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Theological Observer

The Nature of the Church in Ecumenical Theology.—In 1910 the Protestant Episcopal Church invited the churches to consider "the faith and order of the churches" as a preliminary step toward an ultimate union or fellowship of all denominations. About the same time Archbishop Söderblom endeavored to bring the churches together to discuss "the life and work of the churches." The aim of both movements as stated by the committee preparing for the Stockholm Conference in 1925 was to "see Christians act corporately as if they were one body in a visible community without calling theological principles into question." It was hoped that the churches, at least all Protestant churches, would find ways and means of uniting in joint church work in spite of denominational differences. On this premise the World Conference on Faith and Order was organized. But it soon became apparent that before the churches could work harmoniously for the improvement of society and the spreading of "the Gospel," it was necessary to find some relation between "the life and work of the churches" and "the faith and order of the churches." In fact, before the churches could join in any interdenominational effort, it seemed important to answer the paramount question: What is the Church? What is the function of the Church? At the World Conference on Faith and Order of Oxford and Edinburgh, 1937, Visser 't Hooft said: "What we have discovered is that we do not yet know fully what the Church is and that we must try to learn anew what is its nature and function." In other words, before the churches could launch on "a program on life and work," they must analyze the nature and function of the Church. Three commissions were appointed for this study: a commission on the Church, on ways of worship, and on intercommunion. Dr. R. Newton Flew of Cambridge, England, is chairman of the Commission on the Church. Eighteen American theologians were selected as a committee to co-operate with the three commissions. The American committee has completed its study of the nature and function of the Church, and during the past summer the report as adopted by the committee late in 1943 was published.¹ The committee consisted of representatives of the Baptists (K. S. Latourette), Brethren, Congregationalists (Walter Horton), Disciples (W. E. Garrison), Episcopalians, Evangelical and Reformed, Friends, Lutherans (Eric Wahlstrom and T. G. Tappert), Methodists (H. F. Rall), Presbyterians (H. P. Van Dusen), and the United Church of Canada.

The committee's report is rather unsatisfactory, not only in the points in which the members were agreed, but also where they were not agreed. The report states that all members are in essential agreement that "Jesus did not intentionally found a new religion. His religious and ethical teaching stood in direct continuity with the best

¹ *The Nature of the Church, A Report of the American Theological Committee.* Willett, Clark & Company, 37 West Van Buren St., Chicago 5, Ill. 127 pages, 6×9. 75 cents.

thought of His people. . . . His aim was less to compete with the authoritative expounders of the Law than to face individuals with an absolute ethic. . . . This liberal ferment in the teachings of Jesus firmly implanted the spirit of innovation in the Christian movement. . . . Jesus was the anointed, or the Christ who would rule in the coming kingdom. God had vindicated Him by raising Jesus from the dead" (pp.10-11). The committee, however, was not agreed as to the norm for the doctrine of the Church: the New Testament? or the Church which produced and preserved the New Testament writings? or the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit? Therefore the committee could not agree as to the nature and function of the Church. It answers the question in such an ambiguous formula as: "The Church seeks to bring its Gospel to every phase of individual and social need." "In relation to its members, the function of the Church lies in three main areas: in teaching, in worship, and in service" (p.25). "The Church is the sphere of God's salvation in the present and of His ultimate triumph in the Kingdom of God. It is constituted by the revelation of His grace in Jesus Christ, its message is the Gospel of redemptive love. It is a body witnessing to His rule by their trust and obedience. This Church is set in the midst of a world where God's will is not yet done. All the branches (the various denominations) must be truly united in order to witness to His rule by their trust and obedience. This Church is set in the the Church Triumphant, which is the Kingdom of God" (p.26).

