Solving the Ninth Century West Syrian Synoptic Problem

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Within the rich literary tradition of the West Syrian (i.e., Syriac Orthodox) Church, two ninth-century authors stand out thanks to a curious problem. The authors are the bishops John of Dara, who lived in the first half of the century, and Moses bar Kepha, who died in northern Iraq in 903. The problem is the literary relationship between several of the texts transmitted in their names. Applying a three-pronged approach to this synoptic problem, this article offers a path toward a solution. On the basis of biographical, stylistic, and philological arguments, it is argued that at least one text that goes under John's name, *On Heretics*, was not in fact written by him. The author of that text, likely operating in the tenth century, drew heavily from Moses bar Kepha's treatise *On Paradise*, while reshaping the material from Moses, and also incorporating additional material from other sources.

INTRODUCTION

Within the rich literary tradition of the West Syrian (i.e., Syriac Orthodox) Church, two ninth-century authors stand out thanks to a curious problem. The authors are the bishops John of Dara, who lived in the first half of the century, and Moses bar Kepha, who died in 903.[1] The problem is the literary relationship between several of the texts transmitted in their names.

The Syriac manuscript tradition, now spread across libraries in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, assigns over a dozen treatises to John,[2] and several dozen treatises, homilies, and commentaries to Moses.[3] The subjects covered by the two authors mostly deal with speculative theology (such as paradise, angels, creation, the soul, and resurrection), the explanation of church feasts, sacraments, and liturgy, and, for Moses, also biblical exegesis. With one exception, there is no ambiguity concerning the manuscripts' attributions; each work is consistently attributed to one of the two authors.[4]

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1. For information on these two authors, see Brock 2011b and Coakley 2011 respectively. Each will be treated in more detail below.

2. See Shemunkasho 2020: 39–74 for the most recent and comprehensive survey of the writings attributed to John.

3. Reller 1994: 59–80 [62–83] is still the reference for a comprehensive overview of Moses's writings. See Takahashi 2012: 173 for a few other works that have since come to light.

4. The one exception to this rule is *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy by Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite*, which circulates in identical form under both names. See Schlimme 1977: 19.

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Several titles are associated with only one of the two authors. We will call these works "one-form" texts. Thus, for example, John's *On Demons* and Moses's *Hexaemeron* have no parallel text attributed to the other author.[5] But such parallelism is precisely what we find when it comes to other writings that go under these two authors' names. A series of treatises are transmitted in the manuscripts in two forms: one attributed to John, and one to Moses. Thus, there is an *On the Soul* in the name of John, and an *On the Soul* in the name of Moses; an *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* in the name of John, and an *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* in the name of Moses. In each of these cases, as well as about half a dozen others, the two forms of the text are strikingly similar, though far from identical (and thus do not belong to the category of "double attribution," where the *same* work circulates under the names of two authors). We will call these cases "two-form" texts.[6]

The overlap between the two textual forms is evident on all levels: from vocabulary, to many identical sentences, to closely parallel, and sometimes identical, content, to strong similarities on the level of overall structure and literary arrangement. In other words, each case of such two-form texts poses a synoptic problem, not unlike the well-known problem of the synoptic Gospels. The challenge is how to explain the literary relationship between two texts that are at the same time both remarkably similar and far from identical. As with the synoptic Gospels, we cannot automatically write off the problem by assuming that the later author, Moses, simply appropriated material from the earlier author, John.[7] This is because, as in the case of the Gospels, we have reason to suspect the authorial attributions. Just as the Gospel of Matthew was not written by the apostle Matthew, so the works attributed to John of Dara may not have been penned by the historical bishop of that name.

Yet even if we do accept John of Dara as the true author of the treatises attributed to him, one may ask whether it is likely that Moses appropriated materials from John's corpus on such a large scale, without acknowledgment. Reasons to doubt this include the fact that Moses often does acknowledge his sources when it comes to other authors.[8] Why then would he not mention John of Dara if citing from him? Another reason is the fact that John was an older contemporary of Moses's, living within the same ecclesiastical community. Would Moses have taken over so much material, without acknowledgment, from a source widely known in his own milieu?[9]

5. Schlimme 1977: 24–25 suggests that John's *On Demons* might parallel Moses's *On the Temptation of Our Lord by the Devil*, but an examination of the texts in question (based on Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, Orth. 381, pp. 321–35, for the former, and Paris, BnF, syr. 207, fols. 248r–252r, for the latter) rules out this suggestion. Moses's *Hexaemeron* is also only in manuscript; for a German translation, see Schlimme 1977.

6. In a forthcoming article we provide a detailed survey of the full textual corpora of the two authors, with the specific aim of determining which works belong to the two-form category.

7. Several scholars speak of Moses's dependence on John. Vööbus 1976: 576 (followed by Shemunkasho 2020: 73) mentions it, but does not go into detail. Bryant 2015: 229–31, 234 provides a thorough analysis of the impact that John's *On the Invention of the Cross* had on Moses's homily of the same title. Zonta 1991 and 2014 assumes the same for the two-form text *On the Soul*. Some scholars have suggested the possibility of John having used Moses's writings; see Baumstark 1933: 64; Drijvers 1966: 109. This was based on the understanding that Moses was born in 813. More recent scholarship, however, places his birth in 833 (see n. 28 below), which argues against the possibility that John, active in the first half of the ninth century, would have borrowed from Moses, who wrote in the second half of the century.

8. On Moses's habit of quoting earlier sources by name, see Moss 2011, and the discussion below on ninth-century West Syrian quotational culture.

9. Coakley 1987 has demonstrated that one of the works attributed to Moses, *Explanations of the Feasts*, relies heavily on East Syrian sources without acknowledgment. The argument could be made that Moses's silent appropriation of those sources is possible because they come from outside his West Syrian tradition, whereas he would not do the same for a source directly within his West Syrian milieu. See, on the other hand, Reller 1994: 76

A second solution to the challenge, briefly proposed by Lorenz Schlimme, is that the works attributed to John were written by someone else, who reworked Moses.[10] A third solution is to suggest that the similarities and differences between John and Moses are the result of the authors' independent borrowing from the same *Vorlagen*, or a common "school tradition," neither of which is known to us.[11]

The John of Dara and Moses bar Kepha synoptic problem has long been known to scholars.[12] Some have simply called attention to it;[13] others have pointed out the existence of individual parallel texts;[14] and others have provided more detailed analyses of individual parallel passages.[15] Despite the realization that the only way to confidently solve the problem is to analyze two parallel texts in their entirety,[16] there has been, to date, no attempt to do so. No parallel full edition or translation exists of a two-form text, let alone a thorough study of the relationship between any of them.[17]

Most of the dozen treatises attributed to John and several dozen attributed to Moses are still in manuscript. Of the few works that have been published, the substantial ones have

[79] n. 153, who denies Moses's authorship of the *Explanations of the Feasts* precisely because of its heavy reliance on East Syrian sources.

10. Schlimme 1977: 20–22, calling John's work a "redaktionelle Bearbeitung" of Moses's work. Schlimme's conclusion is based on samples from the two-forms of *On the Resurrection of the Bodies*, but he extends this solution to other two-form texts. For more on Schlimme's proposal, and how our own solution relates to it, see the conclusion below. See also Breydy 1977: 28, who argues that *On Priesthood* was a compilation by Moses bar Kepha that was then reworked by later scribes, whose texts came to be associated with the name of John of Dara in the manuscripts.

11. Breydy 1976; Breydy 1978; Reller 1994: 38 [41] n. 44, 79 [82]; Reller 1999. See §2 below for further discussion of this possibility. A fourth solution is that there was in fact only one author, most likely the later one, Moses, who wrote his treatises in two drafts, and only subsequently in the manuscript tradition did his earlier drafts, having been superseded by the later ones, come to be associated with his predecessor John. Yet such a solution does not fit the normal paradigm of the two-draft solution, in which the manuscript tradition attributes both forms of the text to the same author. For a study of the phenomenon of multiple recensions in patristic writings, see Lipatov-Chicherin 2013. For a case in Moses's corpus where the two-draft theory has been advanced, see Coakley 1987: 408, where two works dealing with the same subject that are transmitted in Moses's name are discussed: *Explanations of the Feasts* and *Homilies*. Coakley argues that the former was written at an early stage in Moses's career, and the latter is a more mature, sophisticated output, which superseded the earlier one in popularity.

12. Reller 1994: 38 [41] n. 44 provides a list of scholars who took note of parallel texts between John and Moses, and states that these parallels are "bereits seit längerem bekannt." He mentions Assemani 1721: 119, 218; Barhebraeus, *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, 1: 393–95 (referring to Abbeloos and Lamy 1872–77, 1: 393 n. 1); Baumstark 1922: 277 n. 6, 281 n. 8; Baumstark 1933; Strothmann 1973: 23–25; Schlimme 1977: 14–25; Breydy 1978: 288–93. Assemani 1721 and Baumstark 1922 do not in fact point out parallels.

13. Vööbus 1976: 576; Reller 1994: 38 [41] n. 44; Anderson 2016: 4; Shemunkasho 2020: 34.

14. For *On Priesthood*, see Braun 1891: 12; Barsoum 2003: 404; and Breydy 1976 and 1978, who gives a thorough analysis of the various versions; for *On the Resurrection of the Bodies*, see Strothmann 1973: 23–25; for *On Heretics* (John) and *On Paradise* (Moses), see Ruani 2017a; and for several texts, see Schlimme 1977: 14–25; Braida 2017.

