THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH AS DWELLING-PLACE OF THE FATHER:

Βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ AS 'HOUSEHOLD OF GOD'

IN THE JOHANNINE FAREWELL DISCOURSE(S)\(^1,2\)

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**ABSTRACT**

Jesus' viewpoints did not always conform to the prevailing ideas of the day. Instead, he had his own ideas regarding the kingdom of God, which were far from the prevailing idea of 'king and subjects'. In this paper it is argued that Jesus introduced a specific relationship between God and the believers, namely that of 'father' and 'children', derived from the analogy of his own relationship with God. Should the above-mentioned statement be true, then it is possible that Jesus constituted the Βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, not in terms of a king and his subjects, but in terms of a patron, the father — and clients, the children. Although the phrase Βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ does not occur in the Johannine farewell discourse(s), implicit references to it indicate that it can be interpreted as 'dwelling-place of the Father', and thus as 'household of God'.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel according to John (hereafter referred to simply as 'John'), the word Βασιλεία only occurs in two contexts, namely John 3:3 and 5, and John 18:36. Compared with the other Gospels, it looks as if the author of John does not have a great concern for the concept 'kingdom of God'. When paging through research done on John, it seems obvious that the author's concern is with anything but the kingdom of God. A quite distinct example is Beasley-Murray's book *Jesus and the kingdom of God* (1986), in which John is not even mentioned.

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\(^2\) Without any elaboration, cognisance is taken of the dispute regarding the question whether John (13)-16/17 displays only one farewell discourse, or whether this passage should be divided into a couple of discourses.
Two publications where this theme is noted in the Passion according to John should however be mentioned, namely Blank (1981) and Meeks (1967).

The term βασιλεία will be discussed only in John 18:36. It is taken that the phrase ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή in this verse refers to the kingdom of God. John 18:36 will be linked up with the context of the preceding five chapters, which comprise the farewell discourse(s), and more specifically with John 14:2 and 14:23, where the term μονή (‘dwelling-place’) is used.

As a help to the reader, the three verses mentioned are given in Greek, followed by a translation:

John 14:2

ἐν τῇ οίκῳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἶσον· εἰ δὲ μὴ, εἶπον ἃν ὑμῖν ὅτι πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν;

In my Father’s house there are many rooms; should this be untrue, would I then tell you that I am going to prepare a place for you?

John 14:23

ἀπεκρίθη Ἡ σοφὸς καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῷ Ἔὰν τις ἀγαπᾷ με, τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτὸν καὶ πρῶς αὐτὸν ἔλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ’ αὐτῷ ποιήσωμεθα.

Then Jesus answered him [Judas]: ‘If somebody loves me, he will take care of my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and build a house with him.’

John 18:36

ἀπεκρίθη Ἡ σοφὸς, Ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή οὐκ ἐστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τοῦτον· εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τοῦτον ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή, οὐ θυμῆσαι οἱ ἐμοὶ ἡγώνιζοντο [ἀν] ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις· νῦν δὲ ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἐστιν ἐντεῦθεν.

Then Jesus answered: ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my subjects would recognise me and would not hand me over to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here.’

It is proposed that the term βασιλεία in John 18:36 can serve as a possible background, or even as focal point for μονή in John 14:2 and 14:23. The word μονή in these verses seems to refer to a household situation (‘household’ or ‘family’ according to Gundry 1967:70, 71).

Furthermore, the socio-historical connotation of the word μονή in this con-
text will be linked to John 18:36, in order to define the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and also that between the Father/Son and their followers.

From John 14:2 and 14:23 one might conclude that the ‘dwelling-place’ of God is either in heaven (Jn 14:2), or on earth (Jn 14:23). At first glance, there appears to be a discrepancy between these two utterances by Jesus: On the one hand (Jn 14:2), Jesus promises his disciples that he will prepare rooms for them at the Father’s ‘dwelling-place’ (presumably in heaven), and then he will come to fetch them; on the other hand (Jn 14:23) he promises that he and the Father will come and make a dwelling-place with the believer (presumably on earth). This might immediately provoke a question regarding the credibility of both utterances. Which is correct? Or can one find a correlation between the two? Furthermore, there is Jesus’ pronouncement in John 18:36 that his ‘kingdom’ is not of this world. What does he mean by this? It appears to be one of two things: He either means that his kingdom is not located on earth, and is thus in heaven (correlating with Jn 14:2), or He indicates that his kingdom cannot be compared to the kingdoms on earth, thus meaning that his kingdom is designated in another manner. Should the latter meaning be applicable, then his pronouncement would correlate with John 14:23, because this would imply that his kingdom is ‘here’, on earth, but is different from the other kingdoms on earth, or differs from his disciples’ concept of a kingdom on earth (cf Newman & Nida 1980:570 for various translations). For my thesis it is therefore important to explicate the locale these three verses refer to.

In this paper the proposal is made that John 14:2 and 14:23, read together with John 18:36, focus upon a unique relationship between a father/king and his children/followers/subjects. This unique relationship has been overlooked by the scholars mentioned in the works cited. According to my research, there is only one scholar who in a certain sense worked in the direction of a unique relationship between God, who can be pictured as the father, and his followers/subjects, who are portrayed as his children. This is S Aalen, who as early as 1962 wrote an article, titled “Reign” and “house” in the kingdom of God in the Gospels’. Although he discusses the term βασιλεία within the context of the four Gospels, he provides a considerable amount of information from which we can draw conclusions concerning the mentioned passages in John. Unfortunately he does not work out the consequences of his assumptions. The intention of this paper is to further his arguments and apply them to the three verses in John.

