making the so-called “ emphatic ” state. In the older Aramaic dialects this is used exactly as the noun with prefixed article is used in other languages; but in Syriac the emphatic state has lost this special function of making the noun definite, and has become simply the normal state of the noun. The main grammatical distinction between Syriac and all the west Aramaic dialects is that in Syriac the 3rd person of the imperfect (singular and plural) of the verb begins with *n,* but in west Aramaic, as in the other Semitic languages, it begins with *y.*

When, in the 5th century a.d., owing to theological differences the Syriac-using Christians became divided into Nestorians or East Syrians and Jacobites (Monophysites) or West Syrians, certain differences of pronunciation, chiefly in the vowels, began to develop themselves. the East Syrians in most cases kept the more primitive pronunciation: *e.g.* the old Semitic *ã* with them remained *ã,* but with the Jacobites passed into *õ.* One very tangible difference appears in the fact that the name *Jesus* was by the East Syrians written and pronounced *Ishδ',* by the West Syrians Fes⅛w.

The Syriac alphabet, which derived its letters from forms ultimately akin to those of the Old Hebrew and Phoenician alphabets, has the same twenty-two letters as the Hebrew. And as in Hebrew, the six letters *b gdk p t* are aspirated when imme­diatcly preceded by any vowel sound. On the other hand, the guttural letters affect the vowels much less than in Hebrew: their chief effect is when final to change the preceding vowel, if other than *a* or *ã,* into *a,* but even this is not always the case.@@1 The vowels, which are ten in number (ä a ê e ïi õo û.u), were, as usual in the Semitic languages, indicated only partially by the use of consonants as vowcl-lettcrs@@2 and by means of certain diacritical points, so long as Syriac remained a living language. But about the time when it began to be supplanted by Arabic, two systems of vowel-signs were invented, one for the West Syrians, who borrowed the forms of Greek vowels, and the other more elaborate for the East Syrians, who used combinations of dots. Neither system completely differentiates long and short vowels; the Nestorian scheme is the more satisfactory, though more cumbrous.

Where the same root exists in Arabic, Syriac and Hebrew, its fundamental consonants are usually the same in all three languages. But letters belonging to the same group occasionally interchange. As regards the dentals and sibilants there are one or two rules which govern the interchange, in the manner of a Grimm’s Law. (1) Where Arabic has an ordinary dental, Syriac and Hebrew have the same; but where Arabic has an aspirated dental (c.g. *th),* Syriac has an ordinary dental *t,* but Hebrew has a sibilant *(sh).* (2) Hebrew has one more sibilant than Arabic or Syriac: thus, as corresponding to 5 *(sãmekh), s (sïn) sh* in Hebrew, Arabic has only s *(sïn) sh,* while Syriac has a different pair s *(sãmekh) sh.* Hebrew *sãmekh* is represented by Ar. *sin* and Syr. *sãmekh·,* but Heb. *sin* (Syr. *sãmekh)* is repre­sented by Ar. *sh,* while Heb. and Syτ. *sh* is represented by Ar. *sïn.* As regards this crossing of 5 and *sh,* Arabic has with it the other south Semitic language, Ethiopic: the evidence as to the other north Semitic language, Assyrian, is conflicting.

In vowel-sounds Syriac is clearly more primitive than Hebrew (as pointed by the Massoretes),less so than Arabic. Thus Ar. and Syr. *a* is often thinned in Hebrew into *i (ë* when accented), as in the first syllable of Ar. *qattala≈Syr. qattel=Vleb. qittël.* But the second syllable of the same word shows Syriac siding with Hebrew against Arabic. Again the primitive *ã* of Arabic is in the older (Nestorian) pronunciation of Syriac maintained, while in Jacobite Syriac and in Hebrew it passes into õ: thus Ar. *qãtil* Nestorian *qatel≈* Jacobite and Hebrew *qõtêl.* Again Syriac

maintains the diphthongs *ai* and *au,* which in Hebrew have usually passed into *ë* and *ö.*

the *accent* plays much less part in lengthening and altering the vowels in Syriac than in Hebrew, but there are well-marked cases of lengthening from this cause.

A few words may now be said about the three main parts of speech—pronouns, nouns and verbs.

1. *Pronouns.—*As in the other Semitic languages, these stand almost entirely outside the system of triliteral roots, being mainly derived from certain demonstrative letters or particles. Each of the personal pronouns (except the 3rd plur.) exists in a longer and a shorter form: the one is used as a nominative and is a separate word, the other is attached to verbs and (in a slightly different form) to nouns to express the accusative or genitive. These pronominal suffixes are of much the same form as in Hebrew, but produce less change in the vowels of the words to which they are attached. Demonstrative adjectives and adverbs are formed by prefixing the syllable *hã ( = ecce, “* behold ") to other pronominal elements, and interrogatives similarly by prefixing the interrogative syllable *ay;* but there are other interrogative pronouns. The relative consists only of the letter *d* (indeclinable) prefixed to words.