The overemphasis of the so-called visible church in Reformed theology is evident in this study, not only in the questionnaire which guided each of the commissioners in formulating his denomination's concept of the nature of the Church, but also in several of the denominational statements. The questionnaire is as follows:

- "1. In what sense did Christ 'found' the Church?
- "2. How does your Church consider that its present organization is related to New Testament doctrine and practice?
- "3. What are the characteristics of the Church as a fellowship, and what are the conditions of entrance into it, as laid down by your Church?
- "4. Has your Church a view of the relationship of the Church to Christ on which it lays special stress?
- "5. What does your Church consider most essential in the message and mission of the Church?
- "6. How does your Church conceive of the relation of the Church to the world? to the State? to the Kingdom of God?
- "7. In what way or ways does your Church consider that it is maintaining the continuity of the true Church of Christ?
- "8. What significant changes do you note in the thought and practice of your Church in the last hundred years?
- "9. What do you consider to be the distinctive contribution that your Church has to make to the Church Universal?"

Several of the denominational statements show the overemphasis of the empirical Church at the expense of the *una sancta*. The Anglican representative states: "the term invisible Church seems quite meaningless . . . for the Anglican the Church is the society of people, primarily

here on earth. . . . Not all members of the Church are saved." Judging by the diversity of opinions concerning the nature of the Church, there is little doctrinal unity among the co-operating Churches in the World Conference on Faith and Order. In fact, the theological differences become apparent in each denomination's view of the Church. The Disciples believe that their church polity and practice is a restoration of primitive Christianity (p. 59). The Congregationalists believe that in their denomination the rights of the individual conscience are recognized (p. 49). The Baptists hold that the whole number of regenerate believers constitute the body of Christ and that these cannot be ecclesiastically organized (pp. 64—71). The Presbyterian concept of the Church resembles most closely the theological position of Calvin. Methodism defines the Church, in accord with Wesley's emphasis on perfectionism, as the communion of persons seeking to be saved from their sins and desiring to lead a Christian life.

In this confusion of tongues the Lutheran child of seven years knows and declares what the Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of the Shepherd (Smalcald Articles). Our Lutheran catechumens are able to distinguish between the Church in its proper sense (the *una sancta*) and in the improper sense (the so-called visible church), between Luther's "*wirkliche*" and "*gemachte*" Church. The Lutheran doctrine of the Church is oriented in its central doctrine. Reformed theology does not recognize the doctrine of justification by faith as the material principle of theology and therefore will be unable to present the correct doctrine of the nature and the function of the Church. Professor Wahlstrom follows Articles VII and VIII of the Augsburg Confession in presenting the Lutheran doctrine and distinguishes correctly between the *una sancta* and the empirical Church. We are glad that he made this valuable contribution to the committee's report. We regret, however, that the committee could not unite on a definition of the Church which is based on the central doctrine of the Christian faith: "I believe the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, for Christ's sake through faith."

F. E. MAYER

The Institutional Chaplains' Conference.—The clergy of the Missouri Synod will be glad to know that a number of chaplains belonging to the Synodical Conference who serve at public institutions recently met at St. Martini Church, Chicago. According to Pastor Carino, who reports on the meeting, the brethren assembled "for mutual encouragement, sharing of experiences, strengthening of conviction and faith, study of institutional missionary methods and techniques in the light of experience and research, and the discussion of various problems faced by the institutional chaplain." Papers were submitted by Chaplains M. Ilse, Sr., Enno Duemling, B. H. Schrein, A. A. Fenner, W. C. Baumann. A round-table discussion was led by Chaplain Tr. Thieme. Seven Districts of the Missouri Synod and one District of the Wisconsin Synod were represented. The subjects discussed in the papers were: Law and Gospel as Applying to the Work of the Institutional Chaplain; The Rehabilitating of the Inmates of Penal Institutions; Comfort at the Bedside; Humiliation and Pride; When the Uniforms Are Put Away. The round-table discussion dealt with Prayer in Institutions. A.

