

**Paper 170 — The Kingdom of Heaven**

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Most endnotes and Urantia Book cross-references have been deleted to enhance readability.

**Source for Paper 170**

- (1) Ernest F. **Scott**, *The Kingdom of God in the New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931)

**Key**

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms occurring further apart, usually not in the same row.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the UB writer pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Blue** indicates original (or “revealed”) information, or UB-specific terminology and concepts. (What to highlight in this regard is debatable; the highlights are tentative.)

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## PAPER 170 — THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

170:0.1 Saturday afternoon, March 11, Jesus preached his last sermon at Pella. This was among the notable addresses of his public ministry, embracing a full and complete discussion of the kingdom of heaven. He was aware of the confusion which existed in the minds of his apostles and disciples regarding the meaning and significance of the terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God,” which he used as interchangeable designations of his bestowal mission. Although the very term kingdom of *heaven* should have been enough to separate what it stood for from all connection with *earthly* kingdoms and temporal governments, it was not.<sup>1</sup> The idea of a temporal king was too deep-rooted in the Jewish mind thus to be dislodged in a single generation. Therefore Jesus did not at first openly oppose this long-nourished concept of the kingdom.

[See endnote.]

### PREFACE (Scott 5)

The chief aim of the present book is to determine how Jesus conceived of the Kingdom of God (S 5).

170:0.2 This Sabbath afternoon the Master sought to clarify the teaching about the kingdom of heaven;

he discussed the subject from every viewpoint and endeavored to make clear the many different senses in which the term had been used.

In this narrative we will amplify the address by adding numerous statements made by Jesus on previous occasions and by including some remarks made only to the apostles during the evening discussions of this same day.

An effort has been made in the present book to indicate the main directions in which his teaching was developed by his followers (S 5).

We will also make certain comments dealing with the subsequent outworking of the kingdom idea as it is related to the later Christian church.

## 1. CONCEPTS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

### I: THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Scott 11)

(1) *The Old Testament Conception* (Scott 11)

The Kingdom of God, then, appears in the Old Testament under these two aspects.

It is at once a present reality and a hope which will only be realized in the glorious future.

In the later history of the idea we meet constantly with the same apparent contradiction, and in the teaching of Jesus, as we shall see, it has given rise to serious problems (S 21).

170:1.1 In connection with the recital of Jesus' sermon it should be noted that

throughout the Hebrew scriptures there was a dual concept of the kingdom of heaven.

The prophets presented the kingdom of God as:

170:1.2 1. A present reality; and as

170:1.3 2. A future hope—

when the kingdom would be realized in fullness upon the appearance of the Messiah.

This is the kingdom concept which John the Baptist taught.

170:1.4 From the very first Jesus and the apostles taught both of these concepts.

There were two other ideas of the kingdom which should be borne in mind:

(2) *The Persian Influence* (Scott 22)

In several ways the Persian influence brought this fuller development to the Old Testament conception of the Kingdom of God.... (3) The conception was lifted to the **transcendental** plane.... God will interpose by way of **miracle** and create everything anew (S 27-28).

**Persian** religion was based on the theory of a conflict between two opposing powers, **Good and Evil**, Light and Darkness, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman....

... Ahura Mazda will achieve his victory and all who have served him will have their abode forever in his realm of light (S 23-24).

(3) *The Kingdom in Apocalyptic* (Scott 29)

[contd] It is in the so-called **apocalyptic** writings that the idea of the Kingdom is fully developed, under these Persian influences. The term “apocalyptic” is commonly reserved for a literature which flourished during the period from 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. (S 29).

On the one hand there will be a Kingdom which will endure for a limited period—four hundred or a thousand years. These are the “days of the **Messiah**,” who will work deliverance for Israel and institute a reign of peace and justice in which the whole earth will share.

170:1.5 3. The later Jewish concept of a world-wide and **transcendental** kingdom of supernatural origin and **miraculous** inauguration.

170:1.6 4. The **Persian** teachings portraying the establishment of a divine kingdom as the achievement of the triumph of **good over evil** at the end of the world.

170:1.7 Just before the advent of Jesus on earth, the Jews combined and confused all of these ideas of the kingdom into their **apocalyptic** concept

of the **Messiah's** coming to establish the age of the Jewish triumph,

On the other hand there is “the coming age,” which will set in when that age of the earthly Paradise has run its course. According to one forecast the Messiah himself, along with all whom he has governed, will die. The world will pass out of being and a **new one** will arise in which God will reign for ever and ever (S 37).

(4) *The Rabbinical Teaching* (Scott 40)

According to the Rabbinical view God has ever been king, but this truth has only emerged gradually and still awaits its full manifestation.... The Kingdom will be fulfilled when all heathen religions perish and the **whole world is united in the worship of the one God** (S 42).

(5) *Conclusion* (Scott 46)

It was not by accident that Jesus, when he came forward with his message, **chose** out from the whole body of the ancient teaching this idea of the Kingdom of God.

The more we study the religion of Israel, in the Old Testament and in the later literature, the more we realize that this was its **vital** idea (S 47).

the eternal age of God’s supreme rule on earth, the **new world**,

the era in which **all mankind would worship Yahweh.**

In **choosing** to utilize this concept of the kingdom of heaven,

Jesus elected to appropriate

the most **vital** and culminating heritage of both the Jewish and Persian religions.