The Semantic Lexicon of Louw & Nida (1988) is also investigated, with reference to the term βασιλεία in the New Testament. In their discussion of this term, they only give two possible meanings for βασιλεία in the New Testament. A third possible meaning for this word will be proposed, namely ‘household’, in the sense of ‘dwelling-place’. The question can immediately be asked whether
'household', if an addition to the above-mentioned two possible meanings, is only a reference, or whether it gained a figurative meaning during the first century. Are Louw and Nida correct in giving only two lexicographical meanings for βασιλεία, or should a third possibility be added on the grounds of social-scientific considerations? This question is also asked on the grounds of the assumption that not every case where a particular meaning is applicable is recorded in the Semantic Lexicon (cf Vorster 1991:36).

In their lexicon, Louw & Nida allot two possible meanings to βασιλεία, complemented by three 'units':

βασιλεία:
a reign
b kingdom

βασιλεία: units
1 λαμβάνω βασιλείαν
become a king
2 διατίθεμαι βασιλείαν
give right to rule
3 ιδιό τῆς βασιλείας
people of God

The a-meaning belongs to the domain control, rule, subdomain rule, govern. In this instance the meaning refers to a king. The b-meaning, although it looks as if it also belongs to the domain rule, govern, is found under the domain geographical objects and features, subdomain governmental administrative areas, thus referring to an 'area or district ruled by a king' (Louw & Nida, vol 1, 1988:16). Neither of these two possible meanings thus refers to a household or dwelling-place in the way this paper proposes.

As regards the units, the first two belong to the same domain as the first possible meaning: The first unit even belongs to the same subdomain, while the second unit belongs to the subdomain assign to a rule or function. The third unit, however, catches the eye. This unit belongs to the domain groups and classes of persons and members of such groups and classes, subdomain socio-religious. Up to this point it looks very promising for my thesis, and one would expect the authors to elaborate on this by saying that βασιλεία in this 'idiom' (more probably a metaphor) refers to a specific place; instead, the following statement is made (Louw & Nida, vol 1, 1988:123): 'In this context, as well as in most others, the Greek term traditionally rendered 'kingdom' (in speaking of 'the kingdom of God') points essentially to the rule of God rather than to any place or time' (my emphasis).
Two other lexica (Liddell & Scott 1983, and Arndt & Gingrich 1975) are also discussed to show that they treat the term \( \text{βασιλεία} \) in the same manner as Louw & Nida, though not so nuanced. Liddell & Scott (1983:308) give the following 'meanings':

I)  
1) kingdom, dominion; hereditary monarchy;
2) kingly office;
3) the office of the archon;
4) Pass being ruled by a king;

II) diadem;

III) reign; accession to the throne;
IV) concrete, his Majesty.

All the different possible translations Liddell & Scott present here as different 'meanings' can be reduced to the two possibilities in terms of 'semantic universals', given by Louw & Nida, namely 'kingdom' (personal/spatial, referring to the object that is ruled) and 'reign' (actual, referring to the act of ruling). No reference is yet made to a household.

Arndt & Gingrich's lexicon (1975), which was first published in 1957, proposes the following 'meanings' for \( \text{βασιλεία} \):

1) kingship, royal power, royal rule, kingdom;
2) kingdom, i.e. the territory ruled over by a king;
   esp. the royal reign or kingdom of God, a chiefly eschatological concept, beginning to appear in the prophets, elaborated in apocalyptic passages and taught by Jesus.

The above-mentioned lexica suffice to make the point that \( \text{βασιλεία} \) is a term used almost solely for kings (including their royal rule and territory). This standpoint is confirmed and elaborated on by the theological dictionaries and commentaries which will be discussed later.

2. METHOD AND MODEL

The method that I intend to use is a social-scientific analysis of the text. In this approach 'the tools and techniques of modern sociological study are used, not merely to describe but also to probe the inner dynamics of the early Christian movement, regarded not as a unique event but as an example of patterns of behaviour which may be widely observed and objectively studied' (Best
One can elaborate on this by reserving the description ‘social-scientific’ for the approach that encompasses an analysis of Christianity as a social world, as the creation of a world of meaning which provides a plausibility structure for those who choose to inhabit it (cf Smith 1975:19-20).

This approach serves as complement to ‘the conventional historical-critical analysis of the Bible and its environment with an orientation and method whose questions and objectives, modes of analysis and processes of explanation are guided and informed by the theory, methods, and research of the social sciences’ (Elliott [1992]). It comprises the study of human societies, social systems, social behaviour and social processes. It studies social groups, social institutions, patterns of social interaction, and social phenomena in general.

The specific theory that will be implemented as model is the sociology of knowledge. In this model the view is held that there is an unbreakable link between thought and the way in which the people in a specific historical situation and locality delineate it (Van Staden 1990:59). This is the reason why the sociology of knowledge aims to establish the existential determination of thought.

Though social reality is created by man, man, in turn, is shaped by that reality (Berger 1973:13-14). This implies that society is a product of man, while man is a product of society (Berger & Luckmann 1967:13,15; cf also Van Staden 1988:342). The implication of these statements for Biblical exegesis is vast: It keeps reminding the researcher that ‘time is a capturing device’ (Van Staden & Van Aarde 1991:78), in which a specific historically ‘encapsulated’ society exists and produces literature familiar to that specific era. One can also add that the specific place/locale in a specific era adds to the ‘uniqueness’ of the literature produced (cf Elliott 1991:89). Furthermore, the researcher, in his own historical society, locale and time, is reminded that places, people and eras differ (though there are some common traits between man and society), without a one-on-one relationship between them.

There is also a kind of relationship between a text and the society from which it evolves. Therefore, a text should first be read in terms of the narrative world (the world constructed by the narrative), and not in terms of the real or historical world (cf Petersen 1978:38-40; Van Staden 1990:34). The close analogy between the narrative world and the real world cannot be denied, but one must keep in mind that the real world is a result of the social formation processes, while the narrative world is a conceptualised world with its origin in the mind of the author. Even so, the literary text is a primary source for the time in which it is written, although it is only a secondary source for the events referred to in it.

