INTRODUCTION

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ISHŌ BAR NŪN

(a) The Life. Elia bar Shināyā, in his Chronology 1, records that Ishō bar Nūn was ordained Catholicus of the Nestorian Church on the sixth of Tammuz in the year 1134 of the Greeks (July 6, 823 A.D.) and that he died on the first of Nisan 1138 A.G. (April 1, 828 A.D.). Consequently, he occupied the position of Catholicus for four years, eight months and twenty-three days. If we may rely on the tradition preserved by Mārī ibn Sulaimān in his Book of the Tower 2, Ishō bar Nūn was about eighty years old when he died. From these two statements we may conclude that he was born about the year 743 A.D.

We regret that the facts concerning the life of Ishō bar Nūn as they have been recorded by Mārī ibn Sulaimān and his successor Amr ibn Mattā 3 are few in number and do not provide us with exact dates. Also, Barhebraeus, in his Ecclesiastical History 4, adds next to nothing which is essential to the biography of our author. The following biographical sketch is based on the data supplied by Mārī and Amr. In those cases in which Barhebraeus records a detail, not presented by the other two writers, we shall make mention of it.

Ishō bar Nūn was born in the village of Bēth Gabbārē on the Tigris River near Mosul. Together with Timothy, who was to become his predecessor in the highest office of the Nestorian Church, he visited the school of the famous interpreter and ascetic Abraham bar Dāshandādh, surnamed “The Lame”, at Bēth Sayyādhē. Ishō bar Nūn, who seems to have been an irascible and short-tempered person, quarrelled with his fellow student. He conceived so great a hatred for Timothy that he continued this antipathy even after the latter’s death. According to Barhebraeus, Ishō bar Nūn went so far as to corrupt the name of Timothy into Tālemthēos, “the wronger of God”. The sources give us no hint as to why Ishō bar Nūn held such strong views of Timothy nor of any dogmatic position main-

1 E. W. Brooks, Eiaie Metropolitae Nisibeni Opus Chronologicum, Part I (Text) p. 59 and (Trs.), p. 32 (CSCO vols 62* and 63*).
2 H. Gismondi, Maris, Amri et Sliabe de Patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria, Part I (Text), p. 76 and (Trs.), p. 67.
3 Ibid., Part I (Text), pp. 66-68 and (Trs.), pp. 38-40.
tained by Timothy which would have aroused Ishō bar Nūn’s opposition.

After leaving his master, Ishō bar Nūn attended the school of Seleucia where he acted as a teacher for a month. From there he went to the Monastery of Mār Abraham on Mount Izlā. Adopting the monastic life, he spent his days in the cell writing refutations of Timothy’s teachings and arranging for their distribution. Later he had a dispute with some monks at the Monastery after which he departed for Baghdad. In that city he was engaged, for a few months, by George Māsūyah as a house tutor to his son Yaḥyā. Subsequently, Ishō bar Nūn lived for thirty years in the Monastery of Elia at Mosul 1.

On the death of Timothy the chair of Catholicus fell vacant and Ishō bar Nūn was elected to succeed him through the good offices of the physician Gabriel Bökhištō and Michael ibn Māsūye and the secretaries Jacob and Wahb who held influential positions at the court of the Caliph Ma’mūn. Barhebraeus reports that when Timothy was asked whom he thought should succeed him, he had named Ishō bar Nūn despite the latter’s belligerent attitude. Even though Timothy had been magnanimous, once Ishō bar Nūn was enthroned at the Convent of Kellīṣhō, he continued to attack Timothy and ordered his name to be removed from the diptychs. However, such action on Ishō bar Nūn’s part was not well received by the other clergy; especially since Ishō bar Nūn had been ordained deacon at the hand of Timothy. In fact, the teacher Yozādaq complained to Ishō bar Nūn’s coreligionists who had prepared the way for his election. When Ishō bar Nūn became ill and felt near death, he regretted having spoken so bitterly against Timothy and ordered a disciple to burn those of his writings which he had composed as refutations and expositions of his predecessor. On his death, Ishō bar Nūn was buried in the Monastery of Kellīṣhō which Timothy had restored.