170:1.8 The kingdom of heaven, as it has been understood and misunderstood down through the centuries of the Christian era, embraced four distinct groups of ideas:

170:1.9 1. The concept of the Jews.

170:1.10 2. The concept of the Persians.

[See endnote.]

170:1.11 3. The personal-experience concept of Jesus—“the kingdom of heaven within you.”<sup>2</sup>

## II: THE KINGDOM IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS (Scott 48)

(1) *Jesus' Use of the Conception* (Scott 48)

Our Gospels are full of sayings and parables about the Kingdom of God. We are told what it is like, how it will be manifested, who will inherit it, on what conditions it is entered. But when all this has been learnt we are still left inquiring, “What *is* the Kingdom?” It is evident that the evangelists themselves have a **confused** idea as to how this question should be answered (S 48).

170:1.12 4. The composite and **confused** concepts which the founders and promulgators of Christianity have sought to impress upon the world.

170:1.13 At different times and in varying circumstances it appears that Jesus may have presented numerous concepts of the “kingdom” in his public teachings, but to his apostles he always taught the kingdom as embracing man’s personal experience in relation to his fellows on earth and to the Father in heaven. Concerning the kingdom, his last word always was, “The kingdom is within you.”

[contd] The **confusion** may be accounted for in several ways.

170:1.14 Centuries of **confusion** regarding the meaning of the term “kingdom of heaven” have been due to three factors:

170:1.15 1. The confusion occasioned by observing the idea of the “kingdom” as it passed through the various progressive phases of its recasting by Jesus and his apostles.

170:1.16 2. The confusion which was inevitably associated with

For one thing, Jesus' conception was entangled with Jewish beliefs which in the later age, and especially when the mission had been **transplanted to Gentile soil**, had in great measure become unintelligible.

the **transplantation** of early Christianity from a Jewish to a **gentile soil**.

170:1.17 3. The confusion which was inherent in the fact that

Again, the church had sprung into being after Jesus' death through a faith that **centered in his own Person** (S 48-49).

Christianity became a religion which was **organized about the central idea of Jesus' person**;

the gospel of the kingdom became more and more a religion *about* him.

## 2. JESUS' CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM

170:2.1 The Master made it clear that the kingdom of heaven must begin with, and be centered in, the dual concept of the truth of the fatherhood of God and the correlated fact of the brotherhood of man. The acceptance of such a teaching, Jesus declared, would liberate man from the agelong bondage of animal fear and at the same time enrich human living with the following endowments of the new life of spiritual liberty:

So it will be well to remind ourselves, in the first place, of some of the purposes to which he turns this conception in the course of his teaching. (1) He constantly brings it forward as the inspiring hope which must lie behind all action.... The conviction that the Kingdom is near is to lift men above themselves and fill them with a **new power**.

170:2.2 1. The possession of **new** courage and augmented spiritual **power**.

They can now dare and achieve what seemed impossible.

(2) As they receive power, so also they find support and consolation. The poor, the oppressed, the afflicted can bear up patiently, knowing that the present conditions will be only for a little while. In the confidence that God will soon establish his Kingdom men can put their trust in God (S 52).

(3) The Kingdom is for Jesus the criterion of all values.

It is from this point of view that the hope of it may be said to determine all his ethical teaching. He has his mind fixed always on what will be when the Kingdom comes. What things will then be worth possessing? What type of character will be honored? What sort of conduct will God require? (S 52-53)

The gospel of the kingdom was to set man free

and inspire him to dare to hope for eternal life.

170:2.3 2. The gospel carried a message of new confidence and true consolation for all men, even for the poor.

170:2.4 3. It was in itself a new standard of moral values,

a new ethical yardstick wherewith to measure human conduct.

It portrayed the ideal of a resultant new order of human society.

170:2.5 4. It taught the pre-eminence of the spiritual compared with the material; it glorified spiritual realities and exalted superhuman ideals.

170:2.6 5. This new gospel held up spiritual attainment as the true goal of living. Human life received a new endowment of moral value and divine dignity.



(4) The Kingdom is a **reward** on which men must set their hearts.... But when Jesus spoke, in the religious language of his time, of “reward” he meant outcome or fruition. The value of anything is to be measured by its result, and the **result** of moral obedience is the attainment of the Kingdom (S 53).

170:2.7 6. Jesus taught that eternal realities were the **result (reward)** of righteous earthly striving.

Man’s mortal sojourn on earth acquired new meanings consequent upon the recognition of a noble destiny.

(5) Above all, the Kingdom is for Jesus the **fulfillment of the divine purpose** (S 53).

170:2.8 7. The new gospel affirmed that human salvation is the revelation of a far-reaching **divine purpose to be fulfilled**

and realized in the future destiny of the endless service of the salvaged sons of God.

170:2.9 These teachings cover the expanded idea of the kingdom which was taught by Jesus.

[See S 55-58 for John the Baptist’s teachings.]

This great concept was hardly embraced in the elementary and confused kingdom teachings of John the Baptist.

