

SUBSTITUTES OFFERED FOR CHRISTIANITY.

The religious unrest of our times finds nowhere more marked expression than in that growing literature which deals with proposed "substitutes" for Christianity. In Germany, particularly, the press teems with works which proceed from the viewpoint that Christianity has outlived its usefulness and must give place to something better. The way has been paved for this class of literature by such works as the "Religions-geschichtliche Volksbücher," a series of radical brochures edited by Schiele, of Marburg, which propose to carry into pew and pulpit the advanced views of Bousset, Wrede and other protagonists of the newest school of critical theology.

One of the most notable arguments in behalf of a substitute for Christianity has been made by an ex-Roman Catholic chaplain and professor of religious instruction in an Austrian Catholic gymnasium, Dr. Fr. Mach, whose book, "The Crisis in Christianity and the Religion of the Future," takes the ground that the confessional churches of the day are ulcerous sores upon modern society, and that the teachings of all the great churches, Roman Catholic and Protestant, must be discarded because they are in fatal conflict with the results of the scientific research of the day. The religion of the future he conceives as "pure Christianity with the spirit of Jesus and of the gospel," but as entirely "undogmatic," consisting chiefly of the recognized moral teachings of all the leading religions.

Even more radical in tone is a work by O. Michel, a former military officer, entitled "Forward to Christ—Away with Paul—German Religion!" He declares Paul to have been the "antichrist," in the sense that Paul perverted the original Christianity of the Founder of the Church. What is needed now, he says, is the restoration of this original Christianity, but in a manner adapted to German ideals and tastes. He also proposes a religion committed to no creed and consisting only of moral teachings of a general, not of a New Testament, nature.

An interesting sidelight is thrown on this whole subject by an investigation recently undertaken by a Bremen teacher, Fritz Ganz, who has published the results of his inquiry in a book entitled "Religious Instruction." He addressed a circular letter to scores of leading representatives of advanced thought throughout Germany and beyond its borders, and asked: What religion should be taught to the children in place of the traditional catechism and Bible history? He received more than eighty replies. One correspondent declares that "patriotism is the highest religion;" another specifies "the love for the beautiful and the human;" a third, "the systematic conception of what is taught by good common sense;" a fifth, a "Christian preacher," states that religion consists in the ability to "keep holy" (feiern), to "have premonitions" (ahnen); a sixth, that it is "reverence for mother nature;" a seventh asserts that "religion begins where revelation ends;" an eighth that "all true thought and action are religion;" a ninth, that "religion ends where confessional differences begin." Several men of recognized standing in the learned world contribute to the discussion. Dahlke recommends that Lessing's "Nathan der Weise" be studied instead of the Bible; Haackel, the head of the "Monistenbund," the organization of the ultra radicals in Germany, proposes Wilhelm Boltsche's writings, and those of Carus, Sterne and others; H. Lititz suggests fables and folklore of all kinds; the litterateur Lindenthal favors Rosenger's works and Cooper's "Last of the Mohicans"; the great Jewish writer, Max Nordau, suggests, among other books, "Don Quixote," and A. Phothow mentions Anderson's fables and Emer-

son's essays. In addition, A. Dodel speaks of Marcus Aurelius's "Meditations;" Hartwich wants the Eddas to be used; one writer, A. Kerz, even suggests portions of the Koran.

Dr. Dennert, a brilliant defender of Biblical teachings, subjects these replies to a critical analysis in his new journal *Glauben und Wissen*, and comes to the conclusion that they prove a testimonium paupertatis, so far as radical thought is concerned. The radicals, he answers, can only tear down. They build nothing positive in the place of the ruins they cause. In the light of the history of Christian apologetics, he continues, there need be no fear as to the outcome of the whole controversy. The particle of truth which may underlie the whole agitation will doubtless become a permanent possession of religious thought; but the extravagant "substitutes," he says, will only pave the way for a still higher conception and still stronger defence of the fundamental truths of historic Christianity.

THE CONFESSIONAL AND PRESBYTERIANISM.

