

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT

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The fellowship of the spirit by Charles A. Anderson Scott

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BY

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PREFACE

RELIGION is any and all reaction of the spirit of man to the approach of God. What gives the New Testament its unique place in the history of religion is that it records the most universal approach which God has made to man, and also the beginning of the human reaction to that approach alike in thought and in conduct. It records the latter also from several different angles. And the concurrence of these two forms of response is of the highest importance. For it is evidence of the arrival of power. And the character and direction of the power attest its origin as of God. The name given to that power in the New Testament is the Spirit of God. Its character and direction are ascertainable because it is also the Spirit of Christ, and Him we know as the Jesus of the Gospels.

The characteristic feature of the Church of the New Testament is that it is the Church of the Spirit. The Spirit is at once its creative, and its normative force. As experienced by those who felt it, the coming of the Spirit may be described as an overwhelming sense of sonship, and an overwhelming sense of brotherhood. The evidence of the New Testament provides material for the study of these two factors of the religious consciousness. And it accredits their reality by the testimony it contains to corresponding standards of ethical achievement.

Preface

Men are expected to act, and do act, as though they were the children of God, and brethren of one another.

Tested by these results the Spirit which inspired and guided the primitive Church corresponds to a remarkable extent with the Spirit of Jesus. To discover this is to discover the continuity which connects the Gospels and the Epistles. And yet the form is so different that a mere literary connection is excluded. It is a continuity of life.

This volume is the outcome of studies which were originally made in connection with the essay "What happened at Pentecost." The space at my disposal has not made it possible to go as fully as I could have wished into some of the subjects, notably the question of the original significance of the Eucharist. I think that a still stronger case could be made out for thinking that in the original form of the rite the Loaf and the Cup did not represent the same thing under different aspects (*e.g.*, "the whole Christ"), but two different moments in the Christian experience of the faith-union with Christ.

The second volume of Joh. Weiss' *Urchristentum* only came to hand when my work was practically finished. But I have been able to include some quotations from it, which I have done all the more gladly as there is not much prospect that this admirable contribution to the religious interpretation of the New Testament will be translated.

C. A. S.

*Westminster College, Cambridge,
March, 1921.*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I THE CONQUERING NEW-BORN JOY -	9
II THE LEAVEN - - - -	18
III THE UP-RUSH OF LIFE - - -	35
IV THE CHRIST-CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE FELLOWSHIP - - -	53
V THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE FELLOW- SHIP - - - - -	69
VI THE INNER LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN -	86
VII THE DIFFERENTIA OF A CHRISTIAN—LOVE	105
VIII WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS - -	122
IX WORSHIP AND SACRAMENTS (CONTINUED) —THE LORD'S SUPPER - -	146
X ORGANISATION AND MINISTRY - -	167
XI THE INTERNAL RELATIONS - - -	181
XII CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION - -	199
XIII THE GOAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP -	211

CHAPTER I

The Conquering New-born Joy

THE three greatest facts of history are Christ, the Cross, and the Church. For each of these represents the projection on the plane of history of a specific attitude of God towards mankind. In Christ we see thus projected God's eternal purpose to bring mankind unto Himself, by revealing Himself and redeeming them. In the Cross we find displayed the condition on which alone the purpose can be fulfilled, the suffering which is the necessary experience of love at issue with sin. And in the Church we have the projection of the fulfilment, so far as fulfilment is possible within the conditions of earthly life, of God's redeeming purpose, a redeemed Society, a Society of those who "are being saved."

God's purpose, the method by which it works, and its partial and progressive realisation—these enter the sphere of human observation with Christ, the Cross, and the Church.

It is with the third of these facts that we are to be concerned in the pages that follow, the Church in its infancy and very early years.

The Fellowship of the Spirit

No cause ever suffered more disastrous eclipse than that of Jesus the prophet of Galilee. He entered Jerusalem acclaimed by great crowds of enthusiastic pilgrims, the object of the highest religious hopes on the part of a group of devoted followers. They "trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." For some of them this may have meant the restoration of national independence and David's monarchy. For others it meant that He would "save His people from their sins," establishing an enduring fellowship between a redeemed people and their God. Those who stood closest to Him thought of Him as no less than the Messiah, the supreme fulfilment of religious hope. They had "believed on him," committed themselves unreservedly to Him as men otherwise would commit themselves to God alone. A week later all was over. He had been denied by one of His followers, betrayed by another, deserted by all. He Himself had perished in circumstances of shame and horror. Pilate washed his hands and turned to the next business. The religious leaders of Judaism congratulated themselves on being rid of a dangerous pretender and heretic. Joseph of Arimathæa buried along with the body of the Lord the dearest hopes of those who believed on Him.