

ASSYRIAN JACOBITE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

STATISTICS

The data given for 1926 represent three active organizations of the Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church, all reported as being in urban territory. The total membership was 1,407, comprising 703 males and 704 females. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the churches, all of which reported members under 13 years of age.

The membership of the Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church consists of all persons received into the local churches through baptism.

There were no parsonages nor Sunday schools reported.

Comparative data, 1926 and 1916.—Table 1 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this body for the censuses of 1926 and 1916.

TABLE 1.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1926 AND 1916: ASSYRIAN JACOBITE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

ITEM	1926	1916
Churches (local organizations).....	3	15
Increase ¹ over preceding census:		
Number.....	-12	
Per cent ²		
Members.....	1,407	748
Increase over preceding census:		
Number.....	659	
Per cent.....	88.1	
Average membership per church.....	469	50
Church edifices:		
Number.....	3	
Value—Churches reporting.....	3	
Amount reported.....	\$92,000	
Average per church.....	\$30,667	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	3	
Amount reported.....	\$27,500	
Expenditures during year:		
Churches reporting.....	3	
Amount reported.....	\$24,253	
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$23,576	
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$677	
Average expenditure per church.....	\$8,084	

¹A minus sign (-) denotes decrease.

²Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 2 and 3 present the statistics for the Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church by States. Table 2 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches and the membership classified by sex. Table 3 gives for selected States the number and membership of the churches for the censuses of 1926 and 1916, together with the membership for 1926 classified as under 13 years of age and 13 years of age and over.

TABLE 2.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: ASSYRIAN JACOBITE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	Num-ber of churches	Num-ber of members	MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
			Male	Female	Males per 100 females ¹
United States.....	3	1,407	703	704	99.9
New England:					
Massachusetts.....	1	220	107	113	94.7
Rhode Island.....	1	162	94	68	-----
Middle Atlantic:					
New Jersey.....	1	1,025	502	523	96.0

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1926 AND 1916, AND MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926, BY STATES: ASSYRIAN JACOBITE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

[Separate presentation is limited to States having 3 or more churches in either 1926 or 1916]

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES		NUMBER OF MEMBERS		MEMBERSHIP BY AGE, 1926		
	1926	1916	1926	1916	Under 13 years	13 years and over	Per cent under 13
United States.....	3	15	1,407	748	291	1,116	26.7
Massachusetts.....	1	6	220	291	25	195	11.4
New Jersey.....	1	5	1,025	311	204	821	19.9
Other States.....	1	4	162	146	62	100	38.3

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION¹

HISTORY

The Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church traces its origin to the first 12 apostles of Christ, particularly to St. Peter, the first Patriarch of Antioch.

The gospel had its origin in Syria and the Assyrian fathers were the first Christian missionaries. From the beginning of Christianity, the Assyrians went out to Gaul, Persia, India, China, and Africa, where, notwithstanding severe persecutions, they succeeded in establishing numerous schools and monasteries. They have been constantly persecuted by the various Roman, Greek, Persian, and Turkish rulers, and, judging from the continuous numerous outrages, it would seem that the Turks and Arabs intended to exterminate all the Assyrian Christians. In the face of all these persecutions they gallantly faced death, and to this day they ably uphold the early Christian faith.

Contact with American missionaries who had established schools in various localities turned the attention of the Assyrians to America, and they fled from the rule of the Moslem Turk and sought shelter under the American flag. This immigration began about 1893, and soon there were several large Assyrian communities in the United States. Some of these people were members of the Assyrian Roman Catholic Church, others belonged to the Assyrian Protestant Church, while still others belonged to the Assyrian Nestorian Church or the Chaldean Church. On coming here, all except the Nestorians identified themselves with their respective American denominations. The majority of them, however, were members of the Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic faith, and as the number of immigrants continued to increase, church services for them were in great demand.

¹ This statement, which differs somewhat from that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, was furnished by the Very Rev. Hanna Koorie, pastor of the Church of the Virgin Mary, West New York, N. J., and approved by him in its present form.

In April, 1907, the Assyrian Americans sent Deacon Hanna Koorie, then of Paterson, N. J., to Jerusalem. There he was ordained priest and later a koorie (cvhooie). He returned to this country September 28 of the same year. Immediately afterward, he assembled the dispersed Assyrians, for the first time, to worship in St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Paterson, N. J. The members of this faith are scattered in various States, but their churches were reported only in two New England States and in New Jersey.

DOCTRINE

The doctrine of this church is based on the Nicene Creed. It varies, however from that of the Western Church as regards the procession of the Holy Ghost and uses the phraseology, "the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and is with the Son." It accepts the canons of the first three General Councils of the church, namely, the Nicene, Constantinople, and Ephesus, as well as the writings of the recognized fathers of the church of the period of these councils. It teaches that Christ was perfect God and perfect man. The interpretation of the Bible, the ecclesiastical ordinances, as well as the traditions of the church, are held equally important. The seven sacraments, baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony, are accepted. Baptism is administered by pouring and by immersion, chiefly the latter; it usually takes place several days after birth, and is followed by the ceremony of anointing with the sacred oil or chrism in the form of a cross, and by the laying on of hands. The minister also breathes on the child and on the water. The membership of the church includes all baptized persons. Auricular confession is accepted. Holy Communion is the sacrament which contains the body and blood of Christ under appearance of bread and wine. It is received fasting and is given to the laity in only one kind, the form of bread. The Blessed Virgin and the Saints are venerated, and prayers are offered for the dead.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of the Assyrian Jacobite Apostolic Church centers on the Patriarch of Antioch, who resides at Mardin, Dair el Zahfaran, and his authority is supreme on faith and in all church matters. Next in rank is the Metropolitan, or mifrian, who resides in Mosul and who ordains the bishops. Then follow the iskiffs and the mitrans, who together with the mifrian, act as advisers to the patriarch and as heads of various commissions or congregations which have charge of the church administration. Only a mifrian can become a patriarch. The mifrian is chosen from the mitrans, all of whom are celibates. Then follows the office of bishop, or koorie (cvhooie), rhahib, priest, and deacon, respectively. A deacon under 30 years of age can not be ordained to the priesthood. A celibate deacon can be ordained to the office of rhahib, mitran, mifrian, and patriarch. A married deacon can become a priest, a koorie (cvhooie), or an iskiff.

The government of this church is democratic, every officer of the church from the lowest to the highest being chosen by the people. It is also in a sense hierarchical, for every priest must be ordained by a bishop whose commission is traced to the apostles through the apostolic succession of bishops. The Patriarch of Antioch is the supreme head of all the Assyrian churches throughout the world, and he was represented at the second World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne, Switzerland.

The official periodical of the church is the Beth Nahrin (Mesopotamia), published in West New York, N. J.