Revitalizing Our Appreciation of the Bible.—In the *Lutheran Outlook* (September, 1945), Dr. H. L. Yochum offers some very interesting and encouraging comment on an article that appeared in the *Christian Century* (July 18, 1945). In its article the *Christian Century* had reported that "the doctrine of the Bible now held by European scholars is indistinguishable from the phenomenon we know in this country as Fundamentalism. Yet these scholars insist that they accept the results of the historical criticism of the Bible and share wholeheartedly in the researches of this discipline. In this they differ from our Fundamentalists. But in their actual use of the Bible it seems to their American colleagues that they make no use of the findings of critical research, but fall back upon a naive conception of the book not unlike that which obtained before the historical criticism appeared. . . . There is an obvious irony in the fact that the European theology, as if repentant for what it has done to us, comes now to rescue us from the consequences of its earlier tutelage." Dr. Yochum comments on this editorial (quoted in part) as follows: "This recent trend in Europe ought to convince all of us that the doctrine of the Bible cannot be ignored or deliberately eliminated in our efforts to establish Lutheran unity. It is more than argumentation about 'theories of inspiration.' It involves a vital problem of theology on which will hinge our whole system of doctrine and standard of practice. Can it be that the historic position of Lutheranism on the doctrine of the Bible will now receive its most compelling commendation from the people who learned more about the Bible in the crucible of warfare and suffering than can ever be discerned in the professor's theological laboratory? Shall we find our position vindicated in this most unexpected but convincing testimony which comes from the land whence came the question marks and critic's bold comments? The Book is a solid rock on which faith may build, sinking the foundation all the deeper as storms grow more violent. Our brethren in Europe have tested this Rock and found it firm, adequate for its purpose and chief use. Perhaps that is just as scientific as searching for fissures and fusions and fossils and faults in the Rock and prognosticating on the basis of our findings. The pragmatic test is scientific and profoundly convincing. Maybe we need a similar experience here in America to revitalize our appreciation of the Book." What the new conception of the Bible in Europe attests is that it is the inspired, inerrant source and rule of faith and life, the never-failing fountain of strength and comfort because of the very fact that it is the Word of God. And just that is the point on which all Lutherans, as also all other Christians, should be agreed.

J. T. M.

Church Conditions in Germany.—It is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening along the church front in Germany. Reports say that a conference of prominent members of the Confessional Church (Bekennniskirche) was held in Frankfurt. The meeting had been called by Rev. Martin Niemoeller. Another conference was held at Treysa, which had a still wider scope. It will be recalled that the Confessional Church consists of Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals. Reports state that Protestants in Germany are endeavoring to reorganize a compre-

hensive church body, which they called the "Evangelical Church of Germany." As it appears to us, the confessional differences between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches will be ignored. If the plan succeeds, the principle of union without unity on which the decree of Frederick William III in 1817 was based will triumph.

What the churches are debating nowadays seems to be the question whether in the future the churches are to occupy themselves more with political and social matters than they did in the past. In America and Great Britain the view is often voiced that the German churches, owing to their Lutheran antecedence, were altogether too passive and docile in political matters, and thus Hitler had no difficulty in achieving that absolute control which he sought.

To us it appears that what Germany needs is a return to the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran symbols in general. True repentance is required. If that takes place, the improvements in the social and political sphere that are so ardently sought will be forthcoming. A.

