

**RITSCHLIANISM:
EXPOSITORY AND
CRITICAL ESSAYS**

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Ritschlianism: Expository and Critical Essays by James Orr

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RITSCHLIANISM

EXPOSITORY AND CRITICAL ESSAYS

BY

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P R E F A C E

THE papers included in this volume have, with two exceptions, already been published in various theological magazines. There they might have remained, but for the following considerations. The three expository Essays on Ritschl and his school which head the list appeared at a time when Ritschlian theology was still a *terra incognita* to most in this country. For that reason they attracted some attention. They have since been, and still are, frequently quoted, referred to, and occasionally adversely criticised. The papers themselves, meanwhile, have ceased to be generally accessible. This is a disadvantage to both author and reader which it is thought desirable to obviate, and the Essays are, accordingly, here brought together. They were of use to many at the time, and may perhaps be felt to be of service still.

The author has expounded his views on the Ritschlian system in his *Christian View of God and the World*, and in his *Ritschlian Theology*, in the "Theological Educator" series. The latter book

suffers somewhat, for the purposes of the general reader, from undue compression, and from the necessity the writer felt, in view of the disputes with which the subject bristled, of giving chapter and verse for every statement he advanced. The Essays here republished, as simpler and more popular in character, may be found more suitable as an introduction to this influential phase of theology. Written independently, they have the drawback that to some extent they overlap; but any degree of repetition from this cause is perhaps compensated for by the fact that the standpoint of each is different, and, like pictures taken with a different focus, each helps to fill out the others, and may be regarded as the supplement or complement of the others.

Since these Essays appeared, the means of acquaintance with the Ritschlian teaching have abundantly multiplied. When they were written, hardly a single important Ritschlian book had been translated. Now the reader has access in English to leading works of Herrmann, Kaftan, Harnack, Schultz, Wendt, and finally of Ritschl himself, in an excellent translation of the dogmatic volume of his *Justification and Reconciliation*. The French phase of the movement is represented by a translation of Sabatier's brilliant book on the Philosophy of Religion. In America, Profs. McGiffert and Swing have laboured, not without success, to popularise the ideas and extend the influence of the school. In this country, Dr Garvie

is recognised as having furnished in his *Ritschlian Theology* one of the most important contributions to the exposition of Ritschl's system. All this has served to create and deepen interest in the Ritschlian movement, and to promote a better understanding of both its merits and its defects. The movement is still in progress, and, since the publication of the writer's volume, has undergone fresh developments, some of which call for illustration and remark.

In the conflict of parties and principles thus arising, the present writer, while trying, he hopes, to understand Ritschlianism, and to receive whatever stimulus and benefit it is fitted to yield him (and that is not little), has never felt able to join in the extravagant laudation in which some indulge regarding Ritschlianism as a system, nor to alter the conviction he early formed that, as a theology proposing to displace that of the ordinary creed, its basis is radically unsound. It may, indeed, in its more earnest adherents, succeed in outgrowing its limitations, and in throwing off its elements of weakness; but, in proportion as it does so, it may be predicted that it will be found drawing nearer, as happened before in the wake of the great impulse imparted by Schleiermacher, to the common faith of the Christian Churches, against which it is at present in arms. On the other hand, the danger is not slight that, on the negative side, it may issue in many falling back into pure humanitarianism and