel* (Sheffield: Almond, 1988); Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 2nd printing, 1978), p. 139; William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997), I, pp. 58–72.

19.   Philip L. Schuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), pp. 88–106; Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (SNTSMS 70; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 149–52; David E. Aune, 'Greco-Roman Biography', in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (SBLSBS 21; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), pp. 107–26 and *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), pp. 11–76, all define Matthew's Gospel in terms of a story or a Graeco-Roman biography of Jesus. Aune sees ancient biography as a powerful propaganda tool, ideally suited for direct or indirect criticism or support of an established order. This description accords with Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 68–70, who suggests that the use of biography serves Matthew's pastoral and catechetical purposes and enables him to legitimize his belief in Jesus as Messiah and to persuade his readers to accept a way of life based on his teachings.

Jesus' final commissioning of his disciples. Thus, what appears to be 'a rough chronological sequence, into which large blocks of teaching material have been inserted regularly',[20] now becomes an integrated and powerful tool of instruction on discipleship for God's βασιλεία. Moreover, this tool derives its credibility and influence from being based on the authoritative word and example of Jesus, Messiah and agent of God.[21]

The author's concerted use of direct speech throughout his story assures that it is Jesus who instructs hearers or readers of the text in the nature and demands of God's βασιλεία. It is also through the medium of the story that future disciples of Jesus are commissioned to *disciple* others and to instruct them in all that Jesus had taught. Matthew, thus, ensures that Jesus' teaching on God's βασιλεία is perpetuated to the end of time. Moreover, those entrusted with this task are reassured of Jesus' continued presence and guidance (28.19-20).

Matthew's structuring of his text in the form of a story therefore has a profound theological purpose. As it is in the telling of the story that the author's distinctive theological stance regarding God's βασιλεία is revealed, any interpretative approach to the text must include tools that both respect the sequencing of the narrative and the integrity of the story. As the author also uses the story to engender belief in Jesus and encourage a way of life based on his teaching, any analysis of the text also needs to be aware of the techniques and strategies that he uses as story-teller both to engage his readers while encouraging them to accept his point of view. It is here that literary-critical methodologies, both traditional and new, prove helpful as a rich source for analysing the text from a variety of positions.[22]

Structure of the Subsections of the Matthaean Text

It is in the carefully structured subsections of the text that the author develops different aspects of his understanding of the nature of 'the Kingdom of the

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20.   Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I, pp. 58–9.

21.   Many Christian interpreters have attributed to first-century Judaism a univocal belief in an eschatological, political, nationalistic Messiah. In reality, not all Jews believed in an afterlife or an apocalyptic ending to the world. Of those, who did profess some eschatological hope, some expected a 'messianic figure' and some did not. Indeed, there was a large variety of beliefs about the actual identity and role of the Messiah and his relationship to God. In the context in which Matthew wrote, these variously conceived expectations stood side-by-side without any interrelation. See Eduard Lohse, *The New Testament Environment* (John E. Steely (trans.); London: SCM, rev. edn, 1976), pp. 188–96; Jacob Neusner et al., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) for comprehensive discussions on notions of Messianism in early Judaism.

22.   Exegetes recognize that biblical texts are thoroughly literary in nature and have consistently used literary-critical tools of analysis to assist them in interpreting biblical texts. In this study, these tools or methods of analysis need to be distinguished from those of contemporary scholars who use modern literary-critical methodologies to analyse biblical texts as narrative entities. The tools they use are more concerned with exploring the way a text works both within itself and in relation to the reader. For purposes of clarification, literary methods from the historical-critical approach will be referred to as traditional literary methods, those from the narrative critical approaches, as new or contemporary literary-critical methods.

Heavens' (ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν) or Jesus' teachings on this topic. This is seen in his concerted use of βασιλεία logia or terminology throughout the text. These logia are used as *inclusio* marking off certain sections of the text (and thereby underscoring this theme) and as important introductory statements, whose meaning is developed both in the discourse and narrative sections of the text. They also serve as formula statements, which comment on some aspects of Jesus' teaching and healing mission.

Since this study is concerned with how Matthew uses these structures to develop his understanding of the nature of God's βασιλεία, a close examination of self-contained units where the term actually occurs, must, of necessity, form part of the interpretative process. Thus, a conscientious historical-critical analysis of βασιλεία logia in Matthew – case by case, narrative context by narrative context – will allow for subtle changes in usage to be noted. Such changes in usage assist the reader to register any subsequent development of the author's understanding of the term.

