

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AND FOREIGN RELATIONS
SYNOD OF BISHOPS
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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DESTINY OF THE CENACLE IN JERUSALEM

Bulletin #229 of the Christian Information Centre for the month of February relates that a group of Yeshiva students have systematically caused disorders for a number of years around the Christian shrine in Zion, a place in which - according to some traditions - the Last Supper and also the descent of the Holy Spirit took place. This shrine belongs to the Roman Catholic Franciscan Order. Complaints about such events have become more and more irritating for the Israeli government.

In one of the recent episodes, some Yeshiva "squatters" installed a large iron Menorah at the bottom of the outside steps leading to the upper room. In addition, they occupied rooms adjacent to the Senacle. An official investigation was carried out on January 23rd by Yisrael Lippel, the Director General of the Religious Affairs Ministry and by Daniel Rossing, Director of the Department for Religious Affairs for the Christian community. On Friday the 25th Mayor Teddy Kollek, together with Ministry officials, visited the site. According to The Jerusalem Post on January 25th, Mayor Teddy Kollek termed the break-in "hooliganism." The Director-General stated that "each time there is a new scandal, there should be an investigation by the Knesset or by a committee appointed by the Government. Mount Zion is holy to three religions and no one appointed the Diaspora Yeshiva to be the custodian of Jewish property there." It is believed that the grave of the Prophet King David is located on the site of the Cenacle, and also a cave in which he used to pray.

According to the latest information received from Jerusalem, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has placed the whole shrine in Zion under its immediate control. Unfortunately, none of the representatives of the Christian denominations expressed any concern or filed a protest against this act.

GOD IS NOT TO BE PROFANED

The enemies of Christ manifest their feelings more openly than ever. As a result we see outbreaks of sacreligious acts not only in some parts of America, but also in Europe.

The sacreligious film, "Jesus of Nazareth", according to the plan of its producers, is to become a traditional entertainment and will again be shown on television during western Easter celebrations. Last year this film raised some uneasiness in Christian circles, but one is to assume that by now all the arguments against it are worn out and we haven't heard of any criticism or protests.

The church publication, Pravoslavnyaya Rus (Orthodox Russia), in its March 14th issue, relates that a correspondent from Germany mailed to the Editor's office a sample of gift wrapping paper which is completely made up of especially venerated Russian icons, connected by an ornamental design. The icons of the Holy Virgin of Vladimir and the Holy Trinity by St. Andrew Rublev are the dominating images.

A pornographic magazine, The Hustler, presented in its April issue a color photograph of a stuffed, bleeding, crucified rabbit with a crown of thorns

on its head. The Lord's patience must have worn thin, because the editor of this disgusting publication, Larry Flint, who was "converted to Christianity" by President Carter's sister, was shot by a bystander and as a result was hospitalized, being on the critical list for some time. At present, newspapers report that he is paralyzed from the waist down and no improvement is recorded.

THE CURRENT LIE OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH

A Soviet paper which is published for Russian people living abroad, Golos Rodiny (The Voice of the Fatherland), in its 5th issue for 1978 contained an interview given to a nameless German reporter of the magazine Die Freie Welt in reference to the status of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union. As usual, the Moscow Patriarch devotes much time to explanations of how the Patriarchate participates, under his leadership, in assisting the government in its political goals which are supposedly directed toward the establishment of peace in the whole world.

Among several questions asked was the following: "What is your opinion of statements made by western "Sovietologists" that the Church in the USSR is persecuted?" To this the Patriarch quite resolutely and irregardless of truth declared: "Such statements can be explained either by ignorance of the true facts about religious life in the USSR or by deliberate misrepresentation of them. In our days more and more people who are interested in the life of our Church are convinced that in our country there are normal conditions for it. Unfortunately, it has to be admitted that the basis for rumors circulating in the West about the 'persecuted Church' in the USSR is the deliberate longing of certain circles, unfriendly toward our country, to force upon the inhabitants stereotype images... It is quite natural that the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as other faithful in the Soviet Union, very definitely reject such assertions."