Social arrangements thus have to do with well-known social institutions that the people (‘actors’) deal with every day, and which they represent. At least four basic social institutions can be distinguished within any specific era in any specific social universe, namely economics, politics, family/kinship and religion.
This implies that society is an institutional order (Van Aarde 1991b:10). These elements, put together, form the fabric of what is called the social universe/institutional order, which is obviously segmented by virtue of its institutionality (cf Van Staden 1990:61). The individual institutional processes are integrated into a ‘comprehensive meaningful system’ called the symbolic universe, which in its turn shapes and legitimates social institutions. The social universe comprises people alone, while God the Father, as well as the son of God, are only present as ‘objects of knowledge’, and are rather to be found in the symbolic universe.

It is obvious that nothing concrete can be said about the things that we cannot see. This is the reason why a symbolic universe is created in which we put all the ‘invisible’ matter, including God. It is, however, impossible for man to silence himself/herself concerning that which cannot be seen. The only solution for her/him is to refer to persons/things belonging to the symbolic universe in well-known terms or symbols. These terms are influenced by the dominant social institution of the day. This is especially applicable to God. Man feels that he/she must say something about God in order to understand him better. The only way she/he can do so, is to refer to God by means of metaphorical language (Van Aarde 1991a:6).

As far as the social institutions are concerned, they will always have a hierarchy. One of them will thus be the dominant, the ‘umbrella structure, with the other structures integrated in a subservient manner’ (Van Aarde 1991a:8). Looking at the world of today, it seems obvious that, at least in particular parts of the world, economics is the dominant structure, with politics not far behind. When one, however, investigates the hierarchy of social institutions in ancient times, and more specifically in the first-century Mediterranean world, everything seemingly points to family and kinship, in other words, the household, as the dominant factor, with religion not far behind (Van Aarde 1991a:8; 1988:838-839; cf Hollenbach 1987:58). Economy, politics and religion are thus all embedded in an institutional order which is primarily determined through family/kinship (more specifically birth and nationality; cf Van Aarde 1991a:8).

In a community, whatever its size, the time in which it exists, or the locale, the behaviour of its people and the literature which originates from it, can be seen through the spectacles of the dominant social institution existing in the world at that time or, more specifically, in that area. It is common knowledge that no aspect of reality can be separated from social realities. From the sociology of

4 Not totally in line with this standpoint, Malina (1986a:85) holds the opinion that ‘at the concrete level’ only two social institutions could be distinguished in the first-century world of the New Testament, namely kinship or family and politics or government. Religion, economics (and even education) did not exist separately, but were embedded in the two mentioned institutions.
knowledge we learn that the reality of man, including her/his use of language (parole), is a facet of social realities. These social realities are constituted for man in terms of the symbolic universe, which is dialectically influenced by the social universe.

Though it may appear to some groups of scholars that politics/economics was the dominant social institution in the ancient days, we have ample grounds to state the contrary. With our view that the family/household was the dominant social institution of the first century, we can turn to the above-mentioned texts in John.

3 BACKGROUND TO THE TERM βασιλεία

The views of two general theological dictionaries, namely the Interpreter’s dictionary of the Bible (IDB) and the Theological dictionary of the New Testament (ThWNT) are presented alongside Aalen’s viewpoints.

According to the Interpreter’s dictionary (Evans, in IDB 1962:17), the basic meaning of η βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐρανῶν, is that of the kingly rule or sovereignty of God, rather than the sphere or realm in which his rule operates. Three different aspects are pointed out to indicate the Bible’s use with regard to the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ: 1) as an eternal fact, 2) as manifested upon earth in its acceptance by men, and 3) as a consummation to be hoped for in the future (eschatological). The Theological dictionary (Schmidt, in ThWNT 1969:582) goes along with this assumption, but mentions that, although at first βασιλεία only referred to the being, nature and state of the king, a second meaning soon appeared: ‘The dignity of the king is expressed in the territory ruled by him, i.e., his “kingdom”’ (Schmidt 1969: 579). Both these meanings are found in the New Testament.

Although most scholars take the term βασιλεία, together with its Hebrew counterpart מלך, to imply that God is the king of the world, with the implication that his subjects are only slaves who do as they are told, Aalen (1962:216) is against this assumption. He feels that ‘kingdom’ should rather be translated by ‘the territory ruled by God, or better, the community of God, God’s people’.

It is of great interest to take note that in the Old Testament only one occurrence of the phrase המלך, (the Hebrew form for η βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) is presented, namely in 1 Chronicles 28:5, while the term מלך frequently occurs in relation to God, also in forms such as המלך and ממלכת and in the Aramaic form ממלכת. The primary meaning ascribed to the word, when applied to God in the Old Testament, is ‘kingship’, ‘sovereignty’, or ‘kingly rule’. In the postexilic period the people had problems in reconciling the conviction that God rules the whole world, with the real-life fact still in existence. Their only solution was to develop eschatology, in which the rule of God became a hope for the future. The first reports of eschatology can be found in the prophetic literature (Am 5:18-20;
Zph 1:14-18, etc).

Though the idea of God’s reign was predominant in Judaism (in the Old Testament לְהַרְשֵׁי is used in juxtaposition with יָרָד or the corresponding verb), it is seldom used. Generally God is directly described as a king. In later parts of the Old Testament as well as in Judaism, especially the Jewish Liturgy, the expression ‘kingdom of Jahweh’ does occur, and it corresponds to the phrase ‘God’s kingship’. In pre-Christian Judaism one can, however, detect a certain development (cf the Nathan prophecy in 1 Chr 17), that had a significant influence on certain New Testament passages (cf Aalen 1962:216).