(b) The Writings. Abhdishō, in his Catalogue 2, sums up the writings of Ishō bar Nūn which were known to him in the following way:

1 Barhebraeus records that Ishō bar Nūn lived, during a period of thirty-eight years, in the Convent of Sa‘īd near Mosul.

Since we do not have any accurate chronology for these writings it seems best to follow the order found in Abdhisho’s Catalogue.

1. Baumstark¹ has suggested that the “Work called Theology” may be identified with a book of a polemical nature written against the heathen and the heretics. Extracts of this work were preserved in a single manuscript in the library of Seert which was destroyed during the First World War ².

2. One copy of the “Questions on the whole Text of (Scripture), in Two Parts”³ is extant (Cambr. Add. 2017).

3. The work which is entitled “Decisions and Legal Cases” is most likely to be identified with the collection of canons, laws and decisions which E. Sachau edited in the second volume of his Rechtbücher ⁴. This edition is based upon a manuscript in the Vatic­an Library (Vat. Borg. LXXXII, K VI 4). There are three more manuscripts containing Isho bar Nûn’s canons (Cambr. Add. 2023-3e, Alq. CLXIX-14 ⁵ and Mard. 50).

4. Part of the “Funeral Orations” has been preserved in a single manuscript of the British Museum dating from the ninth or tenth centuries (Add. 17, 217).

5. Three of Isho bar Nûn’s “Epistles” are known to us: (a) a letter to the deacon Macarios containing answers to seventy-four questions (Alq. CLXIX-15 ⁶, Vat. Syr. CLXXXVII-4, CL-9, and Vat. Borg. LXXXI-34, K VI 3); (b) a letter to the periodeutes

¹ A. Baumstark, Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, p. 219.
³ The remark “in Two Parts” may refer to a subdivision into the Old and the New Testament parts.
⁵ J.-M. Vostè, Catalogue de la Bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du couvent de Notre Dame des Semences près d’Alqosh (Iraq). Baumstark in writing his Geschichte had to rely upon the Catalogue of A. Scher which is defective. We prefer to refer to the Catalogue prepared by Father Vostè. We shall, therefore, use the siglum Alq. instead of Baumstark’s NDsem.
⁶ It is not clear whether or not this letter addressed to the deacon Macarios is identical with the manuscript Alq. CXLIxxVI-10, described by Father Vostè in the following words: “Questions proposées par le père Macaire avec réponses d’Isho barnoun patriarche catholico’s"
Isaac of Bêth Qatrâyê containing thirteen canons and admonitions relating to the Holy Eucharist (Alq. CLXIX-26, Vat. Borg. LXXXI-7, K VI 3 and Mard. 50); (c) a letter to an unknown person containing answers to nine questions concerning the daily prayers (Vat. Syr. LXXXVIII-5).

6. No work of Ishô bar Nûn has survived which might be assigned the title of “The Division of the Services”. BAUMSTARK has proposed the thesis that the aforementioned letter concerning the daily prayers might have occasioned later generations to assign to our author a reputation for activity in liturgics.

7. None of Ishô bar Nûn’s “Homilies” have been preserved. Abhdîshô, in his Nomocanon, records the directive which obligated the priests to read the turgâmē of our author, combined with those of Henânîshô and Paul into a lectionary for the whole ecclesiastical year.

8. The reference to “The Efficacy of the Anthem” does not allow us to draw any conclusion as to the nature of this work dealing with liturgical poetry.

9. In addition to the preceding works listed by Abhdishô, we must make mention of a grammatical treatise which deals with ambiguous words (Alq. CCXCI-6 and Mos. CIX-1).

Part of The Book of The Selected Questions concerning the whole Text of the Old and New Testaments, mentioned in section (2), is the subject for the present study.

II. CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY MANUSCRIPT Add. 2017

(a) The Manuscript. Manuscript Add. 2017 is written on paper. Its sheets are 6” by 8”. The volume contains 128 leaves. There are thirteen quires of 10 leaves each with the exception of the first which has only 8 leaves. The manuscript has on the average 17 lines to the leaf. However, 1v° has only 13 lines, 4r° and 4v° contain 18 lines and 16r° and 16v° 16 lines.