It is no wonder, therefore, that this faithful service of the Moscow Patriarchate did not go unnoticed by the Soviet government. According to The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate (#11, 1977) Patriarch Pimen was awarded the decoration of the Order of the Red Banner of Labor in August, 1977. It should be noted that the Journal's subscribers get their copies with at least a 5 month delay. In his speech of appreciation the Patriarch said: "I assure the Soviet Government that our Church will keep up her zealous service to the holy cause of defending peace and strengthening friendship among nations."

THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE IS IN DANGER

The pressure which the Turkish government exercises upon the Greek minority in Constantinople, and in particular upon the Ecumenical See, raises concern in many religious and even some political circles. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is very constrained in financial matters and is greatly dependent upon income from rich America, the Greek dioceses of which are struggling to obtain complete autonomy. The flock of the Ecumenical Patriarch is numerically insignificant; its importance in the Orthodox world is in danger.

According to Time Magazine of April 3rd, of the Patriarch's more than 1-1/2 million flock at the time of the First World War, there remains some 7,000 people now who are spread among 50 parishes, while in the Patriarch's cathedral services are attended by some dozen people only. The real estate of the Patriarchate is also in very poor shape because for any repair estimated to be over \$13.00 one has to get a special permit and this is only obtained with great difficulty. The unbearable taxation on the Church and

and her properties has come to the point where carpets, linen and table ware were attached for tax default, even at the Patriarch's quarters.

The Turkish authorities constantly prevent the Patriarchate's activities as the spiritual center abroad. The travels of bishops and regular clergy are strictly controlled. Last September the government revoked the passport of Metropolitan Meliton who is the main representative of the Patriarchate to the Vatican. They also closed the only existing Seminary and printing shop. The Patriarch himself was elected to this post only after the Turkish government refused to sanction a few other, more suitable candidates. Because of pressure which came from the U.S. State Department and a number of Roman Catholic prelates, the Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit met recently with representatives of the Patriarchate and Greek Prime Minister Caramanlis. He promised to put through some reforms which will ease the position of the Ecumenical See.

Meanwhile, a lot of rumors circulate concerning the destiny of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from possible transfer to Mt. Athos, Crete or Greece, to even, as Moscow proposes, Bulgaria or Rumania! The Hellenic Chronicle of February 16th does not hide its grave concern for the destiny of this historical Patriarchate, because the transfer of the See to another country (which would be welcomed by the Turkish government) would inevitably raise the importance of the Moscow Patriarchate, and this in turn, would definitely have a reaction on political circumstances in Asia Minor. There is also the danger that in case of eviction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Alexandrian and Antiochian Patriarchates would cease to consider this See ecumenical.

A CATHOLIC OFFER FAILED

The Information Service of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in its #35 issue published a letter of Cardinal Willebrands addressed to the Presidents of the Episcopal Conference. He relates in it that as late as May, 1975 the Pope of Rome requested him to make an offer to the Orthodox Churches to agree on the selection of a set date for the celebration of Holy Pascha. The day, according to Roman suggestion, was to be the Sunday following the second Saturday of April. The World Council of Churches on its part inquired among its member churches and it was clear that all the representatives of the western denominations favored this suggestion, but at the same time they stressed that such a proposal could be accepted only if the Orthodox Churches would approve. "Orthodox" modernists declared their fervent wish to celebrate Easter with the western denominations, but had to admit that there are "serious pastoral difficulties existing in certain local Churches" in their way. Because of this they hesitate to give a definite answer but will make some additional studies of the question.

"This study is already under way," writes Willebrands, but it is clear that no decision will be possible in the immediate future... "Under these circumstances, the Holy Father has judged that the situation is not yet ripe enough for the Roman Catholic Church to change its present method of determining the date of Easter or to put into effect this year the proposal that this great feast be celebrated on a fixed Sunday of April." In the conclusion of this letter he expresses the hope that in a few years the Catholic offer will be accepted by "the entire Christian world."

