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AN INTRODUCTION TO SYRIAC STUDIES



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Fr. Emmanuel Thelly C.M.I.



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(Mini Syriac Grammar)

This booklet is just an introduction to Syriac studies. The Grammar of Fr. Gabriel (1922) of Fr. Ludovic (1951); of Fr. Jerome (1944) and mine (1961) as well as the erudite grammar of Rev. Fr. Thomas Arayathinal (1957, 1959); of Mar Aprem (1981) etc. are there for scholars or those interested in further studies. Rev. Dr. Thomas Koonammakkal was behind the making of these notes.

The languages of the world can be divided into five main families : The Aryan (Indo-European); Semitic, Mongolian, Dravidian, and the Negroid. Hebrew, Aramaic (Syriac), Assyrian, Arabic etc. are of the Semetic family.

Aramaic/Syriac is one of the oldest of languages; and hence very simple. Our Lord Jesus Christ and his mother, Bl. Virgin Mary and the Apostles spoke the same. Some parts of the Old Testament, and the Gospel of St. Mathew were originally written in Syriac.

European scholars use either the Chaldean or Western pronunciation. No one is faithful to our ancient Indian tradition. Even in the Assyrian Church of the East (Trichur) they pronounce many words and some vowels like the westerners, probably from the influence of those Jacobite priests who helped them to translate their liturgical books. As to their pronunciation of certain words the influence of some modern Middle Eastern Syriac teachers as well may not be denied.

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