Contrary to the Old Testament Judaism, Jesus and the New Testament very seldom refer to God as a king. Only a few occurrences are reported in parables, with the only reason being that they are ‘indispensable to the meaning of the parable concerned’ (cf Aalen 1962:217). Jesus rather puts the above-mentioned epithets aside, and replaces this concept with another one: God as a/the Father. As a result of this replacement, it looks as if the idea of God as a king is not very noticeable, or has receded to the background in the expression ‘kingdom of God’. Aalen verifies this supposition by pointing out that the Gospels never relate the words βασιλεύς or βασιλεύω to the kingdom of God, or βασιλεία to God’s throne. Furthermore, the Gospels do not mention that God’s kingdom will be established, or that it is already established. The only reference we have is that the kingdom is coming, or that it will come, or that it has already come.

However, the phrase η βασιλεία του θεού των ουρανών frequently occurs in the Synoptics, especially in Matthew. Jesus uses the phrase ‘kingdom of God’ so frequently that it can be regarded as the theme of his public preaching in Galilee (cf Schmidt 1969:583). The metaphor ‘to enter (into) the kingdom’ so often occurs in the sayings of Jesus, ‘that it seems to belong to the most central parts of his material of expression’ (cf Aalen 1962:220).

According to Evans (1962:18), the primary meaning of this word, like that of its Hebrew and Aramaic counterparts, is ‘kingship’ or ‘rule’, though also with an extended use to include the meaning of ‘realm’ or ‘territory governed by a king’. Aalen also suggests that the kingdom of God seems to have a strong

5 Just because the same verb ‘enter’ is also used in phrases such as ‘enter eternal life’, ‘enter into the joy of your master’ ‘enter the narrow gate’ and ‘enter the narrow door’, Aalen assumes that the kingdom of God is conceived of as a territory or area. Though his assumption is acceptable, his method to arrive at this assumption is invalid on a semantic level, because he falls into the trap of a fallacy called illegitimate totality transfer (cf Louw 1982:41). Notwithstanding this fallacy, Aalen’s assumption that the kingdom of God is a territory or an area, and that it should be understood in its ‘concrete’ sense, needs further investigation.

6 The dictionary neglects to point out that, although the idea of eschatology prevailed very strong during the New Testament times, John displays another kind of eschatology, namely a realised eschatology (cf Smith 1988:87; Dodd 1980:395; Schnackenburg, vol 2 1982:426-437 for a distinguished discussion on this matter).
affinity for the local sphere, because it is often described by means of local categories (e.g., in Mk 14:25 Jesus reportedly refers to persons or things as being 'in' the kingdom).

During Jesus' time on earth, as has already been mentioned, three interpretations of this phrase can be traced, namely 1) the idea of God as eternal king (especially the influence of the prophets), 2) a sort of a realised eschatology where the kingdom of God was present wherever a person acknowledged it by obedient submission to God's will (the view of the rabbis; cf. Evans 1962:20), and 3) the idea of the kingdom of God as the object of eschatological hope (with its roots in the postexilic period). Although Jesus used each of these ideas, the eschatological one, to Evans' mind, predominates. He elaborates on this statement by saying that Jesus' eschatological teaching can be divided into two sub-categories, firstly, that which envisages the kingdom of God as about to come into being in the near future, and secondly, that which clearly implies that the kingdom of God, in the eschatological sense, has already come in the person and ministry of Jesus himself.

Firstly Evans (1962:22) indicates that, in the Gospels, the imminence of the kingdom of God is proclaimed several times, with the best example in Mark 9:1: 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.' In the light of Mark 13:26, he concludes that the phrase 'with power' could point to the parousia of Jesus. On the other hand, he indicates that he has found passages which point to the kingdom of God, as if it had already come. A part of the Beelzebul controversy (Mt 12:29; Mk 3:27; Lk 11:21-22) serves as an example: 'How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder the house.' He takes 'strong man' as a reference to satan, and concludes that these exorcisms indicate that the eschaton is already operating. Matthew 11:12-13, as well as Luke 16:16 are, according to Evans, a clear indication that the Law and the Prophets operated only until John the Baptist; after which the kingdom of God arrived. The ministry of the Baptist thus forms the dividing line between the Law and the Prophets on the one hand, and the kingdom of God on the other. Luke 17:20-21 also serves as an example of the viewpoint that the kingdom of God is in the midst of the people, in the person of Jesus and his ministry.

Evans then asks whether Jesus had the imminence or the presence of the kingdom in mind. Then he answers: 'The evidence suggests rather that he held both ideas in his mind, sometimes emphasising the one and at other times the other' (Evans 1962:23). He indicates that the relationship between the two ideas becomes clear when one understands that in the person and ministry of Jesus the kingdom was already present in principle (i.e., the messianic age), but that it had not already reached its fulfilment 'with power' (Mk 9:1). What becomes clear is
that Jesus' eschatological views differed (it was 'a radical departure' according to Evans 1962:23) from the Jewish apocalypses, in that they saw it as one cataclysmic, world-ending manifestation, while Jesus conceived of it as a sort of a 'new era'. This 'new era' would be marked throughout as a divine era, for there would be a constant operation of the divine power. The 'age to come' thus invaded the 'present age', with the implication that the kingdom of God had been inaugurated in an eschatological sense.

Contrary to the Jewish thought that the kingdom/reign is to be 'revealed', or that it 'appears', Jesus therefore says that it 'comes'. In this case the Jewish usage is found in New Testament passages such as Luke 19:11, where the people assume that the kingdom/reign of God will appear at any moment. This appearance equates the epiphany of God and his glory (cf Jub 1:28). Jesus, however, did not adopt this thought (see Mt 20:25-28), because He wished to be 'a Messiah in humility and suffering - in any case for the present' (Aalen 1962:222).

Regarding the 'coming' of the kingdom, the 'usual task of the word is to indicate that something is happening on the scene of men's lives or of history, in a way that implies that it encounters men and intervenes in their lives and destiny' (Aalen 1962:224). Here nothing is mentioned of revelation or theophany; that is why Jesus applied the expression to himself in Matthew 5:17, as well as to the new world, which would be the fulfilment of all that exists in 'this world', hence the technical term 'world/age to come' in Matthew 12:32 and Mark 10:30.

