

Editorials

Missouri Synod Clergymen Look at Themselves

READERS of *The Cresset* undoubtedly have read with great interest the article by Ross Scherer, of the Valparaiso faculty, representing a summary of his doctoral dissertation on the question of how our Missouri Synod ministers look at themselves. The article is of considerable interest to us at Springfield (which he refers to as the R.O.T.C. of the Missouri Synod as opposed to the West Point of St. Louis), because of the way in which our alumni look at themselves. Mr. Scherer notes that the Springfielder is somewhat less clerically oriented in his background than his St. Louis brother, and throughout his professional life retains a greater admiration for, or at least stands in greater awe of, Synodical officials. One might venture the guess that this is perhaps due not so much to the fact that he attended a different seminary, but perhaps because the seminary was not in St. Louis.

One could have wished, although perhaps it has been done and has simply not been mentioned, that Mr. Scherer had asked some questions relative to the doctrinal thinking of our clergy. The air is filled with generalizations, and one would genuinely welcome a few statements as to how our clergy actually do feel about such subjects as Lutheran union, lodge practice, the doctrine of Scripture, unionism, and many other issues which have been paramount in our public discussions.

At any rate, we are very grateful for what Mr. Scherer has done and we hope that either he or someone like him will continue to conduct surveys. The administration and faculty of both Seminaries would do well to read this article, and to evaluate their programs and objectives in light of the way in which ministers some years after graduation view themselves. Self-study is always useful, and Mr. Scherer has given us a good lesson in how to study ourselves more effectively. There were some interesting lessons in this article, both for theological professors and for church officials. One is impressed with the fact that our clergymen seem to be quite independent in their thinking, and not easily bowled over. It would appear that the future of our Church is in the hands of a clergy, which, if not particularly flamboyant, is at least steadfast and firm.

J. A. O. Preus

Church Membership Declines in 1962

FOR THE first time in nearly a century church membership in the year 1962 declined in the United States. Warnings of this had been sounded several years before, when it was noted that the number of theological students was declining. This tendency has not as yet caught up with the Missouri Synod, but it has already caught up with some branches of Lutheranism. The twentieth cen-

ture will be known as the century of the greatest persecution of religion, Christian and non-Christian, that history has ever known. Naturally this affects church membership and the willingness of young men to study for the ministry.

This ought to be a cause of great concern to Christians, and particularly to Christian pastors. It ought to motivate us to examine our work, our programming, and the relevance of what we are doing. It ought to move us to work very diligently and faithfully with our young people. The need for pastors in our church is greater than it has been for many years. The need for missionaries is beyond imagination. It would appear that never before has the statement been so true, "the night is coming when no man can work." It also seems that the decline in church membership is not due to the threats of communism, but to the indifference and the fatness of our western civilization.

Hence, we are issuing a call to the pastors of our Synod to exert effort in the area of evangelism and mission work, and in the recruitment of future ministers, teachers and missionaries. The church must truly be the Church. It must know its message and proclaim it boldly and fearlessly. The church must get down to the business that Christ had given it so long ago. Perhaps we ought to be reminded once more that the mission of the church is to preserve the means of grace in their truth and purity, to use the means of grace for our own edification, and to bring the means of grace to all throughout the world who do not yet have them. This is our mission and may God help us accomplish it.

J. A. O. Preus

BACHELOR OF DIVINITY DEGREE

The Board for Higher Education of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has approved the proposal of the Curriculum Commission to grant the *Bachelor of Divinity* degree to qualified candidates at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. The initial date for conferring of degrees has been set for spring, 1964.

J. A. O. Preus