The quires are numbered with letters, which are decorated with a

1 BAUMSTARK, op. cit., p. 220.
4 The observations as to the number of lines per leaf are confined to 1v°-26v° containing the Questions on the Pentateuch.
red coloured geometric design on either side of the letter. The only other part decorated is the Preface where there is a design surrounding the first eight lines of 1v°. This Preface is in red letters with black vowel points. Furthermore, at the end of the Preface, the words 

The words 

which introduce the Questions and Answers are written, throughout the whole manuscript, in red ink to mark them off from the rest of the text. Otherwise, the text is written in black ink. The writing is extremely legible in a fine Nestorian Serṭa hand, fully pointed with vowels.

The manuscript is dated Saturday the twenty-ninth of Adar 2017 A.G. (1706 A.D.). It was written in the village of Tel Kēphē by the priest George of Alqōsh. The manuscript contains the following sections:

1. The selected Questions of Ishō bar Nūn on the Old and New Testaments (1v°-109r°): (a) The Pentateuch (1v°-26v°); (b) Bēth Mawtbē (26v°-35v°); (c) The Prophets (35v°-46r°); (d) The Psalms (46r°-68r°); (e) The Gospels (68r°-93v°) (f) The Acts of the Apostles (93v°-96r°); (g) The Epistles of Saint Paul (96r°-109r°).

2. A work which is not from the hand of Ishō bar Nūn dealing with Questions from the Book of the Solitary Fathers (109r°-112v°).

3. Another anonymous work dealing with The Marvels of the Six Days of Creation (113v°-126r°).

After the general colophon (126v°) there follows a note (127v°-128v°) by the scribe of the manuscript, giving an account of a riot which broke out in the same year in which the manuscript was written (1706 A.D.) in the district of Amādiyah through the instigation of a so-called Mahdi. After this Mahdi had been killed and his partisans routed, a new outbreak followed which the Emir of Amādiyah was unable to quell immediately. This note is imperfect at the end.

(b) The Text. There is a lapse of about a millenium between the time of Ishō bar Nūn’s writing of The Selected Questions and the date when the priest George of Alqōsh finished copying the present manuscript. It is small wonder, then, that the Syriac text has suffered from some corruptions. On the other hand, perhaps we should be amazed that there are so few errors. Since The Book of The Selected Questions is found only in one manuscript we would be compelled to make emendations conjecturally if it were not for the existence
of another specimen of Nestorian exegetical literature, preserving a number of substantially identical sections (i.e. The Commentary of Ishō’dādh of Merv). It is these parallel passages which permit us to check, at least partially, the text of The Selected Questions. We regret, however, that not all the emendations which we intend to propose have textual support from another witness of the same tradition. Wherever there is a basis for these emendations in parallel textual transmission we shall note them.

The following are the emendations which we suggest for Ishō bar Nūn’s text:

2 r0: 116 read ṣṣṣḥāḥ I 15: 16
2 r0: 171-2 read ṣṣḥāḥ ṣṣḥāḥ cf. I 15: 20
2 v0: 8 read ṣṣḥā
3 r0: 66 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 21: 15
3 r0: 124 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 21: 20
4 v0: 187 read ṣḥā I 28: 1
5 r0: 127-8 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā cf. I 34: 23
5 r0: 175 read ṣḥā ṣḥā cf. I 17: 36; reflecting the Syriac equivalent of the Greek ἐπέφερετο. In 5 v0: 8 ṣḥā bar Nūn wrote the correct word.