Within this framework of meanings, only one can be linked to βασιλεία, namely the last one, since the 'dominant idea is rather that the kingdom is sent into the scene of history, or into the world as the scene of mankind' (Aalen 1962:226). This kingdom is the highest good of salvation (see the great feast/supper, mentioned in Mt 8:11; 22:1; etc), which is closely connected with the idea of both a room and a door, thus having an affinity with the local sphere. The metaphors 'room' and 'door' indicate that one enters the kingdom, while 'meal' stresses the idea of community. This leads to the assumption that the kingdom of God is a house, thus a confined area, a community. Two passages are referred to in order to clarify the point, namely Matthew 12:25-30 and 11:12.

Matthew 12:25-30 (once again the Beelzebul passage) and especially verse 25, supports the concept of βασιλεία as a house: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand; and if satan casts out satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?' If there were a king in this kingdom of God, then, according to Aalen, it would be Jesus, and then the translation 'reign of God' would no longer be adequate. Even satan is not called the king of his βασιλεία (of evil ones), but rather the ἀρχων ('prince' instead of 'king'). This is because the βασιλεία in this context refers to a community, an area, parallel to a house. In verse 28 ἐστι refers to an inevitable reality, namely that the kingdom of God is here. Therefore Aalen
(1962:231) considers the presence of the kingdom a fact. He also assumes that there are two kingdoms opposed to each other, that is ‘two communities or areas, houses, the one full of destruction, the other full of healing, salvation and blessing’.

The second passage is Matthew 11:12: ‘From the time John preached his message until this very day the kingdom of heaven has suffered violent attacks, and violent men try to seize it.’ In this passage Aalen also argues that the kingdom denotes a confined area, a house. He does not really elaborate on this point, which makes his assumption weak.

Concerning the Nathan prophecy and the influence it had on the New Testament, Aalen (1962:240) states: ‘...the Nathan prophecy...forms the starting-point for a trend of tradition in Judaism which no longer understood “house” in the sense of a royal family with its descendants, but as the people of God, the true religious community.’ Reading John 8:35 (‘The slave does not remain in the house forever; the Son remains forever’) with this in mind, Aalen feels that the allusion to the prophecy ‘is clear’: The son in John 8 refers back to the son in 1 Chronicles 17 who will be maintained in God’s house.

Should the kingdom of God be a present reality, then there must be a realm or community where it is manifested. A community is implied by the sayings picturing the kingdom of God in terms of a messianic banquet, for example Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18 (the Last Supper), Luke 22:16 (the Passover meal), Luke 22:29-30, Matthew 8:11, etc. Those who are obedient to God’s will (Mt 7:21), the righteous people (Mt 5:20; see also 5:21-48), those who are willing to sacrifice everything (Mk 9:47; 10:23-25), and those who are willing to receive the kingdom with childlike trust (Mk 10:15) may enter the kingdom and be part of the community (Evans 1962:23-24). In this community humbleness is the greatest treasure (Mt 11:11; Lk 7:28).

4 THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH AS DWELLING-PLACE OF THE FATHER

4.1 Macroscopic social relations
Under this heading, the three verses in John have reference, and are discussed with the emphasis on commentaries. As regards John 14:2, Brown (1982:618-619) makes two postulates: Firstly he assumes that μονή refers to a halting place, thus representing the Aramaic word {Name}, a word that can refer to a night-stop or resting place for a traveller on a journey (see also Pausanias 10.31.7). The Latin

7 The two technical terms ‘macroscopic’ and ‘microscopic’ (heading 4.2) require explanation. ‘Macroscopic’ refers to the general social arrangements which are to be found in the social world outside a specific text, though in the same era etc as the text. ‘Microscopic’ refers to the social relations as these appear from inside a specific text.
translators also render μονή as mansio (a halting place). This interpretation can be related to the gnostic view that the soul in its ascent passes through stages (of progression; see Barrett 1978:456) in which it is gradually purified of all material matter. The second option, which is also chosen by Brown, relates μονή to the verb μένω, which John frequently uses to refer to staying, remaining, or abiding with Jesus and the Father (see also Newman & Nida 1980:454). It could be that Jesus is referring to places or situations where his disciples can dwell in peace by remaining with the Father (see also Jn 14:23). This would mean that it is a permanent, not a temporary, abode (Barrett 1978:456). Barrett confirms this view by referring to the Septuagint’s use of μονή in 1 Maccabees 7:38, and also by stating that the Jews believed in compartments (or dwelling-places) in heaven, as is clear from their apocalyptic texts. Schnackenburg (vol 3, 1982:60-62) mentions that these texts are ‘the closest parallels’ (e.g. 1 Enoch 39:4-7 and 41:2 where there are references to the dwellings of the just angels or elect in heaven; see also 2 Enoch 61:2). Philo also regards heaven as a paternal house or city of the soul (see De Somniis 1:256 and De Confusione linguarum 78). The Mandaeans refer to the heavenly dwellings as well. From Mandaean Liturgies 139:9-11 it is clear that the gnostic redeemer takes the souls to his heavenly dwelling. These heavenly dwellings were symbolised in Mandaean cult by earthly cultic huts or tabernacles. However, according to Schnackenburg, there is no direct relationship between these cults and John 14:2. He assumes that both have a common background, possibly of Iranian origin (Schnackenburg, vol 3, 1982: 61). Barrett adds that John does not have compartments or dwelling-places in mind, but rather the action, or state, of μένω. It thus does not refer to ‘heaven’ as such, but to communion with God as a permanent and universal possibility (Barrett 1978: 457).

