

# **THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649072385

The Beginnings of the Church by Ernest F. Scott

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Cover @ 2017

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BY

ERNEST F. SCOTT, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM IN QUEEN'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE,  
KINGSTON, CANADA

AUTHOR OF "THE FOURTH GOSPEL; ITS PURPOSE AND THEOLOGY,"  
"THE KINGDOM AND THE MESSIAH," ETC.

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1925

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**Printed in the United States of America**

**Published September, 1914**



Religion  
Walker  
8-29-25  
12220

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## PREFACE

THE present book consists of a series of lectures delivered in January and February of this year at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in terms of the Ely Foundation. For the many kindnesses which I received during my visit to the Seminary I desire to express my warmest thanks to President Francis Brown and the members of the staff. To Dr. J. E. Frame, Professor in New Testament Literature, I am further indebted for much helpful criticism of the lectures in the course of their delivery.

My object has been to investigate the aims and beliefs of the Christian community in the time preceding the advent of Paul. No discussion of this dark period can be other than tentative; and I am well aware that many of my conclusions are open to question. They may serve, however, to suggest new lines of inquiry into problems of cardinal importance which have not yet been adequately explored. A detailed study of that initial period is more than ever necessary in view of the more recent developments of New Testament

criticism. Not a few scholars of the foremost rank are seeking to explain almost the whole content of Christian doctrine from the Hellenistic beliefs and practices to which the new religion was gradually assimilated. It may indeed be granted that these influences were operative from an early time, and have left deep traces even on the teaching of Paul; but they ought not to be emphasised in such a manner as to allow no place for a more primitive Christianity. Between the death of Jesus and the beginning of the gentile mission there was a momentous interval, in which the church grew up in its native Jewish soil, unaffected by alien modes of thinking. I have sought to concentrate attention on this fact, and to estimate its bearing on the genesis of Christian belief.

In my attempt to interpret the primitive ideas I set out from the hypothesis that Jesus imparted his message in the terms of Jewish apocalyptic. The application of this theory to the Gospel narrative has already led to many fruitful results, but its significance for the early history of the church has not yet been fully appreciated. I have tried to show that the apocalyptic conceptions of Jesus were normative also for his disciples, and found their natural outcome in the building up of the Christian community.