The Similar Method of Modernism.—Ernest Gordon in the *Sunday School Times* (August 11, 1945) reports under this heading the following: "In a Report to the Biennial Meeting of the Federal Council of Churches (December 10, 1940), entitled 'The State of the Church' and signed by Georgia Harkness, E. E. Aubrey, J. Harry Cotton, Roy Smith, E. M. Poteat, and others, occurs this sentence (p. 12): 'Liberal ministers, themselves theologically instructed, have even been known to pride themselves on the extent to which they could conceal their theology from the congregation.' In the Congregationalist organ *Advance* (April, 1945) the method is explained. The title of the article is 'A Church Made New.' [The method was this]: 'An old Congregationalist church had a Fundamentalist pastor. Very little money was sent through denominational agencies, but increasing amounts were given to independent faith missions sponsored by a well-known Chicago institution [founded, apparently, by the well-known Congregationalist layman D. L. Moody.—E. G.]. Thoughtful and discriminating people began to leave. After thirty years of apostasy the church was hardly recognizable as a Congregational body. Then came a new pastor and a different one. He began to develop slowly but surely a constructive and enlightened approach to modern religious thinking. When confronted with menacing questions, he would deftly turn the discussion into other channels. Thus he was able to keep peace with what might be termed *the old guard*. He based his strategy upon a five-point plan of advance. He would endeavor to separate the church from its former Fundamentalist associations. He would draw the church into affiliation with other broad-gauged churches of the city. Sometimes anonymous letters would come asking why he did not preach sermons on the Blood Atonement, Salvation, the Second Coming, Infallibility of the Scriptures, or the Virgin Birth, but instead he would continue to give emphasis upon positive points of belief, social action, devotional subjects, and topics of spiritual inspiration. He became actively identified with varied civic affairs about town. At Lenten services the church was brought into touch with the larger downtown churches of open mind, rather than with the former group of narrow churches. This new association, of course, brought his

members into fellowship with intelligent, alert, and thoughtful ministers of keen theological perception. And the result? The transition was accomplished without the church realizing that a long-term strategy was being observed and that new appreciations were being developed of which the church had been formerly thoroughly unaware. The old hymnals were supplanted by the new *Pilgrim Hymnal*; the old book in the Church School, with its jangly Gospel songs, was replaced by a modern one. The conservative school literature was abandoned for the Pilgrim Press material. The faith missions of independent bodies were finally dropped, and all benevolence money was put through the regular denominational apportionment for world service.' This is the abridged account in the very words of *Advance*. It is not necessary to comment. Modernism here draws a picture of itself which would shame anybody save Modernists. . . . In the old days, Congregationalism had two flourishing organs, the *Congregationalist* in Boston and the *Advance* in Chicago, both *weeklies*. It has shrunk to the point of combining the two in a monthly with 12,000 subscribers." The last two lines tell the story of what Modernism brings about by its very destructiveness. Under the curse of Modernism all spiritual endeavors are bound to perish.

J. T. M.

The Auburn Affirmation Defended.—In the Southern Presbyterian Church the Auburn Affirmation is a subject of discussion on account of the attempts that are made to unite the Northern and the Southern Presbyterians. Dr. Dunbar H. Ogden, chairman of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church U. S. (Southern Presbyterians), published the following sentiments on the Auburn Affirmation, showing how people of his type endeavor to justify the radical, destructive planks of this statement and how easily the descent from truth to error can be accomplished.

"Some persons seem to think that all signers of the Auburn Affirmation, now alive, are either unorthodox themselves or else are sponsors of heresy. To such persons in order to damn a man theologically you need but say, 'He signed the Auburn Affirmation.' Doubtless there are many officers and members of our Southern Presbyterian Church who have not a clear idea of the content and the historic setting of the Affirmation which some twenty years ago was signed by 1,283 ministers of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. Certainly a large number of the signers of the Auburn Affirmation are dead. Hence it would be safe to say that of the approximately ten thousand ministers in the U. S. A. Church today not more than seven or eight hundred signed the document. The following statement of fact with a few comments may throw some light upon the bearing of the Auburn Affirmation on the question of reunion between the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., and the Presbyterian Church, U. S.

"In the year 1910 the General Assembly (U. S. A.) adopted 'Certain Essential and Necessary Articles of Faith.' These articles numbered five and became the well known 'Five Points.' In 1916 and again in 1923 the U. S. A. General Assembly reaffirmed these Five Points as essential in the admission of a man to the ministry. It is a significant fact that

the same Five Points were presented to our Southern General Assembly more than once and that our Assembly refused to take action similar to that of the U. S. A. General Assembly. The Five Points are as follows:

"(1) It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide, and move the writers of the Holy Scriptures as to keep them from error.