170:2.10 The apostles were unable to grasp the real meaning of the Master’s utterances regarding the kingdom.

(2) *The Apocalyptic Element* (Scott 55)

The subsequent distortion of Jesus’ teachings, as they are recorded in the New Testament, is because the concept of the gospel writers was colored by

At the time when our Gospels were written it was believed that Jesus had departed

the belief that Jesus was then absent from the world for only a short time;

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URANTIA PAPER 170

in order to return at any moment in his Messianic glory to bring in the Kingdom (S 59).

that he would soon return to establish the kingdom in power and glory—

just such an idea as they held while he was with them in the flesh.

But Jesus did not connect the establishment of the kingdom with the idea of his return to this world.

It was enough for [Jesus] to know that a new age was coming in which all things would be different.... The day he looked for has now tarried for two thousand years, and his whole message, we are sometimes assured, was based on an illusion. But one may dare to affirm that even if he could have foreseen the long delay he would not have been greatly disturbed (S 62-63).

That centuries have passed with no signs of the appearance of the “New Age” is in no way out of harmony with Jesus’ teaching.

170:2.11 The great effort embodied in this sermon was the attempt to

For Jesus [the Kingdom] was in very truth the reign of God, who would at last subject all things entirely to his will.... Thus the Kingdom becomes for him another name for the will of God.

translate the concept of the kingdom of heaven into the ideal of the idea of doing the will of God.

Long had the Master taught his followers to pray:

He thinks of it in apocalyptic fashion as the new age in which all things will be marvelously transformed. But the transformation will consist above all in this—that the will of God will henceforth be the sole law. *“Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth”* (S 65).

*“Your kingdom come; your will be done”;*

and at this time he earnestly sought to induce them to abandon the use of the term *kingdom of God* in favor of the more practical equivalent, *the will of God*. But he did not succeed.

170:2.12 Jesus desired to substitute for the idea of the kingdom, king, and subjects, the concept of the heavenly family, the heavenly Father, and the liberated sons of God engaged in joyful and voluntary service for their fellow men and in the sublime and intelligent worship of God the Father.

(3) *The Kingdom as Present and Future* (Scott 66)

170:2.13 Up to this time the apostles had acquired a double viewpoint of the kingdom; they regarded it as:

170:2.14 1. A matter of personal experience then present in the hearts of true believers, and

170:2.15 2. A question of racial or world phenomena; that the kingdom was in the future, something to look forward to.

(2) So with the other debated question as to whether the Kingdom is to burst in suddenly and miraculously or is to dawn gradually and grow from more to more.... Ever and again in his teaching he [Jesus] takes for granted that the Kingdom will come catastrophically....

... Yet here, as in the other conception, we have to recognize a double strain in Jesus' thinking. Most notably in those parables of the seed, already mentioned, he seems to contemplate a gradual coming of the Kingdom (S 69-71).

170:2.16 They looked upon the coming of the kingdom in the hearts of men as a gradual development, like the leaven in the dough or like the growing of the mustard seed.

They believed that the coming of the kingdom in the racial or world sense would be both sudden and spectacular.

Jesus never tired of telling them that the kingdom of heaven was their personal experience of realizing the higher qualities of spiritual living; that these realities of the spirit experience are progressively translated to new and higher levels of divine certainty and eternal grandeur.

(4) *The Kingdom as the Spiritual Order* (Scott 76)

170:2.17 On this afternoon the Master distinctly taught a new concept of the double nature of the kingdom in that he portrayed the following two phases:

170:2.18 “First. The kingdom of God in this world, the supreme desire to do the will of God, the unselfish love of man which yields the good fruits of

He thinks of this new order primarily in its moral aspects. Under those perfect conditions which will prevail in the Kingdom the will of God will be perfectly realized (S 76).

improved ethical and moral conduct.

At the same time the idea of a higher order of existence, over against the earthly one, plays a very real part in Jesus’ thought. He does not formulate it in philosophical or mystical language, but everywhere in the background of his teaching we are conscious of a profound sense that this world is transient and unreal and that man’s true interest lies elsewhere (S 76).

170:2.19 “Second. The kingdom of God in heaven,

the goal of mortal believers, the estate wherein the love for God is perfected, and wherein the will of God is done more divinely.”

(5) *Entrance into the Kingdom* (Scott 82)

Since the Kingdom is not only future but has a real beginning in the present, men can **enter it here and now** (S 82).

(2) Repentance involves the child-like spirit; “unless ye repent and become like **little children**” (S 84).

The Kingdom is **given** to us,

and we cannot have it unless we throw ourselves with an entire **submissiveness** on God (S 84).

[Jesus] requires, for one thing, that men should **free themselves of custom and prejudice**, and look at the world with fresh eyes, as if they saw everything for the first time (S 84).

All that John required was a mending of one’s ways, by which rich men become more generous, tax-gatherers would deal justly, soldiers would refrain from robbery. Jesus demanded literally a **“change of mind”** (S 83-84).

170:2.20 Jesus taught that, by faith,

the believer **enters the kingdom now**.