An historical-critical approach allows the biblical interpreter to make sense of a word or phrase in terms of its position in a discrete section of the text. However, it does not always permit close attention to be paid to the author's placement of the unit in the narrative as a whole. Indeed it is the positioning of a parable, a teaching or an event and the way it is linked to neighbouring units which act as semantic clues,[23] indicating how to interpret and understand the subject matter of the passage. Paradoxically, the specific purpose and intent of the author is also revealed in the sum of the individual parts. Thus any interpretative process must bear in mind the inter-relation between the whole and the parts and maintain a dialogue between them so that an understanding of both is gradually built up.[24] This will necessitate not only making sense of a passage in terms of its own wording or specific context, but also in the general or larger literary context of the author's entire understanding of Jesus and his mission, as it is expressed in the narrative as a whole. Hence the concern, at times, to have a holistic approach to the text, rather than focus exclusively on self-contained pericope. Thus, the historical or exegetical analysis of these logia needs to be consistently complemented with an appropriate use of modern literary-critical approaches which will foster this dialogue.

The Antiquity and Provenance of the Text
The choice of interpretative tools must also be guided by the antiquity of the text. Any contemporary analysis of the Gospel must necessarily recognize that the original narrative was written in Koiné Greek and told by an ancient first-century writer using the accepted rhetorical conventions of his day. The story is addressed or read to an audience of men and women, who are

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23.   The meaning of a word depends not only on its lexical definition, but also on its relation to other words and sentences in the context in which it is placed. Authors frequently indicate how they wish a word to be interpreted by supplying supporting contextual clues.

24.   Ralph P. Martin, 'Approaches to New Testament Exegesis', in I. Howard Marshall (ed.), *New Testament Interpretation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), pp. 220–51 (229).

Christian-Jewish disciples of Jesus. All these factors demand interpretative tools that allow for the socio-historical, religious, cultural and economic background that constitute the narrative setting of this Gospel to be explored.

A major presupposition of this study is that the text of Matthew's Gospel had its origins in the very limited confines of a community of Jewish believers-in-Jesus, living in a predominantly Greek-speaking Jewish community of the late first century AD. The basis for such a presupposition is found in the text which consistently portrays Jesus as the Messiah, who authorizes the founding of this small Jewish sect, its discipline, its missionary outreach and its theology. Indeed, the author is intent on proclaiming and teaching the good news of ἡ βασιλεία for his own community, just as Jesus had done for his first followers.[25] He, therefore, seeks to create continuity and identity with the historical Jesus even in the midst of historical change. If written outside of Israel, Matthew assures his reader, by the setting he chooses, that Israel and its history are still immediately present.[26] By setting his story within the life and teachings of Jesus he seeks to help his community to better understand its place within Judaism after AD 70.[27]

25.   Matthew's sophisticated use of Scripture and the developing body of *Halakah* suggests the construction of a text which is based on 13.52 as a motto or slogan and very much geared for training scribes for ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

26.   The continuing debate on the nature of the Matthaean community has resulted in a broad spectrum of scholarly opinions ranging from a Gentile Church hostile to or ignorant of Judaism to a closed Christian-Jewish community, which has either separated itself from Judaism or is in the process of doing so. Such a range is due to the inconsistent and even self-contradictory evidence provided by the text itself. Nevertheless, when a sociological study of the text is made, such inconsistency proves insignificant. Indeed, the author's sometimes negative view of the crowds, Israel and the Gentiles and his scathing attacks upon Israel's leaders suggest that the author is a member of Israel, who hopes to influence his fellow Jews to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. Matthew does not reject Judaism. Rather, he seeks to convince his fellow Jews to endorse a form of Judaism based on the teachings of Jesus. Matthew's community, therefore, is probably a sect or deviant group still within the broad, variant and often ill-defined Jewish community of the late first century. It is against this backdrop that his text must be read. For comprehensive discussions of this position as well as opposing points of view see Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

27.   There is no scholarly consensus as to a place of composition for Matthew's Gospel. Many commentators would locate the composition of the text in Palestine or Syria. These locations are chosen for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the place must have had a large enough Jewish population to accommodate both the Matthaean community and its Jewish opponents. On the other, as the Gospel was composed in Greek for a Greek-speaking community, it must have been in a place where Greek was used and understood. Several cities in Syria, Galilee, Phoenicia and the Decapolis meet these criteria. There is a definite lack of hard evidence for any one city or geographical region. Galilee is as possible a site as any other. While a specific location would assure a more accurate historical reconstruction of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Matthaean community, the lack of a known geographical location is probably the least significant lacuna of many that militate against a sound understanding of the text.

During this period, Jews struggled with the loss of the temple as a centre of Jewish worship and culture and strove to come to terms with the nature of Judaism and its survival at a time of religious persecution and political oppression.[28] Hence, the Matthaean text is representative of one of the many voices responding to the crisis facing all Jews in the late first century. At this time, Judaism and Christianity were not yet perceived as different or rival religions, though the groundwork had probably been laid for the parting of the ways by the preaching of Paul to the Gentiles. The Matthaean community's negative relationship with other Jewish groups is occasioned by the heated debates concerning how Judaism was to be lived after the catastrophic events of the Jewish revolt against Roman rule.