"(2) It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary.

"(3) It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards that Christ offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God.

"(4) It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and our standards concerning our Lord Jesus Christ that on the third day He arose from the dead, with the same body in which He suffered; with which also He ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, making intercession.

"(5) It is an essential doctrine of the Word of God and the supreme standards of our faith that the Lord Jesus showed His power and love by working mighty miracles. This working was not contrary to nature but superior to it.

"Many in the U. S. A. Church deemed this action of the General Assembly a modification of the minister's ordination vow in an unconstitutional manner, that is, without an affirmative vote by two General Assemblies and by three fourths of the Presbyteries. They also thought the specific language used in the statement of the essential doctrines constituted a too greatly restricted interpretation of the vows taken by a minister at ordination.

"It were well at this point to refresh our memories as to the ordination vows that have to do with doctrine:

"Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

"Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?"

"Much unrest developed in the U. S. A. Church and danger of a division arose. In that crisis the Auburn Affirmation was issued, and in it we find a strong protest against the alleged changing of the ordination vows by an act of the General Assembly rather than by constitutional procedure. We also find in the Affirmation the following important doctrinal statement:

"Furthermore, this opinion of the General Assembly attempts to commit our Church to certain theories concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the Continuing Life and Supernatural Power of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all hold most earnestly to these great facts and doctrines; we all believe from our hearts that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God; that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh; that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and through Him we have our

redemption; that having died for our sins, He rose from the dead and is our ever-living Savior; that in His earthly ministry He wrought many mighty works, and by His vicarious death and unfailling presence He is able to save to the uttermost. Some of us regard the particular theories contained in the deliverance of the General Assembly of 1923 as satisfactory explanations of these facts and doctrines. But we are united in believing that these are not the only theories allowed by the Scriptures and our standards as explanations of these facts and doctrines of our religion, and that all who hold to these facts and doctrines, whatever theories they may employ to explain them, are worthy of all confidence and fellowship.'

"Now to the comments concerning the bearing of the Five Points and of the Auburn Affirmation upon the question of the reunion of the U. S. A. and U. S. Churches.

"(1) The first of the Five Points deals with the doctrine of inspiration. The Confession of Faith and ordination vows commit a Presbyterian minister to belief in the Scriptures as the infallible guide concerning faith in God and duty toward men. But do the Confession of Faith and the ordination vows claim for the Scriptures total inerrancy? Of course, no informed person holds that there is no error in the Bible that we have today. The claim is that the original manuscripts were without error. But those manuscripts are not now in existence, so far as anyone knows, and they have not been in existence for many centuries. Let us imagine a fine Christian man applying to one of our Southern Presbyteries for ordination. He makes a satisfactory declaration of his faith in Jesus Christ, he believes in the Scriptures as our infallible guide touching faith in God and duty toward man; but he cannot conscientiously commit himself to the theory that the Bible is totally inerrant. To him it seems that in places, especially in the Old Testament, the inspired writers used as a framework for their message the ideas of the age in which they lived, which ideas may not have been true to fact. For instance, to him the religious significance of the record in the first chapter of Genesis concerning God's creative work would not be impaired, even though it were proven that some of its statements are not in accord with scientific facts. If total inerrancy of the Scriptures is an essential and necessary article of faith, such a Christian man could not be ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church. But few if any of the Presbyteries in the Southern Church would refuse to ordain such a man.

"(2) The second of the Five Points has to do with the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, faith in which is required of all ministers in our Southern Church. With some care I have inquired into this matter, and I have been informed on trustworthy authority that today the ministry of the U. S. A. Church accepts the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, but places emphasis, as we also do, upon the essential fact of the incarnation.