In the various discourses he taught that two things are essential to faith-entrance into the kingdom:

170:2.21 1. *Faith, sincerity.*

To come as a **little child**,

to receive the bestowal of sonship as a **gift**;

to **submit** to the doing of the Father’s will without questioning

and in the full confidence and genuine trustfulness of the Father’s wisdom;

to come into the kingdom **free from prejudice and preconception**;

to be open-minded and teachable like an unspoiled child.

170:2.22 2. *Truth hunger.* The thirst for righteousness,

a **change of mind**,

Sin, as he regards it, proceeds not from a defect of nature

but from a perversion of the will; this is what makes it sin (S 87).

At this point, however, we come on one of the most characteristic and far-reaching of the ideas of Jesus. God will forgive sins,

but only when men forgive each other (S 88).

(6) *The Kingdom and the Inward Life* (Scott 90)

We shall see that in the later development of his message the main emphasis was thrown on the renewal of man's spiritual nature. The Fourth evangelist no longer speaks of the Kingdom of God but only of eternal life. The chief aim of the believer is for him the attainment of this higher life, which dwells in Christ's people as a present possession (S 92).

the acquirement of the motive to be like God and to find God.

170:2.23 Jesus taught that sin is not the child of a defective nature

but rather the offspring of a knowing mind dominated by an unsubmissive will.

Regarding sin, he taught that God has forgiven;

that we make such forgiveness personally available by the act of forgiving our fellows.

When you forgive your brother in the flesh, you thereby create the capacity in your own soul for the reception of the reality of God's forgiveness of your own misdeeds.

170:2.24 By the time the Apostle John began to write the story of Jesus' life and teachings, the early Christians had experienced so much trouble with the kingdom-of-God idea as a breeder of persecution that they had largely abandoned the use of the term.

John talks much about the "eternal life."

Jesus took up [the traditional Jewish] conception inherent in the hope of the Kingdom and gave it new depth and import. A number of passages might be collected in which he makes “life,” the supreme blessing of the Kingdom, a synonym for the Kingdom itself (“to enter into life,” “this do and thou shalt live,” “strait is the way that leads to life”) (S 93).

In one place Jesus is made to declare in so many words, “The Kingdom of God is within you” (S 94).

The conviction is always present with Jesus, and may be clearly discerned underneath all his teaching, that the true joy of the Kingdom will consist in fellowship with God (S 94-95).

Jesus often spoke of it as the “kingdom of life.”

He also frequently referred to “the kingdom of God within you.”

He once spoke of such an experience as

“family fellowship with God the Father.”

Jesus sought to substitute many terms for the kingdom but always without success. Among others, he used: the family of God, the Father’s will, the friends of God, the fellowship of believers, the brotherhood of man, the Father’s fold, the children of God, the fellowship of the faithful, the Father’s service, and the liberated sons of God.

170:2.25 But he could not escape the use of the kingdom idea. It was more than fifty years later, not until after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, that this concept of the kingdom began to change into the cult of eternal life as its social and institutional aspects were taken over by the rapidly expanding and crystallizing Christian church.

### 3. IN RELATION TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

(7) *The Kingdom and the New Righteousness*  
(Scott 96)

[For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20).]

170:3.1 Jesus was always trying to impress upon his apostles and disciples that they must acquire, by faith,

a righteousness which would exceed the righteousness of slavish works which some of the scribes and Pharisees paraded so vaingloriously before the world.

170:3.2 Though Jesus taught that faith, simple childlike belief, is the key to the door of the kingdom, he also taught that, having entered the door, there are the progressive steps of righteousness which every believing child must ascend in order to grow up to the full stature of the robust sons of God.

170:3.3 It is in the consideration of the technique of *receiving* God's forgiveness that the attainment of the righteousness of the kingdom is revealed. Faith is the price you pay for entrance into the family of God; but forgiveness is the act of God which accepts your faith as the price of admission. And the reception of the forgiveness of God by a kingdom believer involves a definite and actual experience and consists in the following four steps, the kingdom steps of inner righteousness:

[See 170:2.19, above.]

170:3.4 1. God's forgiveness is made actually available and is personally experienced by man just in so far as he forgives his fellows.



170:3.5 2. Man will not truly forgive his fellows unless he loves them as himself.

170:3.6 3. To thus love your neighbor as yourself *is* the highest ethics.

170:3.7 4. Moral conduct, true righteousness, becomes, then, the natural result of such love.

170:3.8 It therefore is evident that the true and inner religion of the kingdom unfailingly and increasingly tends to manifest itself in

Many have here discovered the real purpose of the work of Jesus, which the church, almost from the beginning, has sedulously tried to conceal. He aimed at delivering men not merely from the burden of the Law but from religion itself. He substituted for it a **practical** ethic, a **social** program (S 96-97).

**practical** avenues of **social** service.

Jesus taught a living religion that impelled its believers to engage in the doing of loving service.

Now it is indeed true that he laid all the stress on action, and denied the worth of any belief or sentiment which did not have its outcome in action. This, however, is no reason for concluding that his place is among the great ethical teachers.... His aim was **not to put an ethical creed in place of a religious one**, but only to insist that in whatever manner they professed to serve God men should be utterly sincere (S 97).

But Jesus **did not put ethics in the place of religion**.

