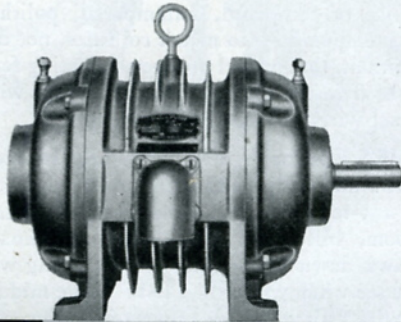




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RELIGION

Assyrian Patriarch

The first Patriarch in history to visit the U. S. docked in Manhattan last week, settled at the Gramercy Park Hotel. His Beatitude Eshai Mar Shimun, 119th Patriarch of Assyria and head of the Church of the East (which Westerners know as the Nestorian Church), had come to see his 70,000 fellow countrymen in the U. S., do something if possible for his persecuted



Pictures Inc.

HIS BEATITUDE

. . . speaks the actual language of Christ.

brethren elsewhere. The Assyrian Christians have had a long record of persecution. They have been a minority in the mountains of Kurdistan and the plains of Syria and Iraq since Mohammedanism's rise.

Saint Thomas, the doubting Apostle, founded the Church of the East in the First Century. A great missionary church, it made millions of converts in distant India and China, then slowly dwindled. Its split with the Western Church came when it accepted the doctrine of the dual nature of Christ propounded by Nestorius, a Fifth-Century Patriarch of Constantinople. Pope Celestine I declared the doctrine heretical. Nestorius was deposed, but Nestorianism continued to flourish among the Assyrians. Aramaic, the language which Christ spoke, is still the liturgical language of the Assyrian Church.

Cambridge-educated, Mar Shimun also speaks perfect English. Unlike many a Patriarch, he has a short black beard instead of a long white one, is young (33) and good-looking. The Assyrian Patriarchate has been hereditary for 600 years, descends from uncle to nephew since no Patriarch marries.

Biblical Draft

General Hugh Samuel Johnson is a lively columnist, a good Episcopalian, a strong believer in conscription. Last week, seeking ammunition for a pro-conscription

broadside, Columnist Johnson resorted to Holy Writ. Titling a column "Biblical Draft," he cited Scripture to his purpose: *Numbers XXVI*, 1-2, for registration of the whole adult population and classification as to its availability for military service; *Numbers XXXI*, 3-4, for assignment of quotas, and *Deuteronomy XX*, 5-9, for a likely list of exemptions from active service.

Few clerics like to have laymen do their preaching for them. Columnist Johnson was soon under a ministerial barrage of counter-citation. His critics charged: 1) that "you can prove anything you want to prove by the Bible"; 2) that he had plucked his texts from the militaristic Old Testament and glossed over the New; 3) that he had skipped the Old Testament's direst precedent against registration—*II Samuel XXIV*, wherein King David ordered a military census. It showed a count of 1,300,000 "valiant men that drew the sword" but the Lord, wrath at David, punished his presumption by killing 70,000 of them with pestilence in three days.

Said Dean Ernest Cadman Colwell of the University of Chicago's Divinity School: "You can't establish the Christian position in relation to conscription by quoting isolated passages from the Bible. . . . I long ago stopped using proof-text to justify conduct." Director Paul Burt of the University of Illinois' Wesley Foundation told a pious anecdote about a proof-text layman who turned to the Bible for guidance in his life work, opened it at random to "Judas went and hanged himself." On his second try the alarmed layman hit on "Go thou and do likewise."

Cumorah's Pageant

Mount Sinai of Mormonism is the Hill Cumorah, a red-clay glacial hump near Palmyra in western New York. On Hill Cumorah, in September 1827, the Angel Moroni handed down the Word to a strapping, 21-year-old farmer-visionary named Joseph Smith, in the form of a book written on golden plates and a Urim and Thummim (stones fastened in silver bows) which enabled him to translate it. The result of Seer Smith's labors was the *Book of Mormon*, which ever since has been the treasured gospel of the sect he founded, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Prophet Smith was without honor in his own county. His neighbors, hearing of his discovery, were more anxious to get the gold than the gospel. When Joseph Smith explained he had returned his treasure to Moroni, mobs dug up most of Hill Cumorah without finding the plates—which have since been as elusive as the Holy Grail. Irate, they drove Prophet Smith out of New York.

But the Mormons never forgot their holy places. Finally they managed to buy back from unbelievers the farms of Joseph Smith, Martin Harris (who mortgaged his