"(3) The third of the Five Points deals with the Atonement. At once the question arises in what sense is the phrase 'to satisfy divine justice' used? To some persons these words seem to mean that a loving

Son is placating an unwilling Father, rather than that the Son, sent of the Father, is meeting demands of right in behalf of sinful men for whom He dies. Not infrequently persons being examined for ordination by Southern Presbyteries state that they do not accept any one theory of the atonement as a complete explanation of the stupendous fact of Christ's vicarious death, in which fact they firmly believe; and these persons are ordained.

"(4) The fourth of the Five Points deals with the resurrection body of our Lord. Here the key word is the adjective 'same.' What is really meant when it is declared that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of His Father with the same body with which He suffered? Once more imagine, if you please, a fine Christian man, applying to a Southern Presbytery for ordination. He affirms his faith that Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead, but in the light of the Apostle Paul's teaching concerning the resurrection body of the believers (1 Cor. 15:35-49) he hesitates to use the adjective 'same' in reference to the resurrection and ascension body of Jesus Christ. Think you that he should be ordained or not?

"(5) At the heart of the fifth of the Five Points is faith in the supernatural. The Presbyteries in both the U. S. A. and U. S. Churches today require of a candidate for ordination such faith.

"Perhaps these statements of fact and these comments will make it clear that the signers of the Auburn Affirmation, now alive, cannot rightly be deemed unorthodox themselves or sponsors of heresy merely because of their having signed that document. Furthermore, the Auburn Affirmation cannot be considered sufficient proof that the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America is doctrinally unsound, or so greatly divergent theologically from our Southern Church as to make a reunion of the two bodies unwise."
A.

The Dogma of the Assumption.—The Catholic weekly *America* (August 11, 1945) pleads with its readers to request the Holy Father to make the doctrine of Mary's Assumption an official dogma of the Church. Quoting the article in part, we read: "The Vatican radio several months ago broadcast a message of special significance to American Catholics. It was an unofficial but clear invitation to the faithful in English-speaking countries to petition the Holy Father for the definition of the dogma of the Assumption of Our Lady. The great festival observed in the universal Church on August 15 commemorates a belief that Catholics have held explicitly for close on fifteen centuries—that within a few days of her death the body of the Blessed Virgin was, by a singular privilege conferred by her Son, taken into Heaven. This doctrine, Catholics hold, was contained implicitly in the deposit of faith handed on by the Apostles. For more than eighty years, however, a movement has been growing to have the doctrine proclaimed infallibly. This would require an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by the Pope, similar to that of Pius IX, who, on December 8, 1854, solemnly defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception; or a definition by a general council of the Church, such as that published by the Council of Trent, four

hundred years ago, when, among other decisions, it confirmed the tradition of the utter sinlessness of the Virgin."