6 r0: 56 ṣḥā read ṣḥā
6 v0: 61 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 28: 30
6 v0: 64 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 28: 30
6 v0: 92 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 37: 23
6 v0: 113 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 29: 4-3
7 v0: 131 ṣḥā read ṣḥā I 30: 2
8 r0: 10 add ṣḥā with I 37: 17
8 r0: 11 add ṣḥā with I 37: 18
8 v0: 27 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 37: 25
8 v0: 6 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 37: 28
8 v0: 173 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 47: 10
9 r0: 11 ṣḥā ṣḥā read participle instead of noun
9 r0: 12 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā cf. infra pg. 101
9 r0: 63 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā
9 v0: 81 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 104: 1
9 v0: 96 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā as in 9v0: 11; I 108: 7
10 r0: 7 ṣḥā ṣḥā read ṣḥā ṣḥā I 127: 14
10 v0: 4-5 add ṣḥā ṣḥā with I 125: 14; the omission in Ishō bar Nūn is due to homoioteleuton
III. The Literary Genre of Questions and Answers

(a) In Greek and Latin Patristic Literature. In a series of articles, Mgr. G. Bardy has described the rise and development of this specific genre of literature. We shall present, in the following pages, a summary of his researches.

There is a long history of the use of this genre for secular and religious instruction. Aristotle's predecessors, the Sophists and the Rhetors, were in the habit of posing questions to their pupils and auditors concerning Homer's poems. It was Aristotle, however, who first systematized these expositions and answers into a book.

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called ζητημάτα καὶ λύσεις. Such use of Questions and Answers, as far as we can ascertain, was first adopted by Philo in connection with the biblical text. It is not known who was the first Christian writer to use this genre for the elucidation of the Bible. While Origen did not confine himself exclusively to Questions and Answers there are nevertheless many examples of this genre in his Homilies and Commentaries. The first time we meet, in Patristic Literature, the form of Questions and Answers is in a book by Eusebius of Caesarea: περὶ τῶν ἐν εὐαγγελίοις ζητημάτων καὶ λύσεων. Subsequent to him, many theologians in the Greek as well as the Latin Church made use of this genre from Eusebius of Emesa and Theodoret to Photius; and from the Ambrosiaster, Jerome and Augustine to Alcuin.

BARDY distinguishes two types of expositions by means of Questions and Answers. The first is purely artificial. Here the expositor himself poses the question in order to answer it. If he follows more or less the biblical order in asking the questions the net result is a modified form of commentary. The works of Philo, Augustine and Theodoret fall into this category. The second type consists of actual questions posed by correspondents to a famous interpreter or learned bishop. The exegete is then required to answer the questions which have been laid before him. This is what Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome did. There are, of course, a number of variations on these two types.

BARDY proceeds to show how during the course of the centuries this form of solving problems became stereotyped. A certain number of classical questions and answers would be repeated endlessly. An author would consult all his predecessors in tackling the problems. And even if he did not copy them slavishly, he could not help but be influenced. Initially, the collections of Questions and Answers were original, individualistic and homogeneous creations. Eventually, they tended to be anonymous or at least pseudonymous compilations. Beginning with the fifth Century we find the development of the Catenae and the Florilegia. The collections of Questions and Answers came more and more to be like these later genres both in content and in spirit; although distinct as far as the literary form was concerned.

(b) Greek Writings in the Form of Questions and Answers in Syriac Translation. There is sufficient evidence available to prove that Syrian expositors of the Bible had access to several of the Greek works summarized by BARDY in his aforementioned articles.
Abhdishō, in his Catalogue ¹, mentions in addition to the other works by Eusebius of Caesarea his Book of the Solutions of Contradictions which are found in the Gospels. It is impossible to conclude from this reference whether the literary critic based himself, for this statement, on references to the work in Nestorian exegetical literature ² or possessed in his own library a copy of Eusebius’ work ³. We are inclined to think the second part of the alternative to be more likely when we consider that rather extensive fragments of a Syriac translation have been preserved in the exegetical literature of the Jacobite Church. For instance, we notice this in the Chain of Severus, in the commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew by George of Be’elthān and in the commentary on the four Gospels by Dionysius bar Salibi ⁴.

Abhdishō lists ⁵ among the works of Eusebius of Emesa Questions on the Old Testament. BARDY, in 1932, still had to concede “jusqu’à présent du moins les Questions d’Eusèbe d’Émèse nous demeurent inconnues” ⁶. Since then, however, various fragments of the Greek text have been discovered ⁷. About twenty-four of Eusebius’ Questions are to be found in the commentary of Ishō’dādh of Merv ⁸ on the Pentateuch. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to trace the manner in which these Questions were introduced into Nestorian exegetical literature.