15. For *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* (John) and *On the Soul* (Moses; in fact the reference needs to be corrected to *Hexaemeron*), see Baumstark 1933, concerning a quote from Bardaisan. (Since Baumstark, several others have provided synoptic treatments of this fragment, e.g., Camplani 1997, including references to earlier scholars.) For treatments of other parallel passages, see Reller 1999 for *On the Soul*; Moss 2016 for *On the Resurrection of the Bodies*.

16. Both Schlimme 1977: 18, 20, and Breydy 1978: 289 highlight the necessity of extending such synoptic analyses to all of the two-form texts.

17. The one two-form text that comes closest to an exception is *On Priesthood*, for which Breydy 1976 provides a brief comparison of the respective structures, and Breydy 1977, 1: 53–111 provides a lengthy list of the main variations between the texts.

mostly been only in translation.[18] Yet in the absence of more published Syriac texts, it is impossible to solve the synoptic problem definitively.[19] Moreover, the problem is further compounded by a vicious circle: due to the widespread synoptic challenges surrounding John's and Moses's texts, their dating and context are uncertain, for which reason many texts possibly do not get published, and the synoptic problem languishes unsolved.[20]

In an attempt to break this vicious circle, we are currently completing a synoptic edition and translation of a two-form text: John of Dara's *On Heretics*[21] and the third book of Moses bar Kepha's *On Paradise*. Despite their different names, these two treatises bear a close resemblance. Here we will focus on aspects of the relationship between those two texts, and between their authors, that can help solve the synoptic problem. More specifically, we will show how a comparative analysis of the two works, at both the "macro" and the "micro" level, points to a solution, however preliminary. With "macro" level we mean the works' respective textual transmissions, namely, how each work is internally organized and with which other texts it circulates; with "micro" level we mean slight textual variations in the way each formulates its arguments and, particularly, in the way each cites earlier patristic sources. As background to this comparative textual analysis, we first offer an assessment of the evidence in John's and Moses's biographies and literary styles relevant to the synoptic problem.

1. BIOGRAPHICAL AND STYLISTIC ASPECTS

The existence of both figures is attested by contemporary sources outside of the manuscripts that attribute works to them. John, known by the Greek (*Iwannis*), not Syriac (*Yuḥanon*), form of the name, was a monk in the Dayr Zaʿfarān monastery until Patriarch Dionysius of Tell-Maḥre (r. 818–845) consecrated him as metropolitan bishop of Dara (both in southeastern Turkey, near Mardin).[22] Dionysius also dedicated his *Ecclesiastical His-*

18. This is the case of John's *On Priesthood* (four books), *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy* (sixteen chapters) and *Commentary on the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (six chapters), and of Moses's *Hexaemeron* (five books), *On Paradise* (three books), *Commentary on John* (introduction and two books, though one manuscript is printed in facsimile), and *On the Soul* (forty-one chapters). John's *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* (four books) and Moses's commentaries *On Psalms, On Luke*, and *On Romans* have been edited and translated. See Anderson 2016 (for the first three works attributed to John); Schlimme 1977; Masius 1569; Schlimme 1978; Braun 1891; Shemunkasho 2020; Diettrich 1901; Saadi 2020; and Reller 1994 respectively. Shorter texts that have been edited and translated are, for example, John's *On the Offering* (Sader 1970); Moses's *On Baptism* (Connolly and Codrington 1913) and *Homily on Monastic Tonsure* (Aydin 2017); and for both, *On the Invention of the Cross* (Bryant 2015).

19. Schlimme 1977: 19.

20. Moss 2016: 501.

21. The manuscript tradition does not preserve a title for this treatise, contrary to the other treatises transmitted with it. It is introduced just as the third treatise of the collection. Scholars have therefore assigned it different titles: *Against the Heretics* (Vööbus; Shemunkasho), *Objections of Simon Magus, Mani and Other Heretics on the Tree of Knowledge* (Schlimme; Breydy), and *On Heretics* (Moss; Ruani; Braida).

22. See Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle* (hereafter, *Chronicle*), ed. Chabot 1899–1963, 4: 754–55 (Syr.), 3: 454 (trans.). Although the year of consecration is not mentioned in the *Chronicle*, which just reports that John was the twenty-seventh bishop ordained by Patriarch Dionysius, Patriarch Barsoum (2003: 391) states it was "around 825" without indicating a source. He also writes that John of Dara remained in charge for thirty-five years and that he died in 860. In support of the latter claim, Barsoum refers to the election of Athanasius Ḥakīm as metropolitan of Dara by Patriarch John III (r. 845–873) "around 860," based on *Chronicle* 3: 756. However, Michael the Syrian again does not mention a date. Others give 825 as date of death (Sader 1972: 467; Reller 1999: 254; Varghese 2011: xi), but they offer no evidence. Furthermore, there seems to be evidence to the contrary, since it appears that John was alive in 837 (see the following footnote). In sum, all we can say is that John was consecrated between 818 and 845 (the period of Dionysius of Tell-Maḥre's patriarchate), and that he was dead by 873.

tory to John, since, as he states, it was John who had asked him to write it.[23] Furthermore, Dionysius praises John as an intellectual, eager to acquire knowledge about every science, including secular history.[24]

With the exception of these sparse snippets and the works attributed to him in the manuscript tradition, nothing else is known about John.[25] We do not know where he came from, who his teachers or associates were (with the exception of Dionysius), if he had any students, and what his stance might have been on contemporary issues of debate.[26] All works attributed to John speak in a void. They display no awareness of the reader, they betray no presence of the writer—no reference is made to other parts of the work, or to other works by the same author.

By contrast, we have far more information concerning Moses. Two biographical notices are preserved.[27] These state that he was born and raised in Balad, close to Mosul, either in 813 or, more likely, in 833.[28] His father's uncle was the teacher of David bar Paulus, who died in 837.[29] Moses studied at the Mar Sargis monastery in Sinjar, west of Mosul, under the monastery's abbot Cyriacus, to whom he later dedicated his *Commentary on John*.[30] He became a monk at age twenty. Ten years later he was consecrated bishop by Patriarch John III of Antioch. Under the episcopal name Severus, he served as bishop of Beth Raman, north of Tagrit, and possibly as suffragan bishop of other towns as well.[31]

Moses dedicated several of his works to Mar Ignatius, whose identity is not entirely certain, but is probably Patriarch Ignatius II of Antioch (878–883).[32] Moses's biographical

23. Dionysius's *History* survives only through citations in later authors. The preface, including the dedication to John, is preserved in the *Chronicle*, 4: 378 (Syr.), 2: 357–58 (trans.). The year of the dedication has also not been agreed upon: Reller 1994: 38 [41] n. 44 says it happened in 843 (based on the same pages of the *Chronicle*, which, nevertheless, do not indicate a specific date), while Sader 1972: 467 and Varghese 2011: xi claim 837, which may have been deduced, probably too quickly, from Bar ʿEbroyo's *Ecclesiastical History* 1.385, which notes Dionysius's dedication ("in these times") after mentioning the death of the schismatic bishop Abraham in the year 1148 AG (= 837 CE) (likewise, Assemani 1721: 219 n. 1 cautiously concluded therefrom that John of Dara was still alive in 837).

24. *Chronicle*, 4: 378 (Syr.), 2: 357 (trans.).

25. Moses bar Kepha quotes a short passage from John in his *Commentary on the Myron* (Strothmann 1973: 114–17), which would seem to indicate that Moses treated John as an author in his own right. Yet Strothmann casts doubt on the authenticity of this citation (ibid.: 23), on the basis of the fact that the formula introducing it differs from the citational formulas used in the rest of the text. Strothmann thinks this quote was a subsequent addition, and that is why it appears at the end of the text. This is the only case known to us of a (possible) citation by Moses from John, but further research is needed to better assess this point.

26. Barsoum 2003: 392 lists as one of John of Dara's works a "treatise on the policy of the church and the settlement of peace in it." Although the work is anonymous, Barsoum makes every effort to attach it to John, speculating that it was "undoubtedly" written "in the days of the Patriarch John IV (around 850)" (John III? See n. 22 above). Barsoum also wishes to attribute to John of Dara "an accord copy" of the abovementioned treatise, which he states "is most probably a reply to Basilius II, Maphryono of the East (848–858)." The evidence connecting these works to John is, at best, circumstantial. Anderson 2016: 3 suggests that the "desire for order and hierarchy" that characterizes John's works could be a response to his tumultuous ecclesiastical context, although she underlines the scantiness of evidence for John's life.

27. See Reller 1994: 24–26a [24–29].

28. The biographical notices give 1214 AG (= 903 CE) as his death year. Most versions of the notices state that he lived for ninety years, but others give seventy. See Reller 1994: 25–26 [26–28], 33 [36], for arguments in favor of the later birth year.

29. Reller 1994: 24 [24]. On David bar Paulus, see Brock 2011a.

30. Reller 1994: 25 [26], 33 [36], 38 [41].

31. Ibid.: 25 [26], 45–47 [48–50]. The other towns are Beth Kiyonaye, Beth ʿArbaye, and Mosul (Coakley 2011; Reller 1994: 29 [32]).

