

**IRENICS: A SERIES OF
ESSAYS
SHOWING THE VIRTUAL
AGREEMENT BETWEEN**

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Irenics: A Series of Essays Showing the Virtual Agreement Between by James Strong

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JAMES STRONG

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AGREEMENT BETWEEN**

L. BLANCHET,
MINISTER.

IRENICS:

A SERIES OF ESSAYS

SHOWING

THE VIRTUAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN

- I. SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE.
- II. NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL.
- III. THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN IN SCRIPTURE.
- IV. THE OLD AND THE NEW TESTAMENTS.
- V. CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM.
- VI. DIVINE BENEVOLENCE AND ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

BY

JAMES STRONG, S.T.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR IN THE DEW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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P R E F A C E.

THE ESSAYS contained in this volume were originally prepared as lectures on various occasions, and it was not till the most of them had been written that the author himself noticed that they possess a common element and purpose. After so many ages of controversy Christians are at last coming to understand better, not only their own faith and its relations, but also one another's views of it; and thus what may be styled an *anti-polemical* spirit is springing up, which argues well for the dawn of the millennial day of the Prince of Peace. These papers are committed to the public in the hope of promoting this tendency. Being intended for general readers, they have purposely avoided technical detail.

In the first of them the author, while he freely admits the necessity of a fresh readjustment of certain old theological positions to the revelations of modern science and philosophy, yet protests most earnestly against the crypto-rationalism which is so hasty in concluding that the Bible itself is at fault. There are, quite as probably, mistakes on the opposite side, and hence caution and candor are requisite on the part of

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the scientist and philosopher no less than on that of the theologian in their respective pronouncements. Especially is it important that each should adhere to his own domain without dictating to the other the concessions which he will demand in departments where he is not an expert. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam*, or in plain English, "Mind your own business," is a good motto to keep people out of unprofitable quarrels.

The second essay is an attempt to mediate between the rigid code of natural law and the demand of revelation for a divine intervention, not only occasionally, but at all times. It touches what the writer conceives to be the central point in the prevalent conflict between naturalism and supernaturalism.

The third paper treats of a topic which has not much agitated the religious world until comparatively recent times, but which in these days of re-examination into the foundation of the most cherished beliefs, is assuming very important proportions. It lies at the basis of all just interpretation, and necessarily tinges the complexion, as it likewise affects the validity, of every modern comment on Holy Scripture. It thus enters as a vital constituent into the household of faith, and holds an appropriate place in this series of discussions.

The fourth and most extensive portion of this little book is intended to show that genuine Bible religion has been essentially the same in all ages of the world, and has only differed in its outward form under the various economies. It is offered as a contribution to

Christian apologetics in a line not often pursued. Good people, doubtless, have always felt the truth of the conclusions here reached, but they have not generally apprehended it clearly, nor traced it out particularly.

The fifth of the papers here presented is still more distinctly irenical. The author is aware that in his effort to act as a mediator between two opposite camps he is liable to incur the hostility of both. But he has aimed neither to sacrifice nor to misrepresent either of them. He has no thought of relinquishing Arminianism himself, nor of asking others to give up Calvinism. He is sure that he understands the former quite well, and he has taken his statements of the latter from few but acknowledged authorities. His method is a truly peace-making one. He is satisfied that, as is evinced in the union services now so frequently and successfully held between different denominations, there is common ground enough for all evangelical believers to stand upon together, and that the more closely they come together in this friendly manner the more fully will they be able to fraternize and harmonize with each other.

The last of this series of essays is on a theme which in these latter days especially troubles the peace, not only of theological Christendom at large, but of many pious minds in particular, who find it hard to believe that their non-penitent friends and kindred will be finally lost. If the author shall be found to have offered any relief to such, his effort will not have been in vain. The suggestions on the associated topic of

the future life he hopes will not be deemed inappropriate or unacceptable.

Other cognate themes, such as the difficulties raised by evolutionists and rationalists, would have been appropriate to the connection, but their discussion would have swelled this book beyond its prescribed dimensions. Moreover, they rather belong to polemic than to irenic theology. These and some like topics may eventually form the nucleus of another volume antithetical to the present one.

It will perhaps be occasionally perceived that the same thought is touched upon in more than one place in the course of these lectures, as they were prepared irrespectively of each other; but the repetition will be found to set the illustration in a new light or relation.

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