Abhdishō enumerates several works by Theodoret of Cyrhhus. His Questions are not among them. In Ishō’dādh’s commentary on the Pentateuch, however, there are twenty-seven traditions which may have been influenced, in what manner we can no longer say, by the Questions of Theodoret ⁹.

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² A. Baumstark, Oriens Christianus vol. 1 (1901), p. 379 writes: “... so würde diese Erwähnung allein nach der Arbeitsweise des Katalogisten allerdings nicht ... die Existenz einer syrischen Übersetzung erhärten, unstreitig beweist sie aber wenigstens dass ‘Abdišō‘ die Schrift in Werken der syrisch-nestorianischen Literatur citiert fand’.
³ J.-M. Vosté, Le Mucéon vol. 60 (1947), p. 173 writes: “... ne parle que des ouvrages qu’il a vus ou qu’il avait dans sa bibliothèque”.
⁶ BARDY, op. cit., vol. 41, p. 343.
⁷ E. M. Buttaert, L’Héritage littéraire d’Eusèbe d’Émèse.
⁸ C. van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 156 (Trs.), p. XIX; CSCO vol. 179 (Trs.), p. XIII. ⁹ Ibid.
In the section of his *Geschichte* dealing with the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia, BAUMSTARK states: „Als Exzerpte aus seinen Kommentaren sind wohl gelegentlich unter seinem Namen auftauchende Reihen biblischer Fragen zu betrachten...“. Besides the two manuscripts from the Vatican Library mentioned by BAUMSTARK, there are three more codices containing biblical Questions credited to Theodore of Mopsuestia (India Office Syr. 9², fol. 268a¹-285b¹; Harvard Sem. Mus. Syr. 62, fol. 48r⁰-62v⁰ and 85v⁰-90r⁰; and, Br. Mus. Or. 2310, fol. 70r⁰-94v⁰). It is not within the scope of the present study to investigate whether this unedited collection of Questions is a Syriac translation of extracts from Theodore of Mopsuestia’s commentaries or a compilation by a Syriac author based upon the works of the Bishop of Mopsuestia. Since the fragments of his commentaries, which have come down to us, are not preserved in the form of Questions and Answers, we are inclined to adopt the second possibility. However, because nothing is as yet known about the author of the work or the date of its composition we must confine ourselves to mentioning the manuscripts in which the Questions have been preserved.

(c) *Nestorian Books of Questions and Answers on the Biblical Text.* The Nestorians have produced a rather extensive literature dealing with the exposition of the biblical text in the form of Questions and Answers. Some of these works have survived; others are known to us only because they have been quoted in the works of later compilers and/or mentioned by Abhdishō in his Catalogue. In addition to these, there are several anonymous examples of this genre of literature still extant which have not yet been edited. In the following lines we shall attempt to list, in chronological order, those books of Questions whose authors are known to us so that we are in a position to deduce more or less exactly the date of composition of the individual works.

According to the Chronicle of Seert ⁴ Yoḥannān of Bēth Rabban

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¹ BAUMSTARK, *op. cit.*, p. 104.


³ We are acquainted with the following: Br. Mus. Add. 17, 218 (Wright no. 867), fragmentary; Br. Mus. Add. 14, 537 (Wright no. 868); Br. Mus. Add. 14, 628 (Wright no. 876), fragmentary; Mingana 108, fol. 180a; Mingana 369, fol. 32a-34a; Mingana 566, fol. 101b-110b; Mingana 604, fol. 42a-75b.

who died about 566/7 A.D. composed a Book of Questions. This statement is supplemented by a remark in the Catalogue of Abhdishō to the effect that these Questions dealt with both the Old and New Testaments. Both sources are unanimous in asserting that, besides the aforementioned work, Yohannān also wrote a commentary. In this commentary he dealt with four books of the Pentateuch (according to the Chronicle of Seert) or with Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers (according to Abhdishō); Job, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (according to the Chronicle of Seert and Abhdishō); and, Proverbs (according to Abhdishō). No one of these works has reached us directly. Nevertheless, Yohannān is quoted a number of times by later Nestorian exegetes: by Isho'dădē in his commentary on the Pentateuch, twenty-three times; by an anonymous expositor, forty-four times; and, in the Gannath Bussāmē, five times. If we are going to distinguish Yohannān's Book of Questions from his commentaries then we are unable to decide from which of these two works the later exegetes did borrow since they fail to quote the titles of the books consulted.