The text argues for a way of life, which will ensure the survival of the Jewish faith despite the destruction of its temple and the loss of its related political institutions.[29] The author of the text, by insisting on Jesus' and his disciples' mission to Israel, emphasizes the continuity between the situation of the earthly Jesus around AD 30 and that of his own community in the last decades of the first century. It is the socio-historical, cultural and religious context of Jesus' own times, that Matthew has chosen as a vehicle for expressing his understanding of the ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν and Jesus' relationship to it. Such an environment establishes an important interpretative principle. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, the Matthaean Jesus deals with problems facing all Israel rather than those surfacing within the Matthaean community.[30] The proclamation and teaching of Jesus concerning the good news of the Kingdom of the Heavens, as handed on by his disciples and the members of the Matthaean community, are meant for all of fractured Israel. Thus, any contemporary reader of the text must be acutely aware of the influences that such a context exerts on the meaning or meanings of the term ἡ βασιλεία, particularly as it is used in the vast number of individual and different contexts throughout this Gospel. This is where methods chosen from the historical-critical approach to the interpretation of a text will prove indispensable.

Connected Themes

Matthew's particular understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven is also strongly influenced not only by the *Sitz im Leben* of the Matthaean community, but also by an intricate and interlocking complex of prominent Matthaean motifs of which the βασιλεία is an integral element. These exert a profound influence on the way Matthew interprets his understanding of Jesus' mission to proclaim

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28.   See Anthony J. Saldarini, 'The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict', in David L. Balch (ed.), *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 38–61.

29.   For a discussion of the social, cultural and political situation of Jewish groups living in Palestine and the Diaspora at this period, see Saldarini's *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, particularly chapters I–IV.

30.   Daniel J. Harrington, 'Polemical Parables in Matthew 24–25', *USQR* 44 (1991), pp. 287–98 (291) makes this point when discussing the polemical parables in Matthew 24–25. It is a principle which can be applied to the whole of the Matthaean text.

and teach ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Prominent motifs which exert a profound influence on Matthew's interpretation of the term ἡ βασιλεία include the first evangelist's portrayal of Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Matthaean Jesus' teaching on righteousness, judgment and discipleship, and Matthew's references and allusion to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Proposed Methodological Approach

A careful detailing of the various presuppositions suggests that any method-ology which explores Matthew's particular interpretation of Jesus' teaching on God's βασιλεία must necessarily take into consideration a number of important factors. On the one hand, there is a balanced way of approaching the inter-pretative task which allows both the complex structures of the sub-sections of the text to be analysed, while at the same time respecting the integrity of the narrative as a vehicle of conveying the author's particular theological perspective. On the other, there is the selection of interpretative tools, both historical and literary, which are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Such tools will enable the present writer to explore the complex array of contexts that influence meaning when interpreting this particular Gospel.

The Interpretative Framework
So that the author's theological perspective of the nature of God's βασιλεία can be teased out both in the way the story is told and also through a careful exegesis of the author's use of βασιλεία logia, the text will be divided into a number of self-contained narrative units. The division of the text will be based on the evangelist's own use of a number of rhetorical devices which he consis-tently employs as structural markers to designate clearly defined sub-sections of his text.[31] These markers include prologue and epilogue, *inclusios*,[32] doublets or stories with a similar theme, the grouping of like material and the devel-opment of a leading idea by stressing key words and formulas.[33]

Another important marker, which has been used in the selection of these discrete units, is the author's stylistic and distinctive use of the verb προσέρχομαι to describe people coming to Jesus to ask a question or to test him. Matthew frequently uses the indicative form of this verb to introduce

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31.   Charles H. Lohr, 'Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew', *CBQ* 23 (1961), pp. 403–35 (404), attests to Matthew's use of structural markers both to mark off major or minor sections of his text and to 'bring together the material he had at hand into a unified and artistic whole'.

32.   Lohr, 'Oral Techniques', p. 409, sees the writer's use of *inclusio* as a rhetorical device that marks self-contained passages and also links these passages to the web of the narrative. As such, it forces the attention of the audience back from the conclusion of a passage or segment of the text to its beginning and thus connects the various parts of the passage together.

33.   See Lohr, 'Oral Techniques', pp. 422–35, for a comprehensive discussion of the use of these techniques for marking off sections of the Matthaean text.

direct discourse or dialogue not only with his disciples and the crowds, but also with the Pharisees and others.[34] Such discourse often includes teaching or instruction on some aspect of ἡ βασιλεία. Matthew also uses this verb to note the approach of suppliants, who come to Jesus for healing.[35] The author consistently portrays such healings as essential elements of Jesus' mission to proclaim the good news of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Matthew's use of the verb also underscores that teaching on God's βασιλεία is not always initiated by Jesus,[36] but also by the question of others. This is similarly the case with Jesus' healing. Sometimes a healing is initiated by Jesus' compassion for the sufferer and at other times by the approach and faith-filled request of the sick or suffering person or someone close to them.