The writer complains that the movement is attracting little attention in Great Britain and in the United States. This "is in strong contrast to the enthusiastic leadership shown by Catholic Americans in the movement for the definition of the Immaculate Conception. Of incidental interest is the fact that although the Council of Baltimore in 1846 designated the Immaculate Conception as the patronal Feast of the United States, the American bishops more than fifty years earlier had chosen the Feast of the Assumption. Nine countries today honor Mary as their patron under the title of Our Lady of the Assumption." The article admits: "There is nothing in the Bible, nor are there any historical testimonies, directly attesting to the Assumption; but the doctrine rests nevertheless on such firm theological ground that even heretical sects as far back as the fifth century accepted it without dispute. According to Pope Benedict XIV, it would be impious and blasphemous for a Catholic to deny a doctrine that, while not defined as an Article of Faith, has been universally held throughout the Church." The writer then declares: "The Feast of the Assumption was already being celebrated in the East when Saint Juvenal of Jerusalem stated the doctrine at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. It was Saint John, the Beloved Disciple, who discovered that the Virgin's grave was empty; and it is, of course, a significant fact that no church or city has ever claimed to possess her mortal remains. Had any relics been found, they would most certainly have been proclaimed by the Church and revered above all others." The following paragraph sums up the argument for belief in Mary's Assumption: "Every Catholic is convinced that of all God's creatures Mary occupies a place apart. Many spiritual writers have shown the parallelism between the Feasts of Our Lord celebrated by the Church and those of Our Lady, and it has been pointed out that there is a close parallel in the life of Christ and His Mother. The Church celebrates His birth and hers; His presentation in the Temple and hers; and so on until we come to the mysteries of the Ascension and her Assumption. It is entirely congruous that, as Mary humbled herself in life even to the point of sharing in the death on the Cross, her Son, who held her first in His thought, should ordain a reward that she should be assumed after her death, body and soul, into heaven to share immediately in His glory." Here indeed is strange reasoning on behalf of a doctrine that is to be elevated to a dogma. Neither Scripture nor any historical testimonies attest to the Assumption. That is admitted. Still it would be impious and blasphemous for Catholics to deny a doctrine that has been universally held throughout the Church. Does mere antiquity make a doctrine a dogma? In addition, it is entirely congruous that Mary should be assumed into heaven to share in Christ's glory. Finally, no bones of Mary are found; hence the Assumption is a fact. The whole argumentation proves the anti-Christian character of papistic theology, especially in view of the fact that the Assumption of Mary is taught in the interest of her worship as mediatrix. Shrewd Thomas F. Doyle, the writer of the article, does

not state that the story of Mary's Assumption is pure fiction; that Pope Gelasius I in 496 declared one of the sources of the legend, the *Transitus S. Mariae*, attributed to Melito of Sardes, as apocryphal; and that even in the 16th century the Dominican theologian Melchior Canus and the Jesuit dogmatician Peter Canisius held that Mary's Assumption is not sufficiently attested to vindicate its character as an article of faith. Luther writes: "The papists appointed the Assumption of Mary (*Mariae Himmelfahrt*) as a Feast in order that the people might honor and adore her" (St. L. XIII:1208); and again: "The papists have made a God out of the Virgin Mary and ascribe to her all power in heaven and on earth" (St. L. XIII:1116). This the article concedes when in conclusion it says: "It is the Queenship of Mary, *the belief that God's grace flows freely through her hands* [italics our own], that should inspire American Catholics to join with others throughout the world in beseeching the Supreme Pontiff to proclaim her Assumption." J. T. M.

Brief Items.—The English are bothered by their rapidly rising divorce rate. It is approaching 40,000 yearly. A thorough overhauling of the marriage laws is being advocated. Lord Horder, physician in ordinary to the king, suggests in his latest book, *Rebuilding Family Life in the Postwar World*, that this idea should be equally stressed with the necessary building of many houses. — *The Lutheran*.

According to an exchange the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America is endeavoring to resume its work in the Chinese provinces of Honan and Hupeh with full vigor and to have fifteen missionaries active there before December 31, 1945. Of the fifteen, seven are new workers.

The leaders of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A. are advising their congregations to postpone the erection of new buildings until help has been given to Christians living in devastated countries throughout the world. To what extent the advice given by these people can be followed in Christendom generally will depend on local conditions. We believe this counsel should be carefully considered by all congregations which are thinking of inaugurating a building program.

The U. L. C. A. mourns the death of Dr. Frederick H. Knubel, its first president, who relinquished this office only a year ago. He was born May 22, 1870, and died Oct. 16 of this year. Personally Dr. Knubel was a conservative Lutheran, who was willing to avow belief in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Roman Catholic Church has this fall observed the centennial of Cardinal Newman's accession to its ranks. Whoever reads his famous *Apologia pro Vita Sua* will not be surprised at his defection from Protestantism. In spite of his learning the man had no understanding whatever of the central truth of the Reformation — justification by grace through faith.