In contrast to Barrett, Bultmann (1971:598-600) proposes that John 14:1-4 stems from the source of the ‘revelation discourses’, where Jesus speaks in the language of the myth. The exhortation in John 14:2 is thus in its entirety delivered in mythological language, paralleled by the Mandaean literature (see Ginza 260:33-37; 270:4-10 etc): Jesus is going to the Father’s house where he will prepare places for his disciples amongst the many dwellings there. The eschatology underlying this promise is, according to Bultmann, not Jewish-Christian, but rather gnostic, where the individual soul after death ascends into the world of light. It is also not the parousia of the Jewish-Christian eschatology.

Schnackenburg feels that one cannot make the assumption in John 14:2 that the preparation of a place for Jesus’ disciples coincides with the return of the souls to the heavenly house of the Father. Rather, this statement refers to the Father’s sphere of power and love, which embraces heaven and earth, and can therefore be completely reversed, with the result that Jesus and the Father will come to the disciples and ‘make their dwelling’ with them (see Jn 14:23). The disciples thus reach their goal (community with Jesus and with God) through
faith and the life that is given by faith. Barrett argues that this community place may be the temple, because the phrase  ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου may be a reference to the temple (Lk 2:49; Jn 2:16; 8:35).

With reference to John 14:23, Schnackenburg (vol 3, 1982:81) feels that the verb used in the plural is sufficient to warrant a conclusion that John does not have the resurrection appearances or the second coming of Jesus in mind. He says the following: 'The statement in v2 about the “many dwellings in the Father’s house” is now fulfilled, but with a paradoxical change of emphasis: Jesus and the Father will “make their home” with that disciple' (i.e. the disciple that loves him and keeps his word — my elaboration). As a result of this statement, Schnackenburg feels that John 14:23 is ‘to some extent’ an elaboration on the image of ‘dwelling’ in John 14:2. The reference to the Father and the son, making their home with someone on earth, was not unknown to the ‘first’ audience/readers of this passage, for this concept had already occurred in the Old Testament (e.g. Ex 25:8; 29:45; Lev 26:11). Josephus also used this expression in his Antiquitates Iudaicae 13:41.

Barrett (1978:466) proposes that John 1:14 already has the ‘basic solution’ for this verse, and he elaborates on this point as follows: ‘Intimate mystical union with God was the goal of many religions in antiquity, not least the mystery cults and gnostic theosopohies. The climax of the Hermetic religion is that elect souls διάμετρος ἐν θεῷ γίνονται (CH 1:26); they are so closely united with God as to be deified (θεωθηνοὶ).’ Even so, John differs from his contemporaries on two issues, namely the historic framework in which he places Christianity, and the fact that he insists upon moral obedience and love as a prerequisite and accompaniment of the indwelling of God. This concept of inward and spiritual community with Jesus and God, however, does not take away physical death, but holds the promise of an eschatological entering into the heavenly world, into which Jesus has already preceded his disciples. Judas’ question was asked on the basis of his longing for the direct present actuality of Jesus. Jesus’ promise was that he and the Father would abide with the believer.

Concerning John 18:36, Brown (1982:852) feels that (in the light of John 17:11 and 16) ‘kingdom’ refers to an earthly dwelling, a dwelling that is in the world, but not of it. This conclusion is drawn from John 14:2-3 and 17:24, where the ultimate goal of the disciples is to be withdrawn from the world. Brown states that ὑπηρέτης (‘subject’) is also used by John for temple police, though Barrett states that the word had already been taken over in Christian usage (see Lk 1:2; Ac 13:5; 26:16; 1 Cor 4:1). However, he mentions that, if Jesus’ kingdom were of this world, it would be imperative for him to have subjects, otherwise it would not be a real kingdom. A very useful statement made by Brown (1982:853) is, ‘If the word “subject” is applicable within Jesus’ kingdom, it has undergone as much reinterpretation as the notion of kingdom itself’. Unfor-
tunately he does not elaborate on it to show how, according to him, the ‘notion of kingdom’ has undergone reinterpretation.

In contrast to Brown’s view, Schnackenburg feels that Jesus’ βασιλεία does not signify his kingdom, but is rather a designation of function (‘kingship’). He even contrasts it with God’s βασιλεία (see Jn 3:3, 5). He argues that Jesus’ βασιλεία has an unworldly nature, but that it is not shut off from the world: ‘...rather it manifests itself just there in the world wherever his voice is heard’ (Schnackenburg, vol 3, 1982:249). In the Synoptics the kingdom of God is not of this age, but of the age to come; one could say that the kingdom is present, for in Jesus’ ministry the age to come has broken into the present age. John took over the Synoptic idea with his reference to the kingdom that is not εξ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. According to Barrett (1978:536), this metaphor is spatial rather than temporal, as indicated by the word at the end of the verse, namely είσπροθεν.

Barrett makes a global assumption that the term ‘kingdom’ in John seems to be equated with ‘(eternal) life’ (see also Mk 9:43-47). As an example John 3:3, 5 is quoted, where entering into the kingdom implies a regeneration, and is thus dependent upon the experience of a regeneration. According to John, life is a present possession of the believers in God (Jn 5:24), which leads one to the conclusion that the kingdom of God is also in the present and not in the future. In John, the word ‘king’ is used frequently with reference to Jesus (e.g 1:49; 6:15; 12:13, 15; 18:33, 37, 39; 19:3, 12, 14-15, 19, 21). In John 18:36 Jesus refers to his kingship/kingdom, which is ‘not of this world’. Evans (1962:25) interprets this utterance as follows: ‘This usage implies the idea of a spiritual sovereignty which Jesus is already exercising as Messiah.’

A ‘global look’ at the lexica and commentaries shows the same trend of thought, namely that βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is more related to a kingdom than a household.