32. For the identification of Mar Ignatius with the patriarch by that name, see Assemani and Assemani 1759: 276 (Vat sir. 147). For the patriarch, see *Chronicle*, 4: 458 (Syr.), 3: 119 (trans.); Bar ʿEbroyo, *Ecclesiastical History*

accounts also list his works and names of his associates and students. The name of another student, Bar Naṣiha, is provided by a later chronicle, which indicates that he broke with his teacher due to a theological and liturgical schism within the West Syrian Church.[33] The debate in question concerned the use of the Eucharistic formula "we break the heavenly bread, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The West Syrian patriarchal line deemed this formula offensive to one-nature Christology, since it appears to imply two natures in Christ manifesting as "heavenly bread" and as "the Son." The schism it created had roots in the eighth century and extended late into the twelfth.[34] At various points in his works, Moses engages, albeit subtly and tacitly, in this debate.[35] Traces of other contemporary political events and conditions can also be detected in his works.[36] Finally, Moses's writings have also been shown to display an interest, if not always necessarily open and explicit, in wider intellectual trends of the day, such as Islamic (and Christian and Jewish) *kalām*, questions about free will, and new historicizing trends in biblical exegesis.[37]

Thus, it is fair to conclude that Moses bar Kepha is a "known entity" in a way that John of Dara is not. We know there was a John of Dara, and we can list over a dozen works attributed to him, but we can say next to nothing about his historical personage. By contrast, the historical individuality of Moses bar Kepha shines forth through his writings as well as independently of them.[38]

As important as this contrast is, however, we cannot base a solution to the synoptic problem on only biographical considerations. As a rule, West Syrian textual culture in the ninth century displayed pronounced tendencies toward an elision of the individual author. Much of the West Syrian original literary production in this period was of a compilatory nature.[39] This was the era of the florilegium—collections of passages from authoritative ecclesiastical writers, arranged according to topics of contemporary theological, exegetical, and spiritual interest.[40] The authors of these compilatory works, while creative in their choices of selection and arrangement, rarely exposed their identities. The result is a general impression of anonymity and collectivity.

Moreover, even those works in this period that were penned by known authors display many of the characteristics of the florilegium. They rely heavily on citations, both explicit

1.389; Wilmshurst 2016: 134 (trans.), 135 (text). Moses dedicated to Ignatius his *Hexaemeron*, *On Paradise*, *Commentary on the Gospel*, *Mysteries of the Tonsure of Monks*, and *On Baptism*. See Reller 1994: 81 [84], 84 [87].

33. Bar ʿEbroyo, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.213–5, for which, Wilmshurst 2016: 376 (trans.), 377 (text). See Reller 1994: 48–53 [51–56].

34. On this schism, see Fiey 1974: 354–56; Reller 1994: 48–53 [51–56]; Oez 2012: 42–55, with relevant sources.

35. For details, see Reller 1994: 50–53 [53–56].

36. For a prodigious astronomical event that occurred during the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861) and its connection to contemporary Abbasid–Armenian tensions, see Reller 1994: 39–41 [42–44]. For further discussion of Moses's Islamic context, ibid.: 54–58 [57–60].

37. For general observations on Moses's engagement with contemporary intellectual trends, see Schlimme 1977: 4–5; with *kalām*, see Rudolph 1994; Nagel 2000: 159; for his *kalām* and discussion of free will, see Griffith 1987; on his historicizing trends in exegesis, see Moss 2011.

38. For implicit claims along these lines, see Schlimme 1977: 17; Breydy 1977: 28.

39. Breydy 1977 (esp. 28–30) and 1978 stand out for providing an early and extreme argument for the complete elision of the individual author in West Syrian literature in this period. For a general presentation of some major aspects of ninth-century Syriac literary culture, with a focus on John of Dara and Moses bar Kepha, see Braida 2017: 162–66.

40. For literature on Syriac florilegia, see Fiori and Ebeid 2023, and the extensive bibliography gathered by the ERC project "FLOS Florilegia Syriaca" (Ca' Foscari, University of Venice) at https://www.unive.it/pag/40546/.

and implicit, from the patristic tradition, and indeed from previous florilegia.[41] The authors of these texts do not shy away from tacitly "recycling" passages from others, or even from themselves.[42] As a result, they are difficult to distinguish from one another.

Furthermore, not only do John and Moses operate within a shared, closed tradition, wherein citation from canonical authorities is paramount, but their Syriac follows set, stereotypical patterns. The argument structure, syntactical constructions, and vocabulary are relatively limited and highly repetitive.[43] The general absence of a personal tone, figurative imagery, and idiosyncratic expressions conspire to create the impression of a generic, conventionalized language shared by their texts, wherein there is little hope of prying out the individuality of the author.[44] This fact complicates the task of assessing whether a text attributed to either John or Moses was in fact penned by him.

Nevertheless, a close examination of the texts attributed to these two authors does in fact reveal several cardinal stylistic differences. Moses's treatises, whether one-form or two-form, are highly structured: they are divided into books, chapters, and subheadings, and contain enumerated "bullet points" and frequent illustrative diagrams.[45] The longer treatises include a table of contents. These are embedded within the work itself; they are part of Moses's composition and cannot be said to be the addition of a later scribe.[46] The same organizational transparency Moses displays in the overall structure of his works is found in his individual

41. An example is Cyriacus of Tagrit's *Book of Providence* (Oez 2012: 183–208), which cites patristic statements based on florilegia. On the patristic sources used by John of Dara in his treatises, see Shemunkasho 2011; Anderson 2016: 7–9. On Moses bar Kepha, see n. 8 above for explicit sources; Schlimme 1978, 1: xxv–xxvi, for one example of implicit use of sources. For an overview of the reception of patristic sources in Syriac literature, with special reference to Moses bar Kepha, see Juckel 2007, esp. 103–7, 114–17.

42. For examples of Moses's recycling of passages from his own oeuvre, see Vosté 1929: 218–19, 227–28; Reller 1994: 85 [88]. For a treatment of the phenomenon of literary "recycling" in Syriac historiography of this period, see Johnson 2021.

43. For example, the argumentation is frequently introduced by expressions such as ܡܚܘܝܢ "we demonstrate" and ܐܬܚܘܝܬ "it is proven," and the opinion to be refuted, by ܗܘܦܬܐ "objection." Earlier scholars have pointed out these phrases and others as characteristic of Moses's style, but they have neglected to make a similar observation about John, whose two-form texts employ the same phrases for argumentative purposes; Reller 1994: 106–8 [109–11], with references to earlier literature. It is precisely this particular stylistic similarity between the authors that precludes the kind of procedure that Schlimme and Jobst Reller use to understand Moses's relationship with the texts at his disposal. Schlimme (1977: 699–701) shows how Moses interlaced the above-mentioned expressions in the passages from Jacob of Edessa that he embedded in his own *Hexaemeron*, while Reller (1994: 108–9 [111–12]) does the same for John Chrysostom in Moses's *Commentary on Romans*; both are able to do so thanks to the large stylistic gap between these previous authors and Moses. The gap between John of Dara and Moses is far narrower due to their shared cultural context.

44. Despite the highly conventionalized language, there are certain words that are used by one author and not the other, while each author uses certain phrases more or less frequently when compared to the other author. We provide evidence of these patterns in the introduction to our edition.

45. Every work attributed to Moses has these features; see Moss 2016: 504 n. 50. For observations on his diagrams generally, see Reller 1994: 109; Schlimme 1977: 649–54 on the diagrams in his *Hexaemeron*. See also Braun 1891: 47, 62–65, 67, 76, 79, 84, 96 for a series of diagrams that are in the manuscript Vat. sir. 147 used for the edition, but that Braun left out of his translation of *On the Soul*. For a study on diagrams as medieval tools for thought organization and conceptual communication, see Even Ezra 2021 (esp. pp. 24, 207 n. 24, for references to Moses bar Kepha's diagrams), and Hamburger, Roxburgh, and Safran 2022.

46. See, e.g., *On Paradise*, which starts out with a dedication and a brief presentation of the topic—including mention of the fact that the work is divided into books, chapters, and subheadings—and only then is a table of contents provided. See the oldest manuscript containing this work, Yale Syr. 10 (dated 1225 CE), pp. 1–3, https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2043723. For its description, see Depuydt 2006: 184–86; Takahashi 2012: 172–74.

arguments. He makes a point of spelling out the logic of every step of his reasoning, even at the cost of repetition and of stating the obvious.[47]

Moreover, Moses manifests a writer's awareness of himself and his audience: he dedicates his works to specific individuals (as we have seen), addresses the reader at various junctures in the text, and offers cross-referencing signposts to other relevant discussions in his body of work.[48] Finally, as mentioned above, Moses's writing can reflect the events and concerns of his day.