He taught religion as a cause and ethics as a result.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 170

Under the old law it was the act alone that counted, but for Jesus the worth of the act is **measured by the motive** (S 99).

Indeed Jesus holds that the **highest kind of goodness is unconscious** (S 100).

Although his teaching for the most part is directed to right conduct Jesus is not occupied with morality

but with the **inward fellowship with God** (S 100).

(8) *The Kingdom and Human Society* (Scott 103)

[contd] The moral demand, as it meets us in the Gospels, has always a **social** as well as an **individual** aspect (S 103).

Jesus discovered the worth of men as personalities. He was the first to break away from the idea of the **community**, and to declare that every human being for his own sake was under the care of God (S 107-08).

170:3.9 The righteousness of any act must be **measured by the motive;**

the **highest forms of good** are therefore **unconscious.**

Jesus was never concerned with morals or ethics as such.

He was wholly concerned with that

**inward and spiritual fellowship with God** the Father

which so certainly and directly manifests itself as outward and loving service for man. He taught that the religion of the kingdom is a genuine personal experience which no man can contain within himself; that the consciousness of being a member of the family of believers leads inevitably to the practice of the precepts of the family conduct, the service of one's brothers and sisters in the effort to enhance and enlarge the brotherhood.

170:3.10 The religion of the kingdom is

personal, **individual;** the fruits, the results, are familial, **social.**

Jesus never failed to exalt the sacredness of the individual as contrasted with the **community.**

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URANTIA PAPER 170

His primary interest was not in society but in the individual; but he recognized that man

But he also recognized that man

develops his character by unselfish service;

unfolds his personality through relation to his fellow men (S 109).

that he unfolds his moral nature in loving relations with his fellows.

170:3.11 By teaching that the kingdom is within,

It is indeed true that Jesus has wrought a revolution in the social life, but he has done so precisely because he looked to the individual.

by exalting the individual, Jesus struck the deathblow of the old society in that he ushered in the new dispensation of true social righteousness.

He insisted that respect must be paid to personality, that even the poorest has his rights, that outward conditions must be such as to allow full development to every life (S 108).

This new order of society the world has little known because it has refused to

All progress for the last two thousand years has been determined by the gradual application of these principles of Jesus to all social institutions (S 108).

practice the principles of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

And when this kingdom of spiritual pre-eminence does come upon the earth,

When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom he was not thinking of any outward conditions

it will not be manifested in mere improved social and material conditions,

but of a **spiritual** fulfillment (S 110).

but rather in the glories of those enhanced and enriched **spiritual** values which are characteristic of the approaching age of improved human relations and advancing spiritual attainments.

#### 4. JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE KINGDOM

(9) *Jesus' Conception of the Kingdom* (Scott 111)

[contd] We are now in a position to attempt some answer to the question, "What did Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God?" He **never defined it**, and no single definition can be deduced from his words (S 111).

170:4.1 Jesus **never gave a precise definition** of the kingdom.

At one time he would discourse on one phase of the kingdom, and at another time he would discuss a different aspect of the brotherhood of God's reign in the hearts of men.

In the course of this Sabbath afternoon's sermon Jesus noted no less than five phases, or epochs, of the kingdom, and they were:

(4) The Kingdom is realized in the **inward life of fellowship** with God (S 112-13).

170:4.2 1. The personal and **inward experience of the spiritual life of the fellowship** of the individual believer with God the Father.

(5) The Kingdom implies a community of God's people

170:4.3 2. The enlarging brotherhood of gospel believers,

and is thus a **social** as well as a **moral** and spiritual ideal (S 113).

the **social** aspects of the enhanced **morals** and quickened ethics

resulting from the reign of God's spirit in the hearts of individual believers.

(2) Again, the Kingdom stands for the higher spiritual order which lies **behind the visible** world and gives it meaning (S 111-12).

(3) But while the Kingdom includes all higher reality it stands more especially for the moral order. It means the **perfect fulfillment of that will of God** which under earthly conditions can only be dimly apprehended (S 112).

A day is coming when it will be **fully** manifest and will assert itself as the sole law (S 112).

By **changing the wills of men**

he compelled a **change** in all human relations.

170:4.4 3. The supermortal brotherhood of **invisible** spiritual beings which prevails on earth and in heaven,

the superhuman kingdom of God.

170:4.5 4. The prospect of the more **perfect fulfillment of the will of God,**

the advance toward the dawn of a new social order in connection with improved spiritual living—the next age of man.

170:4.6 5. The kingdom in its **fullness,**

the future spiritual **age of light and life** on earth.

170:4.7 Wherefore must we always examine the Master's teaching to ascertain which of these five phases he may have reference to when he makes use of the term kingdom of heaven.

By this process of gradually **changing man's will** and thus affecting human decisions,

**Michael and his associates** are likewise gradually but certainly **changing** the entire course of human evolution, social and otherwise.

By **throwing all emphasis** on

170:4.8 The Master on this occasion **placed emphasis** on

the following five points as representing the cardinal features of the gospel of the kingdom:

170:4.9 1. The pre-eminence of the individual.

170:4.10 2. The will as the determining factor in man's experience.

170:4.11 3. Spiritual fellowship with God the Father.