Opposed to this view, Aalen detects an identification of the two concepts ‘house’ and ‘kingdom of God’ in John 14:2-6 and 14:23. He explains it as a paraphrase of the Nathan prophecy. The Targum on 1 Chronicles 17:9 is helpful in this respect: ‘And I will make (or appoint) for my people a prepared place, and they shall dwell in their places, and they shall not tremble any more’ (cf Aalen 1962:238). The similarity between the emphasised phrases and the first verses in John 14 is obvious. Aalen adds that these verses in John 14, as well as the Nathan prophecy (and even Luke 22:28-30) expose the same tradition, with the common theme of the eschatological consummation and salvation for God’s people after their sufferings. When one investigates the texts, one finds that John 14 speaks of the house of God, and Nathan uses God’s house and his kingdom as synonyms. This leads Aalen (1962: 238) to conclude (rightfully) ‘that the “house of the Father” in John xiv 2...is simply another expression for the kingdom of God.’

A further proof of this trend within Judaism is 1 Enoch 41:1-2, where the
‘dwellings of the holy ones’ and the ‘kingdom’ are used as synonyms: ‘Then I saw all the secrets of the heavens, how the kingdom was distributed, and how the deeds of men were weighed in the balance. I saw the dwellings of the elected ones and the dwellings of the holy ones.’ Aalen emphasises that, to his mind, this is the only Jewish text besides 1 Chronicles 17:14 (Targum), where נֹאֵכְלֶנְב clearly has the same content as the Gospels.

Another important point should be made: The Targum refers to the places of rest as being prepared for the people of God; similarly, in John 14, Jesus prepares the eternal dwellings of his disciples in the house of God. In this passage ‘house’ is not the abode of God, but rather an area or place built by God, or after his will.

The next conclusion that can be derived from this proposition is that, should the household be constituted amongst the followers, then it would imply that the household would be on earth. Jesus’ kingdom would thus be a household formed by Him and his followers.

4.2 John 14:2, 14:23 and 18:36, from a microscopic perspective
All the above information serves as background to these passages in John. However, a close look at John 13-21 is needed in order to identify the three verses within their contexts. The entire ‘second part of the book of John’ (traditionally called the ‘book of glory’) appears to comprise Jesus’ farewell to his people. It may even be assumed that the farewell already starts in John 12:23 where Jesus states: ‘The hour has arrived for the son of man to be glorified.’

After the meal (Jn 13:1-30) Jesus bids farewell to his disciples in a lengthy discourse (Jn 13:31-17:26). This part of John 13-21 can be called the farewell proper. John 18:1-19:42 narrates how Jesus is separated from them, and is then crucified and buried. In this passage the farewell is taken up in the different events that take place, away from the disciples. John 20 marks a new stage in the narrative, where the risen Jesus appears to his various followers, especially his disciples. In John 20:1-21:22 his last words are recorded, with a short epilogue by the ‘author’ in John 21:23-25.

It is therefore important to note that the three sayings of Jesus under discussion are to be found within the same macro-context, and also within two consecutive ‘stages’ in the narrative. Without falling into the trap of illegitimate totality transfer (cf note 5) one should determine the relationship between the three sayings.

As has already been said, ΚΟΣΜΟΣ refers to a household situation where the Father, Jesus and the believers will live together. The first problem to be clarified is the locale of this household. Where will the Father and Jesus be living with the believers, in heaven or on earth? This dualism originates from the influence of Gnosticism on John (cf Bultmann 1971:598-600), with literature such as the Ode of Solomon and the Mandaean literature (cf Kümmel 1967:159). This, combined
with the assumption that John displays a *realised eschatology* (cf note 6), leads to the conclusion that Jesus’ words in John 14:2 and 14:3 can be interpreted as follows: His ‘going away’ (departure) refers to his being crucified, and his ‘coming back’ (return) is a reference to his rising from the dead. The preparation of the rooms for his followers is completed, and Jesus will now take his followers to where he and the Father are, implying that his followers will henceforth live in the presence of God. Should this solution be accepted, then Jesus’ *departure* in John 14:2 and 14:23 does not point to an ascension, but rather to his arrest, conviction, crucifixion, and (especially) death. His resurrection thus marks his *return* to the disciples.

Aalen elaborates quite considerably on John 14:2-6 but, interestingly enough, without reference to μονή in 14:23. He also finds an identification of the two concepts ‘house’ and ‘kingdom of God’, without any reference to Βασιλεία in John 18:36.

Now we turn to John 18:36. First of all it is striking that Jesus refers to God as his/the Father (Jn 14:2, 6, 7 etc). This implies that he is the son (Jn 14:13; 17:1). By referring to his relationship with God as son to father (especially in Jn 17:1), Jesus gives an indication of his perception of the kingdom of God (cf Van Aarde 1988: 832). The concept of kingdom implies that somebody (a ‘king’) rules over other people, his servants/subjects. This relationship between ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ is conceived by Jesus in terms of the obedience a child has for his/her father.

The father-son concept referring to a kingdom, was not unusual in ancient times, because a kingdom consisted of an aristocratic family or household (especially from a Roman or Roman-Hellenistic perspective; cf Elliott 1987:39, 41). It therefore seems possible that ‘kingdom’, as a social reality, could refer to a household. Since the dominant social institution was that of the household, one can postulate that the kingdom of Jesus and the Father would also be understood in this manner, especially when one keeps the words and concepts of Jesus in mind.

It appears that Jesus did not have a ‘far away place’ in mind, but rather a household *amongst* his followers, ‘on earth’. Jesus would take them out of the realm of this world and designate a new realm for them, that of God. Though this realm is still in this world, it is not of this world any more (see Jn 18:36). This implies that the followers are not of this world any longer (cf Jn 17:16, 24)! This household situation further implies that God is the Father, and his followers are the children.

With this in mind, the term ‘kingdom’ in John 18:36 may well be taken as the *background*, or even the *focal point* for μονή in John 14:2 and 14:23, and understood as ‘household’. Should this be the case, then it suggests that the household God wants to establish on earth for his followers is also his kingdom. In this
manner God’s kingdom is read into the Johannine farewell discourse(s).