These units will be organized on the basis of the sequence of Matthew's Gospel so as to honour the accumulative process by which the reader of a text learns and synthesizes new material. Each of these components will be large enough to permit the broader contextual factors which impact upon meaning to be taken into consideration, but at the same time allow for the connections between the specific βασιλεία logia which occur within its parameters to be explored. A consistent effort will be made throughout the study to show how each of these textual components are linked together to give an ever expanding development of Matthew's understanding of the importance of ἡ βασιλεία as the core element of Jesus' proclamation and teaching.

Having established sequential, but discrete textual components, using these markers, it will then be possible to focus in some detail on how the author uses the term ἡ βασιλεία as well as decipher the meaning he attaches to it within these particular contexts. At the same time, information gleaned from the previous section regarding Matthew's understanding of God's βασιλεία will be able to be utilized to build an ever-expanding understanding of the author's peculiar theological perspective of Jesus' mission to proclaim and teach ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

The Methodology
The particular methodological approach to exploring Matthew's theological perspective concerning ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν comprises a variety of contemporary critical methods. These are drawn from both historical-critical and modern literary-critical approaches to the interpretation of biblical texts. These methods are selected on the basis of the hermeneutical issues raised in the discussion of the writer's presupposition as discussed early in the chapter.

Historical-critical tools will be used to carry out an exegetical study of βασιλεία logia as they occur in the discrete units of the text. Such an approach

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34.   5.1; 9.14; 13.10, 36; 14.15; 15.1, 12; 16.1; 17.19, 24; 18.1, 3, 21; 19.16, 27; 20.20; 21.23; 22.23; 24.1, 3; 26.7.

35.   8.3, 5, 13, 25; 9.18, 20, 28; 15.30; 17.14; 21.14.

36.   See, for example, Matthew's use of the phrase 'and Jesus called to him' (10.1; 15.10; 15.32; 18.2; 20.25), which is frequently used to preface both narrative and discourse sections of the text devoted to explicating the meaning of God's βασιλεία to the disciples and the crowds.

assures that a contemporary interpreter, who necessarily approaches an ancient Christian-Jewish work from her own particular, and therefore limited, historical location and perspective, engages the text as 'other' and respects its differences. The use of historical tools also ensures that the 'world behind the text' is examined for the influences it exerts upon the author's use of the term ἡ βασιλεία and the meaning that he attaches to it in the various contexts in which it is used. However, not all the steps of an historical-critical approach apply equally to all passages, where the term ἡ βασιλεία occurs. Indeed, in some instances, an insight from the literary or socio-historical context may prove the key to unlocking the meaning of a passage. The relative weight assigned to each step will depend on the types of βασιλεία logia used and the context in which they are found.

While an historical-critical approach to the interpretation of a text certainly allows the use and meaning of particular βασιλεία logia to be studied in context, it does not permit a thorough examination of the author's actual theological perspective of ἡ βασιλεία, as it is developed in the narrative as a whole. It is here that modern literary-critical tools will be used throughout the study to discuss Matthew's unique understanding of Jesus' teaching on this topic.

As Sandra Schneiders points out, literary-critical methods are concerned with how a text works both within itself and in relationship to the reader.[37] Thus, literary-critical tools explore both 'what the story is about' and 'how the story is told'. The 'what' of the story examines the basic elements of the narrative such as plot, characters, events, settings and the role of the 'narrator',[38] as he or she guides the reader through the world of the story.[39] It also analyses the various interactions of the characters, their responses to various events narrated in the story, their points of view and the different

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37. *Revelatory Text*, p.117.

38.   The 'narrator' is a literary term for the story-teller of a narrative. It is a rhetorical device which the author uses both to tell the story and to tell it in a certain way. In the Matthaean narrative, the narrator does not appear in the story; he or she speaks in the third person; is not bound by space or time and is, therefore, an invisible presence in every scene. On odd occasions, this narrator turns from the story to give direct asides to the hearer or reader, manifests full omniscience by narrating the thoughts and feelings of many of the characters and recounts the story from an overarching ideological point of view. For example, the Matthaean narrator clearly favours some characters and not others in the telling of the story and uses introductions and other rhetorical devices to guide the readers' perception of and responses to these characters. For a comprehensive discussion on the Matthaean narrator see Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2nd edn, 1989), pp. 31–7.

39.   For the 'narratee' (the literary term for the fictive entity to whom the narrator of a given story tells the story) the world of the story is the only one that exists. This particular world is closed and self-sufficient. Not only does it have its own integrity, but also its own imaginative past and future, its own universe of meaning and its own set of values. See the discussion in David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), p. 4.