THE NEW METROPOLITAN OF THE OCA

The New York Times of February 5th published a long article devoted to Metropolitan Theodosius entitled "New Metropolitan Sign of Change for Orthodox Church in America." The correspondent, George Vecsey, to whom

Metropolitan Theodosius granted a personal interview, notes that his election "is seen by many in the faith to be a decisive break with old world traditions. When he was installed in Montreal on October 25th the hymns were sung in English. When the previous Metropolitan, Iriney, was installed in 1965, the hymns were sung in Slavonic.... Many Roman Catholic groups and some Protestant churches also kept ethnic and language ties, but the Orthodox Churches intensely guard their heritage. Church members now see Metropolitan Theodosius as a tangible sign that Orthodoxy is broadening in North America."

The Metropolitan himself spoke in the same vein to the correspondent. "Orthodoxy is also modified for local use. This is why you have so many ethnic versions, because we always use the language of the people. You take Roman Catholicism - so unbending about the use of Latin for centuries - then they threw it out."

As related by the official OCA publication, The Orthodox Church, for the month of March, the newly elected Metropolitan visited his former diocese shortly after his installation where there was a banquet in his honor. Much was said about his farsightedness and a lot of changes he made during his 5 year stay as ruling bishop of Pittsburgh. "One would think that with all the countless achievements of our honored guest this evening that we are honoring a man about to retire. On the contrary, he is just beginning. God still has another mission for him, another journey to undertake...the most important one in his young life....," said one of the numerous speakers. "His Grace, Bishop Theodosius and now, Metropolitan Theodosius, a man who has a deep attachment and respect for the past, but who has a dream and a vision for the future" he concluded.

Where is the Metropolia heading now, which just a short while ago was Russian? In any case, by no means can one call her one of the "Russian jurisdictions."

A REMARKABLE TEXT BOOK

While looking for textbooks to teach religion to non-Russian speaking children, the Foreign Relations Department of our Synod purchased a 3-volume History of the Church by Rev. George Nicozisin, published by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. The textbook, not without some good qualities, very clearly reflects ecumenical tendencies. It is especially noticable in the "Recommendation to the Teacher."

When speaking about the original organization of the Church and her spreading in the world, the author recommends that an Orthodox teacher visit the nearest synagogue so that the students would be able to make a comparison with the Church (Vol. I, p. 52). Do we have to call to mind that the holy canons prohibit the faithful from visiting heterodox, and even more, non-Christian houses of prayer?

It is interesting to note that this text very painstakingly avoids the term "heresy" or "heretic." The author prefers to use "internal conflict" or "controversy." Judging from the same "Recommendations," it is obvious that the author is sure that no contemporary child will ever remember the difference between the several heresies which their grandfathers and fathers used to know so well. He doesn't even consider it to be of any importance. "Important only is that they know there were some internal conflicts and basically what these conflicts were" (p. 74). The Arian heresy which for such a long period shook the very foundations of the Church is treated as merely a "controversy (which) became a political football that caused Church leaders to take sides."

Special attention is given by the author to ensure that a teacher in no

way implants in the childrens' souls a feeling of hostility toward Roman Catholics. "The teacher should convey to the pupil the development of Papal authority in such a way as not to encourage animosity toward the Roman Catholic Church." The Orthodox cleric pedagogue also should not explain to students the Orthodox view on the Catholic teaching of "Filioque," which instead of heresy is conveniently called the "Filioque Clause." "Explanations of the Holy Trinity and the procession of the Holy Spirit through the Son, and from the Son, should be avoided, for they will only confuse the pupil that much more. It should be sufficient to impress upon the pupil the connection of the Filioque Clause with the Petrine Promise" (p. 94).