170:4.12 4. The supreme satisfactions of the loving service of man.

170:4.13 5. The transcendency of the **spiritual** over the **material** in human personality.

**spiritual** things he brought about a new attitude to the **material** side of life.... No peace can come until men recognize with Jesus that the real ends are spiritual (S 113-14).

May we not dare to hope that the **idea** of Jesus, which has seemed hitherto a mere counsel of perfection, will some day be accepted as a practical motive? (S 115)

170:4.14 This world has never seriously or sincerely or honestly tried out these dynamic **ideas** and divine ideals of Jesus' doctrine of the kingdom of heaven.

(10) *The Value of the Apocalyptic Forms* (Scott 115)

But you should not become discouraged by the apparently slow progress of the kingdom idea on **Urantia**.

Remember that

One value of apocalyptic has always been that it makes room in the scheme of things for apparent catastrophe. Not only through **ordered progress** but sometimes through the incalculable, God is working toward his Kingdom (S 117-18).

the **order of progressive evolution** is subjected to sudden and unexpected periodical changes in both the material and the spiritual worlds.

**The bestowal of Jesus as an incarnated Son was just such a strange and unexpected event in the spiritual life of the world.**

Neither make the fatal mistake, in looking for the age manifestation of the kingdom, of failing to effect its establishment within your own souls.

[Compare 176:2.]

170:4.15 Although Jesus referred one phase of the kingdom to the future and did, on numerous occasions, intimate that such an event might appear as a part of a world crisis; and though he did likewise most certainly, on several occasions, definitely promise sometime to return to **Urantia**, it should be recorded that he never positively linked these two ideas together. He promised a new revelation of the kingdom on earth and at some future time; he also promised sometime to come back to this world in person; but he did not say that these two events were synonymous. **From all we know these promises may, or may not, refer to the same event.**

170:4.16 His apostles and disciples most certainly linked these two teachings together.

When the kingdom failed to materialize as they had expected, recalling the Master's teaching concern-ing a future kingdom and remembering his promise to come again, they jumped to the conclusion that these promises referred to an identical event; and therefore they lived in hope of his immediate second coming to establish the kingdom in its fullness and with power and glory. And so have successive believing generations lived on earth entertaining the same inspiring but disappointing hope.

## 5. LATER IDEAS OF THE KINGDOM

### III: THE LATER DEVELOPMENT (Scott 129)

[See endnote.]

(3) *The Ideal World* (Scott 143)

Greek thought had arrived at a conception which bore a real analogy to the Hebrew one, and which found its classical expression in Plato's doctrine of the ideal world (S 146).

[See 12:8.16.]

170:5.1 Having summarized the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of heaven, we are permitted to narrate certain later ideas which became attached to the concept of the kingdom and to engage in a prophetic forecast<sup>3</sup> of the kingdom as it may evolve in the age to come.

170:5.2 Throughout the first centuries of the Christian propaganda, the idea of the kingdom of heaven was tremendously influenced by

the then rapidly spreading notions of Greek idealism,

the idea of the natural as the shadow of the spiritual—



“While we look not at the things which are seen but at those which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (S 151).

(4) *A New Life* (Scott 155)

It is not surprising that modern writers have here found the crucial proof that Christianity, in the course of its Gentile mission, had changed into a new religion.... Jesus was no longer the Messiah of the Kingdom but the Redeemer, in union with whom the believer was set free from earthly conditions and was made partaker of the divine life (S 155-56).

[See S 148-50 for Philo's ideas.]

(2) *The Kingdom as Apocalyptic* (Scott 134)

the temporal as the time shadow of the eternal.

170:5.3 But the great step which marked the transplantation of the teachings of Jesus from a Jewish to a gentile soil was taken

when the Messiah of the kingdom became the Redeemer of the church,

a religious and social organization growing out of the activities of Paul and his successors and based on the teachings of Jesus as they were supplemented by the ideas of Philo and the Persian doctrines of good and evil.

170:5.4 The ideas and ideals of Jesus, embodied in the teaching of the gospel of the kingdom, nearly failed of realization as his followers progressively distorted his pronouncements.

The Master's concept of the kingdom was notably modified by two great tendencies:

170:5.5 1. The Jewish believers persisted in regarding him as

[contd] The first effect of Jesus' departure was to heighten the hope of the Kingdom on its purely apocalyptic side. Jesus had died and risen again, and was now clothed with his full authority as **Messiah**.

At **any moment he might return** to judge the world and inaugurate the new age (S 134).

the **Messiah**.

They believed that Jesus **would very soon return** actually to establish the worldwide and more or less material kingdom.

170:5.6 2. The gentile Christians began very early to accept the doctrines of Paul, which led increasingly to the general belief that Jesus was the *Redeemer* of the children of the church, the new and institutional successor of the earlier concept of the purely spiritual brotherhood of the kingdom.

(5) *The Church* (Scott 167)

170:5.7 The **church**, as a social outgrowth of the kingdom, would have been wholly natural and even desirable. The evil of the church was not its existence, but rather that it almost completely supplanted the Jesus concept of the kingdom. Paul's institutionalized church became a virtual substitute for the kingdom of heaven which Jesus had proclaimed.

