

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

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## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—SYMPOSIUM ON MODERN CRITICISM.

HAS MODERN CRITICISM AFFECTED UNFAVORABLY ANY OF THE  
ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY?

NO. II.

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OUR subject suggests three questions: (1) What is to be understood by Modern Criticism? (2) What are the Essential Doctrines of Christianity? (3) Has Modern Criticism affected these Doctrines unfavorably? The answers to the first two of these questions must of necessity shape that of the third.

#### I. WHAT IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY MODERN CRITICISM?

All scientific forms of Criticism are of essentially modern origin. In its application to literature Criticism is the impartial judgment of productions of thought by certain accepted and accredited canons or principles. It aims to understand a production in its faults and excellences, in its parts and its totality, both as it is in itself and as it is in its vital relations.

It is manifest from this brief statement that Criticism is most likely to fail in point of comprehensiveness. As the application of certain canons in judging of a production, it may fail by the erroneous use of approved canons, or by the application of unestablished or indefensible canons. While, therefore, a true and broad criticism in dealing with the Bible leads to a profound and comprehensive knowledge and appreciation of it from every point of view, the result of defective criticism, unintelligent and rationalistic, has been shallow views of God's Word, and at least hesitant belief in its essential doctrines on the part of those who have accepted its conclusions.

It seems so obvious that a true criticism of the Bible, in a broad and generous sense, has been a source of such constant and incalculable enlightenment and enlargement of our Christian views, that it may be taken for granted that we are to understand by "modern criticism," in the question under consideration, criticism in its narrow