It is very hard to expect that students who will be raised with the recommendations in this textbook will remain Orthodox. And when do they have a chance to learn the dogmas of their Church if not at school age?

THE VATICAN AND COMMUNISM

Dr. Malachi Martin, a former Jesuit priest, warned that a group of European Cardinals has a plot to influence the Vatican to support Communism.

Those who happen to follow the different streams in the life of Roman Catholicism can not fail to notice that for a number of years Catholic clergy and monastics have actively collaborated with various socialistic groups of the most leftist leaning. It is especially obvious in the countries of South America.

Just recently, Dr. Martin published his book "The Final Conclave." In a press conference when presenting the book to the public the author stated that a group of "progressive" Cardinals in Europe, Asia and Latin America hope that the successor of Pope Paul VI will declare a "policy not to oppose the advent of Communist governments in Western Europe and Latin America but to allow political and economic collaboration by Roman Catholics." He also noted that the majority of the 20 European Cardinals are involved in this plan. "I am not sure it is written down and in blueprint form, but I'd say in Europe there are at least 10 to 15 of that mentality."

Martin thinks that as soon as the new Pope openly announces his willingness to support socialistic politics and collaboration with the Communists, Catholic votes will be a factor which will, in great measure, influence the establishment of Communism in Europe and South America. The publisher, S. Stein, said: "It may be one man's opinion, but it is based on what is happening today, in secret."

As for Martin himself, who definitely shows a great deal of foresight, he is afraid that the axis "Rome-Moscow" will leave the USA in political and economic isolation (News World, 2-17-78).

RECEIVED INTO "SEMI-ORTHODOXY"

The official publication of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, The Word, in its February issue relates that a small community of Roman Catholic monks in Aubazine, France, was accepted into Orthodoxy, it seems, by Archbishop Gregory who is affiliated with the Ecumenical See.

The leader of this group, Dom Placid Deseille, a noted historian, was a practicing Uniate of the Byzantine Rite for 10 years. Now he works on translations of Orthodox theological and spiritual texts into French.

The spokesman for this community declared that their decision "does not imply a disavowal of the past and, even less, any animosity against Rome and the Catholic hierarchy." Their goal is to continue to work for Chris-

tian unity. They also explained that their former situation created a lot of "abnormalities" and difficulties because the community's "committment to the Eastern Tradition isolated it from the large part of Catholic clergy and monks, whereas its belonging to the Roman Church deprived it of living communion in the Orthodox Church."

The article does not explain in which manner they were "received" in the Orthodox Church, since according to this article they never renounced their Roman Catholicism. Unconfirmed sources have reported that the communities (one of men and one of women) were received by Holy Baptism.

CATHOLIC CLERGY DESERTING

The National Catholic Register relates that some time in February the Roman Pope addressed his clergy with an epistle in which he expressed his grief because so many preists leave their positions. "A mania of Laicization (returning priests to the status of laymen) has ripped the external ornaments of the sacred habit and has torn from the heart of some the sacred reverance due to their own persons, substituting a showy, secular vanity and sometimes even the boldness of the free thinker and the man who performs illicit acts.... The statistics have stricken us," said the Pope.

In the latest Vatican statistical yearbook for 1975 under the heading "Defections" were listed 1,560 priests who left their ministry throughout the world; in 1974 1,778 and in 1972 (the period shortly after Vatican II and the acceptance of modernism in life and teaching) 1,964. Since that time the number of priests in the Catholic Church is constantly declining because the percentage of seminarians and novices is also very low.

EPISCOPALIAN CLERGY APPLY TO CATHOLICS FOR POSITIONS

The National Catholic Register of February 25th reported that not only individual Episcopal clergy, but a considerable number of them including several parishes, petitioned The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Vatican to be accepted into Roman Catholicism while retaining their clerical status. In order to consider these petitions a new committee was established with representatives of the Vatican, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and a "considerable" number of Episcopal clergy. As mediators between the Catholics and Episcopalians two bishops were appointed by American Catholics: Bishop Bernard Law and Bishop Raymond Lessard.