Rev. John Mackay, pastor of Crescent street Presbyterian church, Montreal, was reported recently as favoring the introduction of the confessional into the Presbyterian church. When this was commented upon by the newspapers Mr. Mackay wrote an explanation of his attitude, which explanation was in part as follows:

"I do not believe in the confessional as an institution, nor do I believe that any man should stand between God and his fellow-man, by any other right than that which character and experience give him. But I do believe that the Protestant church ought to have much more of that which the confessional gives, viz., direct, personal contact between the pastor and individual members of his congregation.

"Any man who is fit to be the pastor of a large congregation by his preliminary training and the varied experiences of his office, becomes a specialist in the phenomena of spiritual experience, yet our regular church services do not give him the least chance of using his special knowledge. They must be general in character and suited to the average mind and the ordinary experience. But, in this transition period, large numbers of thoughtful men and women are sorely perplexed on many fundamental questions. Not being able to find satisfactory solutions for themselves, and not hearing these questions fully discussed in the pulpit, too many give up the struggle altogether and lapse into an attitude of indifference to all church and religious life. Unfortunately the impression is all too common that clergymen resent being approached on such questions, counting themselves infallible dispensers of truth, whose opinions ought to be accepted without question. There may be such men in some of our pulpits; but the pastor who is worthy of the name will treat with respect any opinion which is seriously held and will rejoice to help seek a solution for any real human problem.

"It was that men and women should take these doubts and difficulties more seriously and should recognize in their pastors men who are more than willing and often quite able to be their counsellors and guides in these matters that I pleaded on Thursday evening and plead again here. To do this demands confidence and trust in the men thus consulted, but it is very far indeed from giving them the right to exact confession of sin, which is the great characteristic of the confessional."

It is worthy of note that there are more suicides proportionately among those who live in luxury and pleasure than among those who live in poverty.

MISSION WORK IN THE WEST.

In St. Paul's church on Sunday morning Rev. Dr. Carmichael gave a most stimulating and instructive address on the Mission work in New Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan—the vast country forming his field of operations: "That they might be saved," was the text, from the epistle to the Romans. Paul, the first foreign missionary, prayed as a patriot, said Dr. Carmichael, and we as patriots of to-day, should pray not only for education and increased facilities of transportation in the new country, but also for the spread of the Gospel.

During the past year there have been fifty new missions instituted but the west is developing so rapidly that new fields are opened nearly every day. He described the great need for missionaries along the new branches of the C. P. R. and the G. T. P.—men to carry the Word to the new settlers and to the construction workers as well. As an evidence of the extremely rapid growth of the country he stated that during the present year the Government of Saskatchewan were opening 313 new school sections. It was estimated that 200,000 new settlers at the least would come in during the early part of this year. Here alone would be work enough for 800 new missionaries at least.

"One great problem that we have to face," he said, "is the need for men in the fields. We need men more than money."

Sometimes the question arose, was it fair to send bright young men capable of doing so much on other professions out to minister on the prairies—preaching to little communities of ten or twelve families scattered here and there at distances of ten and twelve miles apart. Yet it was due to the work done among the early settlers whether or not the country would grow up into a Christian community. Men were converted on the prairies who would never have listened to the Word had they remained east. The loneliness of the prairies—which only those out there could appreciate—drew the men to the churches.

The Superintendent then went on to explain his system of donorships, whereby churches and congregations agree to raise within a certain time a sum of \$250 or more for the support of the mission fields. He quoted cases where this system had met with marked success and by illustrations of wonderful self-sacrifice on the part of western churches, corrected the idea that the west was not doing its share. Some of the stronger churches were supporting as many as three and four missionaries alone.

In the evening Dr. Carmichael addressed a large congregation in Eastern church. Both morning and evening Dr. Carmichael delivered his message with graphic force, bringing the impressions he meant to convey most vividly before his hearers. It would certainly be a wise thing for the General Assembly to give Dr. Carmichael a commission to visit the congregations in the older provinces. It would result as a deepening of the people's interest in Home Mission work, greatly increase the givings; and also add to the number of men willing to devote themselves to the glorious work of bringing the Gospel to the hundreds of thousands who are so rapidly peopling the prairies of the West.

The Living Age for April 6 begins a new serial, "The Enemy's Camp," which opens with a sprightly and interesting promise to make it interesting summer reading. The "camp" is not of the warlike sort, but a summer camp, so pitched as to lead to diverting social complications.