The next step is to determine the relationship between the father and his subordinates. The patron-client relationship as ‘understood and practised in the Mediterranean’ (Malina 1988:2) should therefore be investigated briefly. During the time of Jesus, the people of Palestine formed a traditional peasant society, which could be distinguished from the extremely wealthy landowners. The landowners ‘looked after’ the landless by giving them land, requiring a large share of the harvest in return. This patron-client relationship was a ‘special type of personal, vertical dyadic relationship’ (Malina 1981:51; 1988:3), between a social superior and a client.

Opposed to this kind of patron-client relationship, another relationship prevailed, namely the ‘horizontal dyadic relation’, which was usually formed between peers (Malina 1988:5). In this relationship, verticality, as well as the redistribution of favours and goods, is replaced by general reciprocity, in the hope that in the end everyone will benefit equally from the relationship. It also involves the exchange of favours and help in time of need. Elliott (1987:42) describes this relationship as follows:

Basic features of the patron-client relationship...include the following: It is a personal relation of some duration entered into voluntarily by two or more persons of unequal status based on differences in social roles and access to power, and involves the reciprocal exchange of different kinds of ‘goods and services’ of value to each partner. In this relationship of binding and long-range character designed to advance the interests of both partners, a ‘patron’ is one who uses his/her influence to protect and assist some other person who becomes his/her ‘client’, who in return provides to this patron certain valued services.

Malina (1988:8) elaborates on this relationship:

What patron-client relations essentially entail is endowing and outfitting economic, political, or religious institutional arrangements with an overarching quality of kinship. Such relations ‘kin-ify’ and suffuse the persons involved with the aura of kinship albeit fictive or pseudo-kinship. And since the hallmark of kinship as social institution is the quality of commitment or solidarity or loyalty realised in terms of generalised reciprocity, patron-client relations take on these kinship dimensions. Thus, economic, political, and religious interactions now take place between individuals bound together by mutual commitment, solidarity, and loyalty in terms of generalised reciprocity, rather than the balanced reciprocity of unconnected equals or the negative reciprocity typical of superiors to their subordinates.

Landé (1977:xxiii) gives more perspective to Malina’s words: ‘...the fact that
even though a patron-client relationship connects persons of unequal status and power, it requires that they treat each other, and especially that the patron treats the client, equitably and with a special concern for each other's welfare.'

The main problem most of the people in the first-century Mediterranean world encountered was that of 'reliability in obtaining the ends that social institutions were expected to produce' (Malina 1988:19). In a group every member had his own role to play. This role was related to a status, in that the person who filled the role had to live up to expectations concerning the function of the role.

Status was not located in a position, but was linked to the condition that the role had to comply with the expectations and function related to it. There was thus no shame in being a client or subordinate, but shame appeared when the role a certain person fulfilled, did not comply with the expectations and function related to it.

As has already been said, Jesus gave an indication of his perception of the kingdom of God, which implies a special relationship between the king and his subordinates. This relationship between 'superior' and 'inferior' is conceived by Jesus in terms of the obedience a child has for her/his father. It can be seen as a social reality, and has consequences for daily life.

When Jesus sees the king as an analogy for the Father, the status of the king changes. His status as patron is no longer that of an aristocrat (thus in a vertical dyadic relationship with his client), but that of a benefactor, in a horizontal dyadic relationship with his subordinate. Shame could be attributed to the subordinate/son who does not fulfil his new role, namely to be obedient to the father, the patron. The content of reciprocity also changed: From being retribution in the vertical relationship, it is changed to loyalty to the patron, because he is his subordinates' benefactor, and they should respond like children, by doing his will.

That is why Jesus taught his disciples to pray to their 'Father' (cf Mt 6:10), and to obey his will on earth, as it is obeyed in heaven. In the context of the farewell proper, Jesus also calls God his/the Father (nearly 50 times!), and asks his followers to love one another and to love Him (Jn 13:34, 35; 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10, 12-17; 16:27-28), and also to believe in God (Jn 14:1), thus being obedient to the Father. In doing this Jesus applied kinship terminology to the God of Israel. Jesus' 'kinification' is typical of patron-client behaviour (Malina 1988:9). God is the father, therefore God is the patron. On this point Malina wants to heighten Aalen's focus on the kingdom as 'realm, community, house', in order to let 'kingdom' emerge as 'clientele' in patronage relationship.

5 CONCLUSION

When one reads John 14:2 and 14:23 against the background of a realised eschatology in John, it becomes apparent that these two verses have in
mind something other than Jesus’ ascension. My proposal is that, within their context, these two verses refer to Jesus being parted from his followers for just a ‘little while’ (three days), but then coming back to stay with them ‘for ever’.

Jesus’ staying with his followers is described in household terms, such as ‘house’ and ‘rooms’. John 14:2 and 14:23 serve as very good examples of this. In this ‘house’ a normal household situation would prevail, comprising a father (God) and children (his subordinates/believers). John 18:36 helps to explicate the way in which this household would be designated. Jesus calls his household on earth a kingdom, but immediately adds that it is not of this world, just as his followers are no longer of this world. His kingdom correlates with a household, and not a king and subjects; it thus comprises another relationship. This relationship can best be called a father-son relationship, or more technically, a patron-client relationship, but then in the sense of a horizontal dyadic relationship.

It can be concluded that the proposal at the beginning of this paper no longer looks so far-fetched. Much consideration will be required in order to think through this proposal to its consequences, but it certainly looks worthwhile.

At this stage it looks as if the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, in the sense of a dwelling-place, was not only used as a reference, but that it gained a figurative meaning during the first century. It thus seems appropriate to enter a third possible meaning under the heading βασιλεία in Louw & Nida’s lexicon, namely household (in the sense of a dwelling-place), with specific reference to the ‘kingdom of God’.

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