170:5.8 But doubt not, this same kingdom of heaven which the Master taught exists within the heart of the believer, will yet be proclaimed to this Christian church, even as to all other religions, races, and nations on earth—even to every individual.

170:5.9 The kingdom of Jesus' teaching, the spiritual ideal of individual righteousness and the concept of man's divine fellowship with God, became gradually submerged into the mystic conception of the person of Jesus as the Redeemer-Creator and spiritual head of a socialized religious community. In this way a formal and institutional church became the substitute for the individually spirit-led brotherhood of the kingdom.

So in the view of many the formation of the church was the great **tragedy** of our religion. Jesus had appeared with his glorious ideal of the Kingdom of God. He had inspired a multitude of his followers to work for this ideal, and they had formed themselves into a society. As time went on the society became an end in itself. Jesus had proclaimed the Kingdom, and instead of it there arose the **church** (S 170).

170:5.10 The **church** was an inevitable and useful *social* result of Jesus' life and teachings; the **tragedy** consisted in the fact that this social reaction to the teachings of the kingdom so fully displaced the spiritual concept of the real kingdom as Jesus taught and lived it.

There is no sign that the church was called into being by any formal and deliberate act. It was the **natural** and **inevitable** outcome of those ideas which the disciples had learned from Jesus. Once more, the Kingdom had always been associated with a community of God's people. **For Jewish apocalyptic this community had been Israel**, and while Jesus broke away from the purely national idea he still took for granted that God would reign over a people. He taught that while men must enter into a personal relation to God they could only serve him when they were united with one another (S 170-71).

170:5.11 **The kingdom, to the Jews, was the Israelite *community***;

to the gentiles it became the Christian *church*. To Jesus the kingdom was the sum of those *individuals* who had confessed their faith in the fatherhood of God, thereby declaring their whole-hearted dedication to the doing of the will of God, thus becoming members of the spiritual brotherhood of man.

170:5.12 The Master fully realized that certain social results would appear in the world as a consequence of the spread of the gospel of the kingdom; but he intended that all such desirable social manifestations should appear as unconscious and inevitable outgrowths, or natural fruits, of this inner personal experience of individual believers, this purely spiritual fellowship and communion with the divine spirit which indwells and activates all such believers.

170:5.13 Jesus foresaw that a social organization, or church, would follow the progress of the true spiritual kingdom, and that is why he never opposed the apostles' practicing the rite of John's baptism. He taught that the truth-loving soul, the one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for God, is admitted by faith to the spiritual kingdom; at the same time the apostles taught that such a believer is admitted to the social organization of disciples by the outward rite of baptism.

170:5.14 When Jesus' immediate followers recognized their partial failure to realize his ideal of the establishment of the kingdom in the hearts of men by the spirit's domination and guidance of the individual believer,

[See 144:6-7.]

they set about to save his teaching from being wholly lost by substituting for the Master's ideal of the kingdom the gradual creation of a visible social organization, the Christian church. And when they had accomplished this program of substitution, in order to maintain consistency and to provide for the recognition of the Master's teaching regarding the fact of the kingdom, they proceeded to set the kingdom off into the future. The church, just as soon as it was well established, began to teach that the kingdom was in reality to appear at the culmination of the Christian age, at the second coming of Christ.

170:5.15 In this manner the kingdom became the concept of an age, the idea of a future visitation, and the ideal of the final redemption of the saints of the Most High. The early Christians (and all too many of the later ones) generally lost sight of the Father-and-son idea embodied in Jesus' teaching of the kingdom, while they substituted therefor the well-organized social fellowship of the church. The church thus became in the main a *social* brotherhood which effectively displaced Jesus' concept and ideal of a *spiritual* brotherhood.

170:5.16 Jesus' ideal concept largely failed, but upon the foundation of the Master's personal life and teachings, supplemented by the Greek and Persian concepts of eternal life and augmented by Philo's doctrine of the temporal contrasted with the spiritual, Paul went forth to build up one of the most progressive human societies which has ever existed on [Urantia](#).

170:5.17 The concept of Jesus is still alive in the advanced religions of the world.

SOURCE OR PARALLEL

URANTIA PAPER 170

In the historical church, with all its errors and inconsistencies, we can see at least the reflection of the Kingdom as conceived by Jesus (S 178).

Paul's Christian church is the socialized and humanized shadow of what Jesus intended the kingdom of heaven to be—

and what it most certainly will yet become.

The [Fourth] Gospel culminates in the seventeenth chapter, in which Christ offers his prayer for the church. Throughout the Supper discourse which has gone immediately before he has spoken of that eternal life which he brings to men, and now he declares that the life-giving union with himself is effected through fellowship with the church.... Everything that Jesus had spoken of the Kingdom was transferred to the church, which represented it on earth (S 179-80).

Paul and his successors partly transferred the issues of eternal life from the individual to the church.

[See 169:4.13.]

Christ thus became the head of the church rather than the elder brother of each individual believer in the Father's family of the kingdom.

So the church became in some degree identified for later thought with the Kingdom.