When we turn to John's treatises, the situation is less straightforward. Based on our preliminary observation of the sources that have been published, there seems to be a stylistic difference between the one-form text attributed to John, *De Oblatione*, and the two-form texts attributed to him. *De Oblatione* is associative and free-flowing,[49] while the two-form texts exhibit a tendency toward dialectical argumentation. Both types of texts, however, appear far less structured and organized when compared to those by Moses—they are divided according to book and chapter, but John provided no table of contents.[50] Within the individual chapters, subheadings, "bullet points," and diagrams occur less frequently than in Moses.[51] What is true on the global level is true also on the local level. The arguments in both types of texts attributed to John are often terse, implicit, and confusing.[52] The logic is not always as clear as it is in Moses.[53] John often offers nothing but an enigmatic hint; unlike Moses, he cannot be accused of belaboring a point.[54]

How do these observations on style bring us closer to solving the synoptic problem? Here the example of the classic synoptic problem of Gospel fame is instructive. When faced with a shorter, less organized Mark and a more developed and more structured Matthew and Luke, many New Testament scholars have preferred to trace directionality from short to long, and from jumbled and surprising to streamlined and expected, rather than the reverse. This accords with the general philological notion of *lectio difficilior potior*—the more dif-

47. On Bar Kepha's mode of argumentation more generally, see Schlimme 1977: 27–31, 743–56; Moss 2011: 334–35.

48. See Assemani 1721: 128, 131; Reller 1994: 81–83 [84–86]. The above-noted aspects of Moses's style correspond to the five categories delineated in Frank 2004: 249–56 to characterize Jewish exegesis in the medieval East. More research is required on connections between the medieval eastern Jewish exegetical tradition and the Syriac tradition represented by Moses bar Kepha.

49. The still unpublished *On Demons*, another one-form text attributed to John, may be different. In our upcoming article assessing John's and Moses's corpora (see n. 6 above), we provide a stylistic profile of *On Demons*, which may complicate the picture presented here. For now, see the translation of *On Demons* in Anderson 2016: 311–39.

50. These can be found at the beginning of the manuscripts containing his treatises, presumably provided by the copyists. See, e.g., the most ancient manuscript (datable to the ninth or tenth century), Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, Orth. 356, pp. 1–12 (www.vhmml.org/readingRoom/). An exception to this observation seems to be *On Demons*, which has a table of contents most likely stemming from the author.

51. *De Oblatione* contains no enumerations of chapters or paragraphs (added only by the modern editor), no diagrams, and, in general, the argumentation does not seem to follow a logical structure, including even the order of the liturgy. For an example from a two-form text, see our planned synoptic edition of John's *On Heretics* and Moses's *On Paradise*, Book III.

52. For John's style, see Varghese 2011: xii; Varghese 2004: 290–91 (both regarding *De Oblatione*), who offers a somewhat similar assessment, but interprets it as a mark of John's "originality" and sophistication.

53. Kelli Bryant (2015: 230, 234) stresses how the style of Moses's *On the Invention of the Cross* is clearer, simpler, and more effective than John's parallel text. See also Hugonnard-Roche 2014: 63, comparing John's and Moses's respective treatises *On the Soul*: "Ce qui . . . n'est qu'ébauché dans l'ouvrage de Jean de Dara . . . est traité de manière plus systématique chez Moshe bar Kepha."

54. For an example demonstrating this contrast, see Table 2 below, especially the two authors' respective replies to "the first objection concerning God's weakness." For one published example, from John of Dara's *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* 2.13 and Moses bar Kepha's *On the Resurrection of the Bodies* 21, see Moss 2016: 510.

ficult reading is to be preferred as more original. Yet, alongside the champions of Markan priority,[55] there have also been scholars who insist that Matthew came first, or that Luke did.[56] Rather than judging Matthew and Luke to be longer and "cleaner" versions of Mark, this alternate view casts Mark as a bumbled abridgment. Both options are presented as logical and a priori.[57] In like fashion, based on logic or likelihood alone we cannot determine whether it would make more sense for Moses's text to be a "cleaner" reworking of John's or for John's to be a "rough" abridgment of Moses's.

Although the above biographical and stylistic comparisons between John and Moses have not led to a definitive answer, they do at least establish the solidity of Moses's literary reality and raise questions about John's. If indeed the texts attributed to John of Dara do not say or betray anything about their author or his involvement in contemporary events,[58] we may ask whether they were then penned by him. Further, we may ask whether the stylistic differences between the one-form and two-form texts reflect the work of two separate authors, living in different times.

To advance further, we proceed to an analysis of a specific two-form text, which will provide evidence as to which of the two forms came first. We will analyze John's *On Heretics* and Moses's Book III *On Paradise*, at both the macro level, namely, the ways in which they are internally organized and transmitted in the manuscript tradition, and the micro level, namely, how they articulate their respective claims.

2. *ON HERETICS* AND *ON PARADISE*, BOOK III

In the manuscript tradition, John's *On Heretics* is the third treatise in a collection of seven of his works. It follows *On Paradise* and *On Creation*, and is followed by *On the Resurrection of the Lord*, *On Pentecost*, *On the Invention of the Cross*, and *On the Divine Economy*.[59] The existence of John's *On Heretics* was first noted in several publications that came out in the 1970s,[60] but the treatise has not been published, translated, or studied.[61]

55. Either according to the most popular Two-Source theory, which sees Mark and Q as the sources for both Matthew and Luke (on which, see, e.g., Tuckett 1992), or according to the so-called Farrer hypothesis, which does away with Q, arguing that Mark was the source for Matthew, and both were the source for Luke. See, e.g., Goodacre 2002.

56. See Farmer 1964; Harrington 2000: 916–28.

57. Compare the similar range of solutions proposed for the synoptic problem presented by 2 Peter and Jude; see Mathews 2010.

58. For example, Bryant 2015: 231, with reference to *On the Invention of the Cross*, contrasts John's conventionalized, traditional vocabulary in identifying theological opponents with Moses's vocabulary that is updated to reflect contemporary debates.

59. *On Heretics* survives only as part of the seven-treatise collection of John's works. That collection is transmitted, as far as we could find, only in three (interrelated) manuscripts, all exclusively dedicated to John's texts. The oldest, which served as the exemplar for the other two, is Mardin, Church of the Forty Martyrs, Orth. 356. *On Heretics* is found on pp. 84–106. The colophon is missing. On paleographical grounds, Barsoum 2003: 391 dates it to the tenth to eleventh century, whereas Vööbus 1976: 577 dates it to the ninth to tenth century. The other two witnesses are twentieth-century copies: Birmingham, Selly Oak Colleges, Mingana syr. 67 (1911 CE), and Città del Vaticano, Vat. sir. 581 (1917 CE). Shemunkasho (2011: 420; idem 2016: 133; and idem 2020: 42) wrongly states that another copy is Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate 4/4, which, however, contains a different collection of John of Dara's works.

60. Vööbus 1976: 577; Schlimme 1977: 18, 23; Breydy 1978: 288 (where, unfortunately, n. 43 corresponding to the discussion of this work is missing). Prior surveys of Syriac literature show no awareness of this work; Barsoum 2003: 391 lists the content of the Mardin and Mingana manuscripts that include it, but omits mentioning it.

61. See Ruani 2017a for a study of part of the work.

The parallel to John's *On Heretics* is the third book of Moses's *On Paradise*, written, it appears, toward the end of Moses's life.[62] Despite the fact that some manuscripts omit it altogether, the third book is an organic part of the treatise.[63] Not only is there internal cross-referencing between the first two books and the third,[64] there is also thematic continuity across the three books. Book I offers a systematic presentation of the concept of paradise followed by a literal interpretation of Genesis 2:7–3:24; Book II provides a symbolic interpretation of the same verses; Book III presents and refutes various opinions contrary to the author's outlook on paradise.[65]

This treatise has been known in Western scholarship far longer than John's *On Heretics*. It was, in fact, the very first nonbiblical Syriac work to have been printed, although only in translation. The Flemish humanist Andreas Masius published it in a Latin rendering in 1569. Masius's Latin text was variously consulted within European scholarship and finally came to be included in Jacques Paul Migne's *Patrologia graeca*.[66] Modern scholarship has mined both the Latin and the Syriac (only available in manuscript) in efforts to reconstruct patristic texts and notions related to paradise.[67] More recently, the incomplete version of the work, lacking Book III, has been translated into Hungarian.[68] Apart from two articles, there are, to the best of our knowledge, no studies dedicated to this work.[69] The manuscript tradition also offers an Arabic version of the treatise, first produced in 1740.[70]

Of the little extant scholarship that knows of the existence of both *On Heretics* and *On Paradise*, it seems that only Lorenz Schlimme postulated that they constitute a two-form text.[71] Other scholars seem to have thought that they represent one and the same text attributed to two different authors.[72]

Following Schlimme's correct assessment that these two treatises constitute a two-form text, we may ask which came first. Their respective textual transmissions can help provide an indication. Given the peculiar focus on opinions related to the paradise story, John's *On Heretics* thematically follows the two treatises that precede it in the manuscripts, *On Paradise* and *On Creation*.[73] Nevertheless, the link is more solid in the case of Moses: the focus on

62. See Reller 1994: 84–86 [87–89], on the basis of internal evidence from *On Paradise*.

63. The manuscript tradition can be divided into two branches, one "complete," containing all three books, and one "incomplete," containing Book I and Book II, up to the middle of chapter 7. For a presentation of the relevant manuscripts, see Reller 1994: 61–62 [64–65].

64. See, for example, the beginning of Book III in Yale Syr. 10, fol. 108r: "In the previous book, O our dear and admirable brother Ignatius, we spoke about spiritual paradise, about the spiritual trees of the words of the text. In the present book we will with God's help rebut the attacks and censures brought by the heretics against the things said above, and we will answer some questions that other people ask." In this manuscript, Book III is at fols. 108r–124v.

65. For more on the character of Moses's *On Paradise* and its relation to other writings on the topic within the Greek and Syriac traditions, see Moss 2011: 331–36.