The Chronicle of Seert records that there was among the pupils of Ḥēnānā of Adiabene (director of the School at Nisibis from 572-610 A.D.) one called Michael. Some of these pupils, including Michael, left the school because they were opposed to the views and teachings of Ḥēnānā. According to Abhdishō this Michael, who is also called Bādhoqā, wrote a Book of Questions on the Text of Scripture in three volumes. The work itself is no longer extant. But Michael is often quoted by later exegetes: by Isho'dădē in his commentary on the Pentateuch, twenty-nine times; by an anonymous expositor, forty-two times; by Bar Bahlūl, once; by Solomon of Basra, once; by the Gannath Bussāmē, thirteen times. It is most

1 Baumstark, op. cit., p. 116.
3 Van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 179, p. XXIII.
4 Ibid., p. XXV.
5 Ibid., p. XXVII.
6 Scher, op. cit., p. 192.
7 Baumstark, op. cit., p. 127.
9 Van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 179, p. XXIII.
10 Ibid., p. XXV.
12 E. A. W. Budge, The Book of the Bee, p. 135 where Solomon states expressis verbis that the quotation is from Michael's Book of Questions.
13 Van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 179, p. XXVII.
likely that these quotations were drawn from Michael’s Book of Questions.

Among the works of Daniel bar Tūbhānīṭhā, Abhdishō ¹ mentions a treatise of Answers to Questions on the Text (of Scripture). This author is sometimes identified with a Daniel bar Maryam who, according to Amr ibn Mattā in his Book of the Tower ², flourished at the time of the Catholicus Ishōyabḥ III (who died about 657/8 A.D. ³). The Book of Questions is no longer extant. But Daniel is quoted by Ishō‘dādh twice ⁴; the first time as Daniel bar Tūbhānīṭhā, and the second time simply as Daniel. He is quoted by the anonymous expositor once ⁵: with his full name, in a passage which is parallel to the second quotation by Ishō‘dādh.

There has come down to us under the title Book of Scholia a work written by Theodore bar Kōnī. The greater part of its eleven Discourses (I-V, VII, VIII ⁶ and the first part of IX ⁸) contains a commentary on the Old and New Testaments in the form of Questions and Answers. The author develops his work in a two-fold manner: by interpreting first, in more or less detail, selected passages from the Scriptures; and then, at the end of each unit, such as at the end of the Pentateuch, adding in a very concise manner explanations of the difficult words found in that part of the text just commented upon. The second part of the ninth Discourse which is a treatise against the Monophysites, the Chalcedonians and the Arians, and Discourse X which is a Catechism, and Discourse XI which is a book about heresies, are actually appendices which may not have been originally part of the Book of Scholia proper. This suggestion is based on the fact that at the end of the first part of Discourse IX, where the Scholia end ⁷, there is a statement that Theodore the teacher in the district of Kashkar completed the work in the year 1103 of Alexander (791/2 A.D.). Theodore bar Kōnī’s Book of Scholia has been edited by A. Scher. It is regrettable that this work does not satisfy the requirements for a scientific edition ⁸.

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² GISMONDI, op. cit., p. 56 (Text) and p. 33 (Trs.).
³ BAUMSTARK, op. cit., p. 197.
⁴ VAN den EYnde, CSCO vol. 179, pp. 104 and 127.
⁵ Ibid., p. XXV.
⁶ Discourse VI deals with logic, grammar and speculative theology.
⁷ A. SCHE, Theodortts bar Koni Liber Scholiorum, Two Parts (CSCO vols 55 and 69). The statement referred to in the body of the text is to be found in Part II (CSCO vol. 69), p. 219 ftnt. 5.
⁸ Cf. Addendum II.
According to Abhdishō¹, Henānishō bar Sārōshway of Ḥirta „bei dem gegen einen Ansatz in die zweite Hälfte des 9 Jhs mindestens nichts spricht“² wrote, among other works, a Book of Questions on the biblical Text. In a Vatican Library manuscript there is found an anonymous collection of Questions on the (divine) Economy. A later hand, possibly that of J. S. Assemani wrote in the margin Henānishō’s name. Father van den Eynde supposes that the collection under consideration does not represent the original work of the Bishop of Ḥirta but rather extracts from the Book of Questions concerning the Economy ³.

