

PROFESSOR CHRISTLIEB, of Bonn, has been visiting Scotland. He records the gratifying fact that in Germany, where, a generation ago, there was a comparatively small percentage of evangelical preachers, about seventy per cent. of the pastors may now be said to be evangelical. There were many things in Germany which earnest men could not but deplore, such as the sad want of Sabbath observance, and the lack of anything like general attendance at public worship in such cities as Berlin. There is too great a tendency to see only the evils that exist, and a want of knowledge and appreciation of the hopeful indications that are to be met with, though not heard of, at hotels frequented by travellers, and to be known only by those who themselves mingle with the more earnest classes of the people.

In connection with this may be noted the case of Rev. O. B. Frothingham, of Jersey City, who for many years has been a leader in the "Free Religious Movement," even Unitarianism being too narrow for the liberty he desired. Mr. Frothingham is a man of unblemished reputation and acknowledged attainments. Two years ago he started on a European tour, and on returning declined to occupy a broad pulpit again, confessing meantime he can ascend no other. We quote a few of his confessions to a representative of a New York paper:—

"One fact began to loom up before my mental vision in a disquieting way—that the drift of free-thought teaching was unquestionably towards a dead materialism, which I have abhorred as deeply as any Evangelical clergyman I know."

"When I left New York for Europe, I believed and said that I might take up my work as pastor of an independent church when I got back. I may as well say now that I could not do it. I would not be able to teach as I did. * * * *

"The creeds of to-day do not seem in my eyes to be so wholly groundless as they were then; and while I believe that the next hundred years will see great changes in them, I do not think they are destined to disappear. To sum up the whole matter, the work which I have been doing appears to *lead to nothing*, and may have been grounded upon mistaken premises; therefore, it is better to stop. But I do not want to give the impression that I

recant anything. I simply stop denying, and wait for more light."

We would not make too much of these extracts, but they are significant of the husk-like character of Agnosticism when the hungry soul would fain fill itself therewith. Moreover, the *frankness* of these utterances is instructive. Here is a man of undoubted ability, of broad culture, high position and attractive eloquence. Yet, after twenty years of earnest and determined labour, we meet the frank confession concerning all his teaching that it "*appears to lead to nothing*," and may have been grounded on mistaken premises!"

THE following, from the Boston *Congregationalist* (with a few verbal alterations), has some very simple but important and practical truths, indicating the line upon which the free churches may safely travel:—

No wise man can deny or ignore that there has been a great drift in the common theology of the churches. It could not be otherwise. Knowledge has advanced, Hebrew and Greek are better known than three hundred years ago, more codices have come to light, more ancient versions, while an enlarged acquaintance with the Greek and Latin fathers adds discrimination and value to their citations as evidence for the original text. Besides this, physical science has advanced, so that whatever sidelight shines upon spiritual truth from the natural world is more clear, exact and apposite than of old. Progress has been effected in psychology and ethics, giving better foundation for the subject as to what man really is in his springs of action and sources of responsibility; and in what sense and to what degree an infinitely just God must necessarily estimate him and exact service from him. All these things together combine to put us in possession of a truer understanding of the Divine nature; which nature must ever be the fundamental fact and starting-point in all our theology, whether looking Godward or manward.

In the face of these facts, to suppose that all the minute, exact and specific theological hypotheses, statements, and proof-texts which satisfied and edified our fathers of two or even of one hundred years ago, may and ought to as fully satisfy and edify us, is to assume