66. Masius 1569, repr. in Migne 1857–66 [PG 111]: 481–608. On Andreas Masius as a Syriac scholar, see François 2009; Van Roey 1978 and 1990. For the seventeenth-century scholarship that cites the work, see Delumeau 1995: 181, 183, 189, 198; Mércz 2016: 345.

67. Ginzberg 1954: 97 n. 70; Graffin 1980; Parmentier 1989: 164; Michelson 2010; Kaufhold 2017.

68. Kövér, Lukács, and Pesthy 2001.

69. Moss 2011 for the Syriac original; Mércz 2016 for its Latin and Arabic translations.

70. See Graf 1944–53, 2: 230 for the manuscript tradition; Mércz 2016 for a study of its historical context (pp. 351–52 for its specific date).

71. Schlimme 1977: 24. See further the conclusion below.

72. Breydy 1978: 288; Reller 1994: 78 [81] n. 161. The introduction to a manuscript of the Garshuni translation of *On Paradise* describes the work as being authored by both Moses bar Kepha and John of Dara (in that order); Mércz 2016: 351–52.

73. Previous scholarship has not viewed these three treatises as one unit. See Schlimme 1977: 18; Breydy 1978: 287–89; Shemunkasho 2020: 44 ("It seems that these seven *mimre* belong to each other as a unit").

paradise in his heresiological section makes perfect sense since it is an organic part of a treatise specifically dedicated to paradise. As Moses states clearly in his introduction to Book III, the point of the heresiological discussion is to refute problematic opinions about paradise.[74]

Both texts address Simon Magus, the Manichaeans, the Julianists, and the Nestorians, all considered heretical from the perspective of West Syrian orthodoxy. No mention is made of the classical ideas associated with these groups, such as their Christological positions, which, especially in the case of the Nestorians and the Julianists, form the very core of the theological and social rift between the respective communities. But our texts focus on aspects of these groups' teachings (as the West Syrians understood them) that directly relate to the topic of paradise, namely, the original condition of humanity and the nature of the tree of knowledge, as well as the meaning of the command not to eat from it.[75]

Moreover, both texts refute these opponents in eight chapters; four are expressly given over to the four aforementioned heretics, and the remaining chapters address other challenges not identified with specific opponents. Despite these overarching similarities, there are profound differences in structure and arrangement: the chapters are not in the same order, and half of them are dedicated to different topics.[76] Thus, the chapter against the Julianists is third in John, sixth in Moses; the chapter against the Nestorians is fourth in John, eighth in Moses. Likewise, John's chapters four to eight dealing with the trees of life and knowledge are absent in Moses,[77] while Moses's chapters three and seven, devoted to patristic refutations of Julian the Apostate, do not find a counterpart in John as independent chapters.[78]

Even when the chapters do correlate to one another, the internal arrangement and wording of similar passages differ. We provide below (Table 1) one example from chapter one of both texts to demonstrate.[79] Chapter one deals with Simon Magus's theological objections concerning the creation and fall of the primordial couple.[80] Our example focuses on two of these objections—the accusations that God is weak and that he is wicked—both based on God's having given Adam a command that led to his fall from immortality. John and Moses present and refute these two accusations in similar, sometimes identical, terms. Yet John presents the two accusations together, immediately followed by their refutations, at the outset of the chapter, while Moses separates them, presenting the first alongside its refutation at the

74. This is in keeping with Moses's method as demonstrated also in his other works. He cites opinions he considers heretical with reference to the specific topic at hand. See, e.g., Strothmann 1973: 34–37; Schlimme 1977: 137–42, 177–80, 309, 365. For more on the heresiological aspects of Moses's writings, see Ruani 2017a, 2017b, 2023.

75. At the end of the first chapter of Book III of *On Paradise* (Yale Syr. 10, fol. 112r), Moses refers to another work of his concerned with the "multitude and diversity of heresies," where the matters are discussed at greater length. Although mentioned in both versions of Moses's biographical account (Reller 1994: 26 [28]), this treatise is not extant. Following a series of misunderstandings, Breydy 1978: 288 erroneously identifies it with John's *On Heretics*. See also Reller 1994: 78 [81] n. 161.

76. Differences in the order of the chapters have been noticed for other two-form texts: see Breydy 1976 for the treatises *On Priesthood*, and Schlimme 1977: 20 for *On the Resurrection of the Bodies*.

77. They are found in earlier books of Moses's *On Paradise*.

78. For a detailed presentation of the respective structures of the two works, see the introduction to our forthcoming edition.

79. We furnish below a literal English translation of the Syriac texts that is meant to reflect as closely as possible the subtle similarities and differences of the original (which we were not able to include due to space limitations). In the table below, < > indicates added divisional headings.

80. These objections under the name of Simon Magus ultimately stem from the Pseudo-Clementine literature, but our texts do not seem to be directly dependent on it; *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* III.38.2, 39.1 and *Recognitions* II.53.5–7.

Table 1

John of Dara, *On Heretics*, ch. 1 (= Mardin, Orth. 356, pp. 84–85)	Moses bar Kepha, *On Paradise*, Book III, ch. 1 (= Yale Syr. 10, fols. 108r, 111r,v)
<First and second objections concerning God's weakness and concerning God's wickedness> Simon Magus said to Peter that the god who fashioned man is weak and not good. [He is] weak because the man he fashioned did not remain as he [God] wished. He is not good because he prohibited man to eat from the tree of knowledge, lest by eating and knowing what good and evil are, he might recognize evil and choose the good. **<John's reply to the first objection concerning God's weakness>** To him [Simon] we say: man remained as God wished. For God wished that man be free, autonomous, and not a bound nature, like the animals. And thus [man] was, i.e., he has the power to obey and to disobey, which shows that he was created free. For his [man's] disobedience here has demonstrated the will of his maker, that he made him both free and the receiver of good and evil. **<John's reply to the second objection concerning God's wickedness>** Furthermore, he prohibited him [to eat] from the tree, not so that he might not choose good and avoid evil, as you have said. This [claim], indeed, is proven to be false from the fact that he [man] ate, knowing [already] what each one of them [good and evil] was. And he became liable for the punishment of disobedience, and he did not benefit at all from his knowledge of the Tree, as you have said.	**<First objection concerning God's weakness>** Simon the Magus objects as follows. The god who fashioned man is weak. It is proven that he is weak from the fact that Adam did not remain as he [God] wished. **<Moses's reply to the first objection concerning God's weakness>** We say to him that Adam remained as God his creator wished him to remain, inasmuch as God wished that Adam be autonomous and free; and not a bound nature like the irrational and soulless ones [animals]. Just as God his creator wished, so he remained. In fact, if God had not wished for Adam to be autonomous, and Adam had not remained autonomous, and had remained, not as his creator wished, but contrary to what he wished, then there would be grounds for your objection. If, however, God wished that Adam be autonomous, then he remained just as God his creator wished him to remain; not as you have said—that Adam did not remain as he [God] wished. [. . .] **<Fourth objection concerning God's wickedness>** Another objection of his. Simon Magus objects saying: The God who created Adam is not good, for he prohibited Adam to eat from the tree of knowledge [lest] he know what good is and what evil is, and [lest] he stay away from evil and draw near to the good. **<Moses's reply to the fourth objection concerning God's wickedness>** And we say to him: He [God] did not prohibit him to eat from the tree so that he [Adam] would not choose the good and stay away from evil—as you have said—for your statement is demonstrated to be false by the very fact that he ate from the tree of knowledge. He knew what the good is and what evil is by the trial and deed itself, and not only did no good and advantage attach to him through this, but also great ruin [occurred] in the fact that he [God] decreed against him a judgment and severe punishment.

outset, but postponing the presentation and refutation of the second to later in the chapter, thereby making it Simon's fourth objection.[81]

Significant differences in wording relate to extent and style, especially in the refutations. John is brief, but at the same time pregnant in meaning, which creates a degree of ambiguity. Moses, on the contrary, is more expansive, more explicit, and even repetitive; this creates a direct and clear, yet long-winded discussion.[82] Even for the same concept, John and Moses might choose different terms. For example, in the refutation of the first objection, they both stress Adam's freewill in opposition to other creatures, in particular animals: John uses the term "animals" (ܚܝܘܬܐ, *ḥayuwoto*), whereas Moses resorts to two synonyms that better convey the issue at stake, namely, "irrational and soulless ones" (ܠܐ ܡܬܠܠܐ ܘܠܐ ܡܬܢܦܫܐ, *lo mlile w-lo mnafše*).

Finally, even when both authors use the same words, they do not always put them in the same order. The three adjectives qualifying Adam at the beginning of the refutation of the first objection are, for example, "free, autonomous, and not a bound nature" in John, and "autonomous, free, and not a bound nature" in Moses.

As these examples demonstrate, *On Heretics* and Book III of *On Paradise* are clearly members of the same family. The precise nature of their relationship needs to be established: is one the "parent" of the other, or are they both "children" of another parent? On the theoretical level, we cannot rule out the existence of a third, common source for both texts. Yet there is no material evidence to support it. Moreover, the fact that not just one, but several two-form texts would require such a common source, renders this solution highly unlikely: we would have to postulate the existence of some ten treatises for which there is no material trace.[83] Therefore, we are left with the possibility that there is a direct relationship between our two texts.