Even though Ishō’dadh of Merv’s commentary on the Old and the New Testaments is not in the form of Questions and Answers, we must make mention of it; especially of his work on the Pentateuch. We know next to nothing about his life. Mārī ibn Sulaimān and Amr ibn Mattā record ⁴ the fact that after the death of the Catholicus Abraham II, who died on September 16, 850 A.D. ⁵, Ishō’dadh was one of the candidates for the patriarchal throne. His election was successfully obstructed by the powerful physician Bōkhtishō. Fortunately the exegetical writings by Ishō’dadh are extant. The commentary on the Pentateuch has been recently edited by Father C. van den Eynde ⁶. One of its characteristics is that it presents a number of expositions preceded by the question formula and a few traditions with both question and answer form. It is for this reason that Ishō’dadh’s commentary, though not a Book of Questions, has to be referred to in any survey of this genre of literature.

IV. THE AIM OF THE PRESENT STUDY

It is our intention to contribute to the general understanding of an eminent author whose numerous works have heretofore been known only through the edition of his ecclesiastical canons edited by E.

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² Baumstark, Geschichte, p. 232.
³ Van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 179, pp. XXIII-XXIV.
⁴ Gismondi, op. cit., Part I, pp. 78-79 (Text) and pp. 69-70 (Trs.) and Part II, p. 72 (Text) and p. 42 (Trs.).
⁵ According to Elia bar Shināyā, op. cit., p. 61 (Text) and p. 33 (Trs.); but Amr ibn Mattā loc. cit., says that Abraham’s death occurred in the year 852 A.D.
⁶ J.-M. Vosté (who collaborated for the text of Genesis) and C. van den Eynde, Commentaire d'Ish' antid de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament, I. Genèse, CSCO vol. 126 (Text) and 156 (Trs.); II. Exode-Deutéronome, CSCO vol. 176 (Text) and 179 (Trs.).
Sachau 1. Our concern, however, is with the Nestorian Patriarch as an expositor of the Bible. In one of the extant letters written by Timothy I, who was a fellow disciple of Ishô bar Nûn’s, he has shown himself to us as an ardent exegete whose concern was with both the text and the interpretation of the Bible 2. We have already noted, in the preceding section, several of Ishô bar Nûn’s contemporaries: Theodore bar Kônî, Ishô’dâdh of Merv and Henânishô bar Sârôshway. Besides the Book of Scholia by the former, the Commentary on the biblical text by Ishô’dâdh and the Questions of the latter, there have come down to us works in a non-catechetical form by two authors who lived about the same time. We refer to Ishô’bôkht’s exposition of the Hexameron 3 and to Denhâ’s Commentary on the Psalms 4. From this cursory survey of literature which is accessible to us we may conclude that The Selected Questions of Ishô bar Nûn are the product of a period which may be styled a high point in the development of the Nestorian Church because of the extensive activity in the field of biblical exegesis as well as, for that matter, in many other areas 5.

In the Introduction to Ishô’dâdh’s Commentary on the last four Books of the Pentateuch Father van den Eynde presents the results of a cursory comparison of Ishô’dâdh’s text with the works of Theodore bar Kônî, Ishô bar Nûn, Henânishô and four anonymous Chains which most likely date from a much later period 6. This comparative study led him to conclude that there is a very close interdependence between the texts of Ishô’dâdh, Theodore bar Kônî, Ishô bar Nûn and the anonymous commentary which is sometimes ascribed to Sabrîshô bar Paulos 7. Such a general and provisional comparison, however, does not suffice to establish convincingly the nature of the relationships between the different works which were scanned. Therefore, Father van den Eynde

