

fully to their sensuous nature, and Paul, perceiving their danger, exhorted them to stand firm and unshaken in the new principles they had adopted.

It might not be thought necessary to address such an exhortation to those who live under civil and social institutions which have been moulded by centuries of Christian influence. But, though Christianity is dominant among us, the spirit of heathendom has not been entirely driven out of the land. Some of its forces are still at work weakening and even destroying the faith of many. There are also currents of modern thought opposed to Christianity which are imperilling the religious belief of not a few within the Christian Church. The spirit of the negative criticism, which rejects the supernatural and denies that a special revelation has been given for our guidance, is moving to and fro, and disturbing men's convictions regarding the Divine character and authority of the content of Scripture. The consequence is that many within the Church, who have been educated in the truths of the Gospel from their childhood, are not standing surely in them. They are not holding them with a firm grasp. The theories of philosophy and science, falsely so-called, are shaking the ground beneath them. The idea of a Personal God by whom and for whom all things were created, is said to be only a crude conception of a less cultured age than our own. It cannot be maintained in the light of modern discoveries. The universe has been fashioned by the action of forces which are inseparable from matter, and matter itself is uncreated and eternal. The order and beauty and life which we see around us are not the expression of an intelligent will, but of an inscrutable force. The doctrine of a providence in history, of an infinite wisdom controlling the march of events, and directing the movements of humanity towards the accomplishment of a purpose, is only a religious fiction. The spirit of man is a function of the material organism, a product of the correlated forces of the body, immortality is merely an irrational dream. Man's true heaven is to enjoy himself as fully as he can in this mortal state. Let us eat and drink now, for death will end all. Even moral obligation is not permanent and absolute. Conscience is not of Divine authority. It is nothing more than a tendency acquired through many generations of ancestors to do the right. But what is right, if there be no ultimate authority and power to reward the doing and punish the neglect thereof? If we reject the idea of a Supreme being, the Author and Sustainer of life, the source of goodness and righteousness and law, we at the same time abandon the notion of Right, for Right implies an eternal standard