The task then becomes to establish which of the two came first. In Table 1, John's more concise and cryptic style and Moses's more discursive and more rationalized style are especially apparent in their respective replies. Yet, as with the Gospel synoptic problem, the stylistic distinction does not allow us to draw a decisive conclusion about the direction of dependence between the texts. However, a close reading at the micro level of the texts' explicit and implicit sources, especially when combined with the arguments about biography and textual organization discussed above, gives a nudge in favor of the priority of Moses's text.

3. ZOOMING IN

The synoptic problem is ultimately a question of what can a comparison, a parallel evaluation of the two texts, reveal about their genetic relationship? Like any question of comparison, significant progress can only be made with the help of a *tertium quid*, a control term with which to triangulate the primary comparison.[84] If there were an identifiable previous complete third text to which to compare both *On Heretics* and *On Paradise*, Book III, that would be the first place to which we would turn. But no such text is known. On the other

81. These differences will also be presented in our forthcoming edition.

82. Schlimme 1977: 20 observes a similar pattern in the two-form text *On the Resurrection of the Bodies*, where John's text presents summaries and abridgments of Moses's text.

83. It will be recalled that the common-source option includes two possibilities: either a common textual source or a common school tradition. The lack of information about the latter does not allow us to discuss it any further. However, we find it hard to envision a situation in which such lengthy, numerous, and complicated topics would have been taught in school settings and independently reproduced so faithfully in the writings of different authors.

84. A point ably made in Smith 1990: 51–53.

hand, in keeping with the "compilatory" literary culture in which they operated, both John and Moses relied heavily on many individual passages, of varying length, from their shared patristic tradition. There we may find our *tertium quid*.

An examination of Moses's and John's respective use of their patristic sources reveals that Moses accurately cites his sources, while John occasionally makes mistakes. This is in keeping with our claim that Moses came first—it seems more likely that the version with errors (John) would have used the errorless one (Moses), rather than the reverse.[85] Table 2 provides a telling example. It compares Moses's and John's respective proofs in support of the notion that Adam was created mortal by nature. Presentation of Moses before John (unlike Table 1) highlights the errors John committed in processing earlier sources.[86]

Table 2

Moses bar Kepha, *On Paradise*, Book III, ch. 5 (= Yale Syr. 10, fols. 118v–119r)	John of Dara, *On Heretics*, ch. 3 (= Mardin, Orth. 356, pp. 91–92)
It is further proven that he was created mortal by his nature from the testimonies of the orthodox and truthful teachers.	Further Julian says that man was immortal by nature and he openly stands against the Scriptures and the Fathers [. . .] Saint Cyril says about Adam in the eighth treatise *Against Julian*: "when Adam transgressed the command, he became liable for death, and he was proven guilty for what he naturally was."[87]
And the holy Mar John says in the treatise *To the Monk Stagirius* as follows: "Until then Adam was not sure he had immortality."[88]	For John in the treatise *To the Monk Stagirius* says: "Until then he was not sure he had immortality."
And further, in the treatise *On the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* he says as follows: "The soul is immortal by nature, but the body is mortal by nature."[89]	And in the treatise *On the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* he said: "The soul is immortal by nature, but the body is mortal by nature."

85. The opposite argument could also be made: John came first and made errors, which Moses then identified and corrected. But see below for a demonstration that rules out this option.

86. Despite their parallelism, the two paragraphs belong to different chapters in their respective books: Moses presents his proofs as a response to an anonymous question about Adam's nature (ch. 5, "Another Question People Ask"), whereas John presents his as a refutation of the Julianist claim "that man was immortal by nature" (ch. 3).

87. Cyril of Alexandria, *Against Julian* 8.35, 36 = Kinzig and Brüggemann 2017: 580–81. See also n. 95 below.

88. John Chrysostom, *To Stagirius* 1.5 = Migne 1857–66 [PG 47]: 435. On the Syriac text of this passage from Chrysostom in Moses, John, and elsewhere in the Syriac manuscript tradition, see Moss 2023.

89. John Chrysostom, *Sermons on Genesis* 7.4 = Brottier 1998: 334.

And when commenting on the three verses that are written in the Book of Job: "He does not trust this servant,"[90] he says as follows: "If man was haughty even though he did not have immortality by nature, if he had had this [immortality] by nature, what would have happened?"[91]	And when commenting on the verse in Job: "Behold, he does not trust this servant": if man was haughty even though he did not have immortality by nature, if he had had [immortality] by nature, what would have happened?
	And Severian of Gabala in the treatise *On the Nativity* says: "It was grace and not nature that which Adam and Eve were stripped of, because they transgressed the command."[92]
	And Cyril in the treatise *On the* [verse] "*Having become strong, death swallowed up*,"[93] says [*sic*].
And Saint Athanasius in the treatise *On the Incarnation* further says as follows: "For man was mortal by his nature, inasmuch as [he came into being] out of what is not."[94]	And Athanasius in the treatise *On the Incarnation* says that "for man was mortal by his nature, inasmuch as [he came into being] out of what is not."
It is proven from these [demonstrations] that man was mortal by his nature, and he was immortal by grace and not by nature.	It is proven from these [demonstrations] that man was mortal by his nature, and he had immortality by grace and not by nature, and that the soul is immortal by nature.

As we can see, John offers the same four patristic citations as Moses, plus three that are absent in Moses. Of these, the passage from the eighth book of Cyril's *Against Julian* appears later in Moses's text,[95] whereas the other two do not. It is precisely these two passages that manifest the kinds of mistakes that John makes in his work with earlier sources.

The problem with John's citation from Cyril's treatise on Is. 25.8 is that he announces the quotation from this work, but fails to provide it ("And Cyril [. . .] says"). John ends the sentence without a quotation, and instead immediately moves on to the next patristic prooftext, from Athanasius.

As for the passage from Severian of Gabala, the issue is more complicated. Here John provides an accurate citation, yet when he quotes the exact same passage later in his treatise,

90. Cf. Job 4.18 (different wording).

91. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Job 4.16* = Sorlin 1988: 236–37.

92. A homily *On the Nativity* survives in Severian's name only in Syriac; Moss 1948. The present citation is not found there. It is documented, however, in the anti-Julianist florilegium contained in BL Add. 12155, fol. 62vb. See Geerard 1974: 488, 18c (*CPG* 4295). See also below, n. 98.

93. Is. 25.8, according to the Septuagint.

94. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation* = Kannengiesser 1973: 278.

95. Moses cites the passage from Cyril, as part of a separate string of patristic citations, immediately after the concluding remark quoted in our table. See Kaufhold 2017: 868–69 for the citation of this fragment in Moses.

he attributes it to Chrysostom's *On Job*, rather than to Severian's *On the Nativity*.[96] Thus, John displays some clumsiness in the handling of his sources by inconsistently attributing the same passage to two different authors.[97] The fact that John does correctly quote a passage from Chrysostom's *On Job*, as shown in the table, highlights his mistake of attributing to it a passage that does not occur there.

These two mistakes fit the unorganized stylistic profile of John as an author that we have posited above, as well as the general absence of an authorial voice in the texts attributed to him. Moses, by contrast, does not make these mistakes, or any others, as far as we can tell, in his handling of earlier sources.

As noted, John's mistakes are limited to quotes that are not paralleled in Moses. In the quotes that are paralleled in Moses, John cites correctly, both in terms of attribution and in terms of content, and without any major differences in comparison to Moses. If we were to imagine that Moses was working off of John's text, we would expect him to have left out the problematic Cyril citation, to have corrected the misattribution to Chrysostom of Severian's citation (or leave it out altogether), and to have included the correct Severian citation alongside the other correct citations. In other words, if Moses lacked only John's problematic citations, that could be taken as an indication that he was using John and discarding his mistakes. Because Moses lacks both the incorrect *and* the correct citations given by John, Moses looks to be the primary text. It stands to reason, therefore, that John used Moses for the material that they have in common and also added material from another source, with which he made occasional mistakes. Given the contemporary cultural norms described above, that additional source was likely a florilegium. Indeed, the large West Syrian florilegium, BL Add. 12155, dating, it appears, to the mid-eighth century, includes a section on the state of Adam before the fall that contains both pieces of additional material that John cites.[98] We cannot prove definitively that John had access to this florilegium, but the presence of John's sources in a florilegium such as this supports the notion that John did not have firsthand knowledge of the patristic texts that he used. In what follows we will provide a demonstration that further strengthens the case that John relied on Moses, and which also shows that Moses, in contrast, did have direct access to patristic sources, unmediated by later florilegia.

If the material so far supports the notion that John borrowed from Moses rather than the reverse, a final instance proves this notion conclusively, we believe. Had Moses been the borrower, he would have spotted and corrected the errors in John. This option is conceivable when the citations explicitly note earlier authorities, as in the cases we have seen, for Moses could have "looked up" the sources that John quotes and corrected them—but what if the source were not stated explicitly? What if both our texts only allude to an earlier patristic source, without acknowledging it?[99] Allusions are meant to signal to the educated reader the

96. *On Heretics*, ch. 4 = Mardin, Orth. 356, p. 97. This passage is not found in the Greek tradition of Chrysostom's *On Job*. See Sorlin 1988.

97. It should be noted that within the textual tradition there are some issues concerning attribution of John Chrysostom and Severian of Gabala; Mayer 2015: 143. We have no specific evidence of such issues relating to Severian's *On Nativity* and Chrysostom's *On Job* cited here. Our concern in any case is not with the sources, but with how John used his sources. Whatever textual tradition he may have received, he should have noticed that he offers one and the same citation as belonging to two different sources.