Bishop Law noted that since Episcopal clergy are married, their petitions are to be forwarded for consideration to the Vatican. He refused to state how many petitions were received and when the first one was accepted, although the paper notes that this movement is strongly connected with the period of liturgical changes in the Episcopal Church and especially the ordination of women. It is quite clear that the question of celibacy represents the main problem for the Vatican. To accept a considerable number of married clergy certainly can become a very unpleasant precedent for Catholics. When Rome very unwillingly permitted married clergy to the Uniates, it always stressed the idea that those were people of Eastern tradition, but this in no way can be applied to Episcopalians, who come from the bosom of Catholicism. Beside the important question of celibacy, one more arises for the Vatican: the acceptance of the validity of Episcopal orders. Pope Leo XII issued a bull in which he categorically rejected Episcopal orders and sacraments. If one is to still hold to this point then the Episcopalians will have to be re-ordained when accepted by the Catholics.

Bishop Law hopes that all the same, ecumenical negotiations with the Episcopalians will suffer no ill effects because their clergy want to become

Catholics; he even thinks that it "would be recognized and our own pastoral response to that need would be deeply appreciated." The Vatican shows a bit less optimism than that demonstrated by the American bishops. It became known through a source in the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity that it decided to stand aside from the whole question. "As long as the Catholic Church remains committed to dialogue for unity with the Anglican Communion," said the source, "we cannot be involved in anything like this which could prejudice that dialogue."

UNREST AMONG EPISCOPALIANS CONTINUES

As it was reported in our previous Newsletters, a group of Episcopalian parishes which protested the ordination of women to holy orders formed a Holy Trinity Diocese. Then it was decided to form a new church which received the provisional name of The Anglican Church in North America.

On January 28th the dissident group had four bishops ordained in Denver, Colorado. One would expect that now matters with the Episcopalians would settle down and their conservative church would begin to progress peacefully. But it has become known that the validity of those ordinations is already questioned by the participants themselves. The magazine Christianity Today in its March issue published a detailed article entitled "Episcopal Problems with Documentation." Bishop Albert Chambers, who is retired in Illinois was the only American bishop at the consecrations. Assisting him was F. Pagtakhan, a bishop of the Philippine Independent Catholic Church, a fact which has raised some doubts already. Not having a third bishop - a must for a canonical Episcopal ordination - it seems that Bishop Chambers secured the promise of help from Korean Bishop Mark Pae, whose written consent was to be given to Chambers, forwarded to him by one of the candidates for ordination, Bishop Doren. Later on Bishop Pagtakhan told representatives of the press that "Bishop Chambers had called me long distance several times, asking me to participate in the consecration of the new bishops" but he didn't want to commit himself so that the Episcopal Church would not say anything against him. The initiator of those consecrations, Bishop Chambers, also made a statement to the press.

No doubt, concludes the editorial article, more documents will appear on both sides of the consecration controversy in the months that remain before this summer's meeting of the Lambeth Conference, Anglicanism's global parliament. So far the dissident group has not received recognition from Episcopalians in America or from Anglicans in England. Yet the crux of the problem for Westerners lays in their teaching of the everlasting grace of consecration which is shared by Catholics and Anglicans. If a legally correct formula of the sacrament is pronounced, a person becomes a priest and nothing can annihilate the received grace. One can be suspended, declared to be irregularly ordained, but nevertheless in priestly orders. The ordination of women by Episcopalians drew basically on this teaching. Some retired bishop ordained a woman first to the diaconate and then the priesthood. Since the procedure was irregular, she could not be appointed to a parish, yet the ordination by itself was treated as valid. After a while, even unwillingly, it had to be recognized.