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1 Sachau, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 119-177.
3 Baumstark, Geschichte, pp. 215-216.
4 Ibid., p. 220.
5 Ibid., p. 216.
6 Van den Eynde, CSCO vol. 179, pp. XIX-XXVIII.
7 Ibid., p. III; the first eighteen chapters of this commentary have been edited on the basis of MS Mingana 553 by A. Levene, The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis; cf. also Baumstark, op. cit., p. 290.
cautiously submits that, in order to solve this problem, "il faudrait au lieu d'avoir pratiqué quelques coups de sonde dans la masse des passages parallèles, comparer dans le détail tous les textes communs à un ensemble de documents dont un trop grand nombre est encore inédit".

After a careful comparison of the parallel sections in the works of Ishōʿdadh, Theodore bar Kōnī and Ishō bar Nūn we have arrived at the conclusion that a detailed analysis of these three texts would provide the clue to the solution of the problem. Although The Selected Questions of Ishō bar Nūn, with the exception of a few interpretations which are not to be found elsewhere, do not add new material to biblical exegesis we have decided to edit this work because only in this way are we in a position to proceed from a hypothesis based on impressions to a conclusion concerning the relationship of the three recensions which is based upon facts. The structural analysis of the parallel texts whose first aim was to decide the nature of their interdependence, has at the same time provided us with a great many observations which will enable us to delineate more or less in detail the editorial methods employed by the three editors. From this sketch of the way in which our authors have handled their source we may be able to draw a conclusion as to the character of the literary activity in the late 8th and early 9th centuries which, as we have noted, has been a decisive period in the history of the Nestorian Church. Through the detailed study of the syntactical structure and the phraseology of the parallel sections we have been able to trace a series of corruptions which crept into Ishōʿdadh's text before the time from which the manuscripts utilized by Father Van den Eynde date. And, quite unexpectedly, this comparison has provided us with a guiding principle by which to disentangle the complicated problem of the relationship of the different recensions of Theodore bar Kōnī's Book of Scholia.

Since the edition of the Syriac text of Ishō bar Nūn's Selected Questions is not an end in itself we have felt it proper to restrict ourselves to presenting only that portion which would suffice in providing the indispensible means for establishing the nature of the relationship of the three works under consideration. We have confined ourselves, therefore, to editing the fifty-six Questions on the Pentateuch.

1 Van den Eynde, op. cit., pp. XV-XVI.
INTRODUCTION

We have also been concerned to trace, in so far as this is possible, the ultimate sources, Syriac and Greek, which served as a basis for an 8th century Nestorian compilation. In so far as Father Van den Eynide has already traced these sources we shall make only the briefest reference. Where this is not so, we shall elaborate.

V. THE METHOD OF EDITING THE TEXT

Since there is only one manuscript extant, we think it adequate to provide a facsimile text of the Cambridge Manuscript Add. 2017, fol. 1v°-26v°. In order to facilitate reference to the Syriac text we have added line and page numbers. Earlier, we noted a number of textual errors. These we shall indicate between half brackets in the Syriac text. We have also provided an English translation of the first fifty-six Questions of Isho bar Nun which he asked concerning the Pentateuch. In the English translation we have followed the emended text—indicated by half brackets. To these two parts we have added a series of essays on the first thirty-four Questions dealing with Genesis. These essays are devoted to a detailed analysis of the parallel passages in Isho‘dadh, Theodore bar Köni and Isho bar Nûn. From such a detailed study we are led to a concluding Chapter in which we shall attempt a description of the immediate source from which our compilers have drawn. We shall also summarize the editorial activities of the three writers. We have not felt it necessary to proceed, in our analysis, beyond the Questions on Genesis because no new ideas are to be found in such a study. We have, however, presented two Addenda. In the first Addendum, we have listed our suggestions for emending Isho‘dadh’s text with comments concerning the French translation. In the second Appendix we have noted some remarks on the contribution which Isho‘dadh’s text presents to the problem of the textual criticism of Theodore bar Köni’s Book of Scholia.

1 Cf. the Introduction, sec. II, pp. 6-7.