98. BL Add. 12155, fol. 62vb; on this florilegium, see Wright 1870–72, 2: 921–55 (for its mid-eighth-century dating, which is not entirely certain because the colophon is partially erased, see ibid., 2: 921, 955). For the citation from Cyril of Alexandria's *Commentary on Isaiah* (which, as noted above, is referred to but not actually cited by John) and for the citation from Severian of Gabala's *On Nativity*, fol. 62vb.

99. Compare Zonta 1991 and Zonta 2014, for studies of implicit citations of and allusions to Nemesius of Emesa and Gregory of Nyssa in John and Moses's respective works *On the Soul*. Following earlier scholarship

author's use of a known and respected text. They operate as a rhetorical tag within a shared cultural tradition.[100] When two texts allude to an earlier patristic source, but one of the two botches the allusion, its whole value is lost. In such a case, it would seem far more likely that the author who cites correctly came first, and the one who cites incorrectly does so because he does not realize that it is an allusion. The opposite scenario—the botched allusion came first, and the author of the correct version identified the patristic source (although it was not stated, and although it was modified) and knew how to correct it—is very unlikely.[101]

We have found one case of an implicit citation from a patristic source that Moses quotes correctly and John incorrectly. It is located at the end of the second chapter of our two-form text, which offers a summary of the presentation and refutation of Manichaean claims about the tree of knowledge and the prohibition against eating from it.

Table 3

Moses bar Kepha, *On Paradise*, Book III, ch. 2 (= Yale Syr. 10, fol. 115v)	John of Dara, *On Heretics*, ch. 2 (= Mardin, Orth. 356, p. 91)
Let not the Manichaeans, the fighters-against-God (ܟ̈ܬܘܫܝ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ), send their tongues in that direction [at the tree], as they strive (ܡܬܟܬܫܝܢ) to make two entities—one evil and the other good. They compose the following statement against our confession of one God: "If the tree is evil, why did God plant it in paradise, so that it might be a cause for falling? If it is good, he [God] kept him from eating from it because he was envious of Adam."	Let not those strivers-against-God (ܗܢܘܢ ܡܬܟܬܫܢ̈ܐ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ) send their tongues in that direction [at the tree], as they try (ܨܒܝܢ) to make two entities, namely, an evil one and a good one, saying against those who proclaim one God: "If the tree was evil, why did God plant it there [in paradise], so that it might be a cause for falling? And if it was good, he [God] kept Adam from it, because he was envious of him." And these [are the claims they make] about the tree.

The first sentence in both texts in Table 3 uses an unusual phrase that bears unpacking. It expresses the wish that the imagined Manichaean opponents, as they strive to establish the dual existence of a good god and an evil god, not "send their tongues in that direction," namely, that they not use the tree of knowledge of good and evil to prove their point. Why use the unusual circumlocution "send their tongues," which makes little sense in Syriac, to refer to intellectual discussion?

The answer is that these words quote, albeit without attribution, a phrase that appears in Oration 38 and Oration 45 by Gregory of Nazianzus, the fourth-century Cappadocian bishop considered the theologian *par excellence* in the Greek and Syriac churches.[102] In Greek the

(Vööbus 1976), Zonta assumes that Moses came after John and relied on his work, including his use of earlier sources. Zonta does not consider the reverse possibility. See also Hugonnard-Roche 2014: 49–64.

100. Thus, allusions of this sort fulfill a different function than explicit citations. The latter are summoned for their demonstrative value, the former for their social-rhetorical value. On the dynamics of nonexplicit allusions within a traditional textual context, see Riffaterre 1978: 81.

101. Naturally, the logic of this claim depends on the fame of the allusion in question. If the allusion is to a widespread and much quoted phrase, like a biblical passage, a later source would in all likelihood recognize a mistaken citation of it. The case we present below does not belong to this category.

102. Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 38.12 = Moreschini and Gallay 1990: 128; Or. 45.8 = Migne 1857–66 [PG 36]: 632C. Unlike other instances where our two authors cite from Gregory of Nazianzus (as well as many other patristic sources) for their demonstrative value—and where they explicitly attribute these sources—here the implicit, nondemonstrative setting of the allusion allows it to accomplish a different, more social task. It signals to readers

phrase "to send a tongue" is attested in ancient and Byzantine literature as idiomatic.[103] We cite the phrase in its fuller context, according to the Greek tradition (we will address the Syriac in a moment), which is curiously identical in both orations:

> He gave him a law, as material for his free will to act upon. This law was a commandment as to what plants he might partake of, and which one he might not touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted, nor was it forbidden because God begrudged it to men—let not the fighters-against-God (οἱ θεομάχοι) send their tongues in that direction (μὴ πεμπέτωσαν ἐκεῖ τὰς γλώσσας), or imitate the serpent.[104]

In the original context, which provides an overview of the economy of salvation, the object of Gregory's polemic is not indicated. The Manichaeans fit the bill, but so do most Gnostic groups, and possibly Porphyry as well.[105] Whatever Gregory's original intention may have been, it is clear that in the West Syrian tradition this was understood to offer a patristic rebuttal of heretical, and perhaps specifically Manichaean, notions about the tree of knowledge. This passage is cited as part of a compilation of patristic positions concerning the tree of knowledge in the above-mentioned polemical florilegium,[106] and, more specifically, a precious gloss in a ninth-century Syriac manuscript of the homilies of Gregory notes "Manichaeans" (ܡܢܝܚܝܐ) in the margin when the homily mentions those who "send their tongues."[107] Thus, to medieval Syrian Orthodox churchmen, this passage in Gregory's orations would have been a logical place to turn to in order to understand both the Manichaean claims about the tree of knowledge, and the patristic response to these claims.

In order to compare the two texts' citing of Gregory's words "let not the fighters-against-God send their tongues in that direction," a note first about the Syriac tradition of Gregory's orations. Generally speaking, they are preserved in two versions. The first is thought to date from around the fifth century, and the second is a revision of the first, made in the early seventh century by Paul of Edessa. For some orations there is also a sixth-century middle version, but not for orations 38 and 45.[108]

Moses's descriptor of the Manichaeans as "fighters-against-God" (ܟܬ̈ܘܫܝ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ) agrees with all the Syriac attestations of this passage in Gregory, namely, the two Syriac versions of each of the two orations as well as the citation from Gregory made in BL Add. 12155. John's descriptor—"strivers-against-God" (ܡܬܟܬܫ̈ܝ ܥܡ ܐܠܗܐ)—is, by contrast, not otherwise attested. Table 4 provides a clear picture of the evidence.[109] John's unique

who are able to "get the reference" that they, the writer, and the author who is implicitly cited (Gregory), all belong to the same tradition. See n. 100 above.

103. Bacchylides, *Ode* 5; Plato Comicus, *Fragment* 51 (Kock); Anastasius of Sinai, *Hexaemeron* 1.6.2. See Ruani 2017a: 219 n. 63 on the connection between the Syriac texts here and Gregory's oration.

104. Our translation follows Schaff and Wace 1894: 348, 425, with some modifications. For the question of the identity of this excerpt in two different orations, see ibid.: 422; McGuckin 2001: 386.

105. See Moreschini and Gallay 1990: 128–29 n. 2, who understand the reference to be to Christians "d'inspiration généralement gnostique," but then propose that the reference might be to Manichaeans. See Morlet 2011: 135–38 for a discussion of the possibility that this is a direct response to, and citation of, a claim by Porphyry.

106. BL Add. 12155, fol. 85r.

107. BL Add. 12153, fol. 104r. A notation sign placed after the verb "to send" and repeated in the margin links the sentence and the gloss of "Manichaeans." The manuscript was copied in 845 (Wright 1870–72, 2: 427); the gloss appears to be later, but it is not known how much later.

108. For the Syriac tradition of Gregory's orations, see De Halleux 1983; Detienne 2000; Schmidt and Quaschning-Kirsch 2000; Haelewyck 2017.

109. The Greek texts of both orations follow Schaff and Wace 1894 and McGuckin 2001. For the direct Syriac tradition of Or. 38, we quote from the critical edition: Haelewyck 2005: 72 (early version) and 73 (revised version). For the direct Syriac tradition of Or. 45, we quote from the known manuscript witnesses: BL Add. 17146, fol. 92r,

Table 4

Or. 38/45 Greek						
μὴ πεμπέτωσαν ἐκεῖ τὰς γλώσσας οἱ θεομάχοι let not the *fighters*-against-God send their tongues in that direction*						
Or. 38 Syriac early version	Or. 38 Syriac revised version	Or. 45 Syriac early version	Or. 45 Syriac revised version	Florilegium	John of Dara	Moses bar Kepha
ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܬܪܥܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܠܬܡܢ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܠܬܡܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܬܪܥܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܠܬܡܢ ܬܪܥܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܠܬܡܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܬܪܥܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܬܪܥܝ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܠܬܡܢ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܠܬܡܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܡܚܐܕ̈ܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ	ܠܐ ܢܫܕܘ ܠܗܘ ܠܬܡܢ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܡܟ̈ܝܪ ܬܪ̈ܥ ܕܐܠܗܐ
let not the *fighters*- against-God send in that direction tongues	let not those *fighters*- against-God send their tongues in that direction	let not the *fighters*- against-God send tongues in that direction	let not those *fighters*- against-God send their tongues in that direction	let not the *fighters*- against-God send in that direction tongues	let not those *strivers* -against-God send their tongues in that direction	let not the Manichaeans, *fighters*- against-God, send their tongues in that direction

