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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—“HAS MODERN CRITICISM AFFECTED UNFAVORABLY ANY OF THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY?”

NO. III.

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This question may be answered by yes and no. If it be understood to refer to the immediate effects of some forms of modern biblical criticism on the minds of men, that is, if it be understood in a subjective sense, the answer must be yes. If, however, it be taken in an objective sense, as referring to the doctrines of Christianity themselves rather than to the opinions of men respecting them, the answer should be, as unhesitatingly, no. It may, perhaps, be advisable to treat the question in both of these aspects. Moreover, we shall consider ourselves at liberty to discuss it almost exclusively from the point of view of the Old Testament.

Let it be premised that no exception can fairly be taken to biblical criticism in itself considered. It is as legitimate as any other form of criticism. We often hear objections raised against it, especially against the so-called “higher criticism,” as though the thing itself were evil, a sure indication of hostility to the Bible. The mistake arises from ignorance of the sphere and aim of all legitimate biblical criticism. Its aim is not to discover grounds for censure. It is just as little to find excellences to admire. It covers a very limited field of inquiry. It concerns itself with certain definite questions which, however broad may be their ultimate bearing, are, in themselves, of narrow scope, and generally of a literary or historical character. It is supposed to deal with acknowledged facts.

It is the aim of criticism, for example, in the department of the Old Testament, to use all the means at its command, such as grammar and lexicon, literary analysis, archeological discoveries, doctrinal teaching, logical and chronological adjustments, to find out whether current opinions concerning the origin of its books be true or