Episcopalian troubles did not stop at this. The Holy Trinity Diocese, which only a few weeks ago was renamed Anglican Church of North America, has split already! A group led by Canon Dubois in California protested the establishment of a new denomination, as well as the irregularity of the consecrations, since the rule was broken by which there have to be three participating bishops. The new Episcopal group insists that "we formed the Diocese of the Holy Trinity specifically to refute any charges that we were a new church. We emphatically do not wish to start a new church; we are content with the one which has endured for nearly two

thousand years." In its assembly on February 2nd in Sun Valley, the Dubois group announced plans to "form a separate diocese of loyalist churchmen who were former Anglicans and Episcopalians." Their leader, Canon Dubois, was one of the bishop-elect candidates, but for some reason the ACNA chose not to include him in the Denver consecrations.

This new formation is neither a part of the Episcopal Church nor the Anglicans in England, but still insists it is not a new church. The group doesn't lack optimism. "If other options fail, the Roman Catholic Church might grant uniate status to us, if we are faithful to Catholic doctrine and tradition" or "we might, on some collective basis, enter into communion with a canonical Orthodox body, and still preserve our Anglican traditions," they expressed in hope.

ALARM OVER THE NEW LAW IN ISRAEL CONCERNING MISSIONARIES

Ecumenical Press Service reports state that the United Christian Council in Israel sent a three man delegation to visit the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and explain the danger to all Christian missions in the Holy Land created by a new Israeli law (officially called the Penal Code Amendment Law, also Enticement to Change of Religion). The delegation stated that the new law might damage friendly relations between Jews and Christians. The delegates hope to receive some sort of promise on the part of the Israeli government that the legislature "will never again be misused for such scurrilous verbal attacks on the Christian Church as preceded the passing of the new law."

The members of the delegation proposed to establish an independant ecumenical commission to investigate any case which could fall under the new law, hoping in this manner to protect Christian denominations from "prejudices and misconceptions about the Christian Church impressed on the Israeli public." The members of the delegation felt "tremendously encouraged" by the talks they had in Geneva and previously in Rome, and were "very hopeful" of the outcome of their mission.

MEETING OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN HOLLAND

The Ecumenical Press Service in its February report states that at the Lutheran Centre "Moekelum" in Holland there was a meeting of representatives of Jewish and some Christian denominations. The participants of this meeting were mainly professors of the Lutheran, Catholic, Anglican and Reformed Jewish faiths. The conference, which was called and organized by the World Council of Churches, passed several resolutions. One of them states that "Only in overcoming anti-semitism will a true ecumenical unity be found, because the people of God and the covenant of God with His people cannot be divided. We are bound together with the Jewish people in this covenant. Therefore the ecumenical fellowship with the roots (Jewish people) is as important as among the branches (Christian Churches)."

ENGLAND'S RELIGIOUS FACE IS CHANGING

A Protestant magazine "Eternity" relates that statistics show many religious changes have taken place in England. Only 45% of the population attended church in 1951 and only 18% attends today. This is a general percentage valid for the whole of Great Britain, except Northern Ireland where some 76% are still active members of their church. The Evangelical Alliance, which publishes a yearbook with statistics, listed some 700 different churches, fellowships and religious organizations. Quoting his publication, the editor comments that "Britain is not only becoming less Christian because of declining faith among former adherents, it is

increasingly anti-Christian because of the rise of other faiths." Presbyterians, Catholics, Baptists, and Anglicans are rapidly losing members, while Buddhist, Hindu, Muslims, Pentecostals, Sikhs and others register some gains. Among those who "gained" are also listed the Orthodox.

LAMBETH CONFERENCE

In July of this year the 11th Lambeth Conference will be convened in London. There will be 440 Episcopal bishops attending from all over the world. The Conference is so named because its sessions are usually held in Lambeth Palace and according to tradition it is convened every 10 years by the primate of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He also has the privilege of offering the agenda, made up by himself. The decisions of the Conference are not obligatory, but are considered to be a sort of guiding manual for members of the Episcopal or Anglican Church.