Paul and his contemporaries applied all of Jesus' spiritual implications regarding himself and the individual believer to the church as a group of believers;

It cannot be denied that the message of Jesus was thus in many respects obscured.

and in doing this, they struck a deathblow to Jesus' concept of the divine kingdom in the heart of the individual believer.

170:5.18 And so, for centuries, the Christian church has labored under great embarrassment because it dared to

Not only so but the church, believing that it was itself the Kingdom, laid claim to mysterious powers and privileges (S 182).

lay claim to those mysterious powers and privileges of the kingdom,

powers and privileges which can be exercised and experienced only between Jesus and his spiritual believer brothers.

And thus it becomes apparent that membership in the church does not necessarily mean fellowship in the kingdom; one is spiritual, the other mainly social.

#### IV: CONCLUSION (Scott 184)

170:5.19 Sooner or later another and greater John the Baptist is due to arise proclaiming

[contd] Our religion began with the proclamation, “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” and this has always been its central message.

“the kingdom of God is at hand”—

meaning a return to the high spiritual concept of Jesus, who proclaimed that the kingdom is the will of his heavenly Father dominant and transcendent in the heart of the believer—and doing all this without in any way referring either to the visible church on earth or to the anticipated second coming of Christ.

There must come a revival of the *actual* teachings of Jesus, such a restatement as will undo the work of

It might seem to have changed the message, almost from the beginning. The disciples, while calling themselves by the name of Christ, made him the sponsor for a mystical or social or philosophical teaching which had no place in his own gospel.

his early followers who went about to create a sociophilosophical system of belief regarding the *fact* of Michael’s sojourn on earth.

But when we look deeper we can discern his idea of the Kingdom underlying all later thought and expressing itself in many different forms (S 184).

Without the vision of a fulfillment to which all things are working, all impulse and meaning would die out of human life. It was the grand achievement of Jesus that he **blended** this vision of the **future** with the **moral ideal** (S 190).

(3) Once more, the permanence of his message is due, above all, to its **many-sidedness** (S 191).

Christianity has broken into many **divisions**, each claiming to represent the authentic gospel and often opposed to each other in bitter antagonism.

But all of them are right. Jesus proclaimed a message of which some aspect is truly preserved in each of the countless **sects** which prophesy in his name. Yet all of them are wrong; for in the thought of Jesus all those elements were fused together, and none of them can be rightly understood when they are taken separately (S 192-93).

In a short time the teaching of this story *about* Jesus nearly supplanted the preaching of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom. In this way a historical religion displaced that teaching in which

Jesus had **blended** man's highest **moral** ideas and spiritual **ideals** with man's most sublime hope for the **future**—eternal life.

And that was the gospel of the kingdom.

170:5.20 It is just because the gospel of Jesus was so **many-sided**

that within a few centuries

students of the records of his teachings became **divided** up into so many cults and **sects**.

This pitiful subdivision of Christian believers results from

failure to discern in the Master's manifold teachings the divine oneness of his matchless life.



But someday the true believers in Jesus will not be thus spiritually divided in their attitude before unbelievers. Always we may have diversity of intellectual comprehension and interpretation, even varying degrees of socialization, but lack of spiritual brotherhood is both inexcusable and reprehensible.

170:5.21 Mistake not! there is in the teachings of Jesus an eternal nature which will not permit them forever to remain unfruitful in the hearts of thinking men. The kingdom as Jesus conceived it has to a large extent failed on earth; for the time being, an outward church has taken its place; but you should comprehend that this church is only the larval stage of the thwarted spiritual kingdom, which will carry it through this material age and over into a more spiritual dispensation where the Master's teachings may enjoy a fuller opportunity for development. Thus does the so-called Christian church become the cocoon in which the kingdom of Jesus' concept now slumbers. The kingdom of the divine brotherhood is still alive and will eventually and certainly come forth from this long submergence, just as surely as the butterfly eventually emerges as the beautiful unfolding of its less attractive creature of metamorphic development.

1. *Compare:* Although the very term kingdom of *heaven* should have been enough to separate what it stood for from all connection with *earthly* kingdoms and temporal governments, it was not (170:0.1).

*with*

The very phrase “Kingdom of God” would perhaps have carried with it a political suggestion, dangerous at a time when Christians were under the suspicion of disloyalty. [Cf. Justin, *Apologia* II, “When you hear that we look for a Kingdom, you suppose, without making inquiry, that we mean a human kingdom.”] In any case it would have required elaborate explanation. So as soon as the gospel passed over into the Gentile world the effort was made to translate the term employed by Jesus into one that could be understood; and this was not difficult (S 130-31).

2. *Compare:* Not a few passages can be gathered from the Rabbinical literature in which there is a real approach to the Gospel saying, “The Kingdom of God is within you.” Too much, however, may be made of these passages, which must be taken, for the most part, in a purely formal sense. The test of inward submission is strict performance of the Law. According as a man observes or neglects a given ordinance he is said to take on or throw off the Kingdom (S 42-43).

3. *Compare:* ... and to engage in a prophetic forecast of the kingdom as it may evolve in the age to come (170:5.1).

*with*

One conspicuous example of Christian prophecy has been preserved to us in the book of Revelation (S 136).

*and with*

In even the crudest of the early Christian forecasts there is this new element which enters into their very substance (S 137).