2. *Nouns and Adjectives.—*The Syriac noun has three states— the *absolute* (used chiefly in adjectival or participial predicates, but also with numerals and negatives, in adverbial phrases, &c.), the *construct* (which, as in Hebrew, must be immediatcly followed by a genitive), and the *emphatic* (see above). There are only two genders and two numbers: the neuter gender is entirely wanting, and the dual number is not recognized in Syriac grammar, though there are plain traces of it in the language. The fem. sing, ending is absolute 0, construct *ath,* emphatic *tã* or *'tha:* thus the fem. sing. abs. is always identical in form with the masc. sing, emph. The plural endings are—masc. abs. *in,* const, *ai,* emph. ë; fem. abs. *ãn,* const, *ãth,* emph. *ãthã.* Syriac is not, like Arabic and Hebrew, confined to the use of the construct for the ordinary expression of the genitive or possessive relation: for it has a pre­position (d) which expresses “ of," “ belonging to." The noun preceding this preposition may be in the emphatic state or may (as is usually the case when the noun is definite) have a pleonastic suffix. Thus “ the son of the king ’’ is more commonly expressed by *b'rã dh'malkã* or *b'rêh d'malkã* than by *bar malkδ,* whereas the latter type would alone be permissible in Hebrew. And a genitive with prefixed *d* does not require the governing noun to precede it immediately, as must be the case when the construct is used. This is one of the many respects where Syriac has gained greater flexibility in syntax than Hebrew.

3. *Verbs.—*The Syriac verb is remarkable for having entirely lost the original passive forms, such as in Arabic can l>e formed in every conjugation and in Hebrew are represented by the Pual and Hophal. For these Syriac has substituted middle or reflexive forms with prefixed *eth* and a change in the last vowel. The simple active *q'tal* makes its passive *ethq'(el∙,* the intensive *qatlël* makes *ethqallal;* and the causative *aqtêl* makes *ettaq(al.* The inflexion of the verbs is, on the whole, more regular than in Hebrew: thus, to take one instance, the 3rd plur. fem. impf, *neqplãn* corresponds better to 3rd plur. rnasc. *negf'lün* than does the equivalent Hebrew form *tiqt·õtnã* to *yiqt'lü.* But the most important peculiarity of Syriac verbs is again in the sphere of syntax, and shows thé same progress towards flexibility which we found in the nouns. Whereas the Hebrew verb is devoid of real *tenses,* and only expresses an action as completed or as in process without indicating time past, present or future, Syriac has by the help of an auxiliary verb constructed a set of tenses. 'Γhus we have—

Pres, *qãfel,* “ he kills," “ he is killing " (sometimes “ he is about to kill ”).

Impf, *qa(el wã, “* he was killing.”

Fut. *neqtõl, “* he will kill.”

Pf. or Aor. *q'tal* “ he has killed,” “ he killed.”

Plup. or Aor. *q'(al wã,* “ he had killed,” " he killed.”

The same progress towards flexibility in syntax iβ seen in the copious supply of conjunctions possessed by Syriac. No doubt the tendency towards a more flowing construction of sentences was helped by the influence of Greek, which has also supplied a large stock of words to the Syriac vocabulary. (N. Μ.)

**SYRIAC LITERATURE.@@3** By *Syriac* is denoted the dialect of Aramaic which, during the early centuries of the Christian era, prevailed in Mesopotamia and the adjoining regions. The literary use of Syriac by Christians had its first centre in Edessa (Syr. Ürhãi, modern Urfa), where, in all probability, the chief Syriac versions of the Bible were made. The use of the same dialect appears in the earliest Christian literature connected

@@@1 It may indeed be remarked that Syriac, which is generally more primitive in its sounds than Hebrew, shows a more advanced stage of weakening as regards the gutturals: thus in a good many forms it has substituted *ãlef* for initial *he,* and often shows a dislike for the presence of two gutturals in the same word, weakening one of them to *ãlef.* A much more advanced stage of weakening is seen in some of the other dialects.

@@@2 With regard to this, Syriac has one great difference from Hebrew, viz. that final *ã* is indicated not by *he,* but by *ãlef.*

@@@3 The sketch of the history of Syriac literature here presented is based on Wright’s great article in the 9th edition of the *Ency. Brit.,* which was afterwards published separately under the title of *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London, 1894).