It is expected this time that 25 representatives of different religious denominations will participate in the meetings with full voting power. Also the conference will change its place of meeting. Only the registry of delegates will be made in Lambeth, while all the sessions will be conducted at Kent University which has more space for such occasions. All the bishops will be staying in the University's dormitories which will give them the opportunity to become acquainted with each other. Among the speakers (devotional lecturers) is listed Metropolitan Anthony Bloom of the Moscow Patriarchate.

SCENARIO IN OBERAMMERGAU

The Catholic Register for March 19th relates that the plans to radically change the text of the Oberammergau plays has failed. As we reported in our Newsletter #13, the American Jewish Committee demanded that the play be censored line by line and preliminary talks gave all reason to believe that the producers had agreed on so many points that Rabbi Tannenbaum could express his satisfaction.

Now it has become known that the inhabitants of the village of Oberammergau, who nearly all participate in the plays, categorically rejected the new version of the scenario. They elected a new City Council which was made up of members who do not want to accept the new version. The former Council, which was forced to retire, insisted that the new version is based on the 1750 text in which the guilt for the Lord's crucifixion is laid upon the devil and not the Jewish people and therefore, supposedly, the new text actually is a return to an older version while the one which was in use from 1860 until 1970 is an innovation. This is why, allegedly, the Council which was retired wanted to change the scenario and abridge it a bit.

One of the main actors, who played the role of Christ in 1970 and the only one who managed to get re-elected to the new Council, Mr. Helmuth Fischer, could not hide his disappointment. "Sooner or later," said Fischer, who led the attempt to change the play, "Oberammergau must realize that world opinion has turned against anti-semitism - in our play as in everything else."

The play in Oberammergau is staged every 10 years and is the main source of income for its inhabitants. In 1970, 500,000 tickets were sold and more than one million people were turned down because of lack of space.

PRESBYTERIANS AND HOMOSEXUALS

The United Presbyterian Church in America, with 2,700,000 members, is about to have a grave split as related by the March issue of the magazine

Eternity. The cause is the projected ordination of avowed homosexuals to the priesthood. The problem will come before the General Assembly of Presbyterians which is scheduled for May in San Diego. Conservative members of the church became gravely concerned in January when the denomination's homosexual task force voted 14 to 5 to recommend the approval of the ordination of avowed, practicing homosexuals.

Christianity Today relates in its March issue that the future Assembly will study the question in material presented by both sides. The majority presented a 150-page paper plus an additional 28 pages consisting of recommendations. This paper was authored by Byron Shafer, Chairman of the Religious Studies Department of Fordham University. The minority report, signed by five persons, asked the General Assembly to insist that the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church exclude the possibility of ordaining a homosexual. By mid-January the Advisory Council of the Presbyterian Church voted 12 to 3 in support of the majority, i.e., homosexuals. Unfortunately, the General Assembly will have to take into consideration those "recommendations."

Three major groups, the Presbyterian Charismatic Renewal, the Presbyterian Lay Committee and Presbyterians United for Biblical Concerns formed a coalition in an effort to defeat the motion. The coalition members hope for success, but if they fail, they plan a large scale press conference in which they will criticize the General Assembly's decisions and organize a new motion of protest. One of the possible solutions is to join one of the recently severed groups of the Presbyterian Church in America. There is also the possibility of remaining in the church nominally, while in no way taking part in the activities of the denomination. Observers predict that if the motion of the homosexuals wins the conservative party will have no alternative but to establish one more Presbyterian Church, thus splitting their largest formation.

Never has sin been a uniting factor anywhere, and in church life especially. The events of today's life demonstrate it so clearly!

Donations received and greatly appreciated: Archbishop Andrei, Archimandrite Panteleimon (Holy Transfiguration Monastery), Archpriest V. Stepankovski, and D. Levitsky. The Foreign Relations Department greatly appreciates this help.