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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—HOW CAN THE PULPIT BEST COUNTERACT THE INFLUENCE OF MODERN SKEPTICISM?

NO. II.

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SKEPTICISM in religious phraseology originally meant simply questionings or doubts respecting the divine origin and authority of the Christian religion. Its present meaning, in popular language, is very nearly identical with that of the older word infidelity. It exists, however, in varying degrees of intensity from mere doubt up to a broad and unqualified denial, not only of every trace of the supernatural in Christianity, but of the possibility of any authoritative revelation of a divine will, other than that given in the uniform processes of nature. In its baldest and boldest form, modern skepticism is simply atheism. But in one form or another its influence on the religious thought and life of our time is wide-spread and disastrous. In the form of doubt, it is tainting the faith of some that are strong and killing the faith of others that are weak.

Just how the pulpit can best deal with this subtle and pervasive spirit of skepticism it is not altogether easy to say. Wholly to ignore it is not safe, even if it were practicable. To be perpetually attacking it is unwise, as well as pervasive of the true purpose of the pulpit. But to remove honest doubts, and to make clear to both believers and to unbelievers the real and just grounds of Christian faith, is doubtless a legitimate part of the pulpit's true function. If the believer is to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason for the hope that is in him, then the pulpit ought to help him to give an intelligent answer. But, because I ought to give a reason to every one that asks it for the hope that is in me, it by no means follows that I should thrust a reason on others who do not care to hear it. I may thrust on him the truths he ought to believe, and may urge on his attention a consideration of their reasonableness; beyond this my duty does not require me to go.