* "Their" renders the definite article τὰς, which in Greek has possessive value when used with a part of the body.

divergence from the tradition means that it must have been Moses, rather than John, who had direct access to Gregory's Syriac text.[110]

Incidentally, this comparative table also helps us pinpoint which of the versions of Gregory's text it was that Moses used. Moses's "their tongues" (ܠܫܢܗܘܢ) indicates that he must have used the revised version, bearing the same formulation, rather than the early version, which has "tongues" (ܠܫܢܐ) without the possessive suffix.[111]

Since John's locution "those strivers-against-God" is unattested, the question is whence he derived it. An answer can be found two words later in Moses's text, where Moses describes the Manichaeans with the participle ܡܬܚܫܚܝܢ ("they strive") (Table 3). John, who—it should be noted—never uses this word anywhere else in his treatise, must have borrowed it from Moses, moved it up, and changed it to the construct form ܡܬܚܫܚܝ to adapt to the locution that includes "against God." Then, in the place of "they strive" (ܡܬܚܫܚܝܢ), John inserted the synonym "they try" (ܡܫܕܝ). This scenario is reinforced by the fact that throughout his treatise John uses the root ܚܫܚ only here. Thus, it seems quite likely that here, in his one usage of the root, he borrowed it directly from Moses.

This case offers a spotlight on John's literary behavior. He has altered a key word of the text (either in error or perhaps to blur his direct borrowing from Moses), but he must not have realized that Moses was in fact alluding to a passage from Gregory, and thus his alteration defeated the very purpose of the allusion. With this, John seems to display some ignorance of the implicit literary-theological references shared by his community, and he shows himself to be a follower of Moses, rather than his model.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to clarify the relationship between the similar literary outputs attributed to two renowned figures of ninth-century West Syrian culture, John of Dara and Moses bar Kepha. We sought an answer in a comparison of the authors' biographies, in an analysis of their literary styles, and in an in-depth examination of one textual case-study: John's *On Heretics* and Moses's *On Paradise*, Book III.

and 18815, fol. 64v (early version); Vat. Sir. 369, fol. 120v, BL Add. 14549, fol. 80v, Mingana Syr. 545, fol. 200r (revised version). We thank Jean-Claude Haelewyck, who is preparing a critical edition of Or. 45, for sharing several images with us. As for the indirect tradition, we quote from BL Add. 12155, fol. 85r (n. 98 above; this cites the early version of Or. 38); for the citations in John and Moses, see Table 3.

110. Because it is an allusion rather than a direct quotation, Moses can allow himself some liberty in his use of the source to fit his argument. Toward this end, he inserts (Table 4) the explicit mention of the Manichaeans (ܕܡܢܝ̈ܐ, lit. "of the Manichaeans") absent from Gregory's source text. On the other hand, John has the demonstrative pronoun ܐܠܝܢ ("those"), which Moses does not, in any of the few extant manuscripts of his text. This pronoun is present in the revised version of both of Gregory's orations. At first sight this might seem to complicate our argument, since in this case John, rather than Moses, quotes directly from Gregory. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Moses had the demonstrative pronoun as well originally—Moses's inserted expression, ܕܡܢܝ̈ܐ ܗܢܘܢ, cannot stand alone as a plural subject, and this expression in the remainder of Moses's chapter is always preceded by ܐܠܝܢ (e.g., Yale Syr. 10, fols. 114r, 115r)—but that it was lost in the textual transmission. It is thus likely that John, following Moses, kept the demonstrative pronoun but did not keep ܕܡܢܝ̈ܐ ܗܢܘܢ, which was not needed given the general anti-Manichaean context of the chapter. This is nevertheless a reconstruction.

111. Given the fact that the revised version of both orations 38 and 45 is identical, we cannot determine which of the two orations Moses is quoting from. But had Moses relied on the early version, we would know because of a difference in word order. This difference is what enables us to determine that the florilegium cites from the early version of Or. 38. Moses's reliance on the revised version of Gregory's orations differs from his use of Severus of Antioch's homilies, also attested in early and revised versions. When citing from Severus, both the florilegium and Moses testify to the early Syriac version of his works rather than the revised one. See Moss forthcoming, at n. 86.

The cumulative strength of this three-pronged approach enabled us to reach the conclusion that *On Heretics* was written after *On Paradise*. *On Heretics* is therefore a pseudepigraph. Its author, whom we might call Pseudo-John, knew Moses's work and used it, and, like other writers of the age, he exercised his own agency, adding sources and arguments of his own. But he also made some mistakes in handling his sources. Thanks in part to these mistakes his posteriority is exposed.

On the biographical level, John's reputation rests solely on a glowing dedication made to him by the Patriarch Dionysius of Tell-Maḥre in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Moses, in stark contrast, is well known both from external sources and from internal evidence. He is anchored in a well-defined historical, literary, and prosopographical context in a way that John is not. It would therefore have been convenient for the less celebrated figure of John of Dara to become associated with works of pseudepigrapha.

John's one-form texts (whose authorship is not presently in doubt) are associative and free-flowing. The two-form texts attributed to John (whose authorship we are calling into question) follow an argumentative structure, but they are far less tightly organized than their equivalents in Moses's oeuvre. Moreover, at the level of textual organization, the organic continuity within the author's literary output is clearer and tighter in Moses than it is in John. Nothing links John's *On Heretics* to the two preceding treatises with which it circulates, whereas Book III of *On Paradise* is explicitly linked to what comes before it. The fact that *On Heretics* does not address a wider range of issues than the single topic of paradise supports the probability that it was modeled on Moses's chapter on heresies, which is solely concerned with paradise since it is part of a treatise on that topic.

These comparative aspects of the two-form texts agree with our theory that the author of these two-form works took over certain elements of Moses's style, themes, and organization, but by reconfiguring the text he unavoidably undid the original tautness and organic flow.

Not only the argumentative and organizational structures of Moses's text were unsettled by Pseudo-John's reworking, however. We also saw Pseudo-John making mistakes when he departed from his source, which indicated that he postdated Moses. In addition to errors in several of the explicit citations, we also identified where Pseudo-John changed a key word in Moses's allusion to a sentence from Gregory of Nazianzus, by borrowing from Moses a verb that he does not otherwise use, and thus he unwittingly muffled the subtle literary resonances of his model.

We are not the first to propose that the author of the texts that have parallels in Moses, including *On Heretics*, relied on Moses, and thus could not have been John of Dara. On the basis of general stylistic arguments, Lorenz Schlimme suggested earlier that "Dieser Abschnitt [i.e., *On Heretics*] könnte somit ebensogut ein Fragment oder Kompendium aus diesem Buch [*On Paradise*, Book III] darstellen."[112] We differ from him in two major ways, however. First, methodologically, we have combined stylistic arguments with biographical and philological arguments, and second, our in-depth examination of *On Heretics* prevents us from considering it merely a "fragment or compendium" of its parallel in Moses. Even though it suffers from disorganization and other flaws, and did rely heavily on Moses's *On Paradise*, it remains a self-standing treatise, with parts that are completely independent from Moses; it can in no way be called a fragment or an abridgment of the latter.

Our conclusion applies to one textual case study and should be tested on other two-form texts attributed to these two authors. We hope to have set out a methodology that is

112. Schlimme 1977: 24. For a similar suggestion regarding a different two-form text, see Breydy 1977: 28 (n. 10 above).

applicable to multiple cases beyond the one discussed here. In this context, we would like to emphasize our third approach, the identification of implicit allusions to patristic sources to assess the directionality of dependence between the two authors. Future research will hopefully uncover other allusions than the one from Gregory of Nazianzus that we found. Scholarship has demonstrated Moses's implicit use of earlier sources in various instances.[113] We expect that comparison of these to their parallels in the texts attributed to John of Dara will yield additional material through which the question of priority can be further explored.

If indeed Pseudo-John wrote *On Heretics* after Moses and borrowed from the latter's *On Paradise*, we need to date his work to the beginning of the tenth century, at the very earliest, since Moses seems to have written his treatise toward the end of his life.[114] Further research will be required to explore the extent, the context, and the meaning of Pseudo-John's literary endeavor. It will need to address the following questions: How many other works attributed to John of Dara should be reclassified as belonging to Pseudo-John? If the oeuvre of John of Dara is to be significantly diminished, must Arthur Vööbus's evaluation of him as occupying "a very important place in the history of intellectual culture in the 9th century in the lands of the Euphrates and the Tigris"[115] be reassessed? Why, indeed, produce works so similar to Moses's and so close in time? How might Pseudo-John's activity relate to broader West Syrian culture in the early tenth century? And, finally, how might Moses and Pseudo-John's synoptic situation compare to other instances of textual interdependence in both the West and East Syrian milieux?[116]

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113. See nn. 41 and 99 above, as well as Ruani 2017b and Ruani 2023.

114. See text at n. 62 above.

115. Vööbus 1976: 576.

116. For a West Syrian comparandum, see Daniel of Salah's *Psalm Commentary* (sixth century), which survives in four recensions, one of which is attributed to another author (David of Tella, prior to 1515); Taylor 2011. For an East Syrian comparandum, see the rich exegetical tradition of the eighth and ninth centuries; Van Rompay 1986: xl–liii.

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