

ORIENTALIA CHRISTIANA ANALECTA

311

SYMPOSIUM SYRIACUM XII

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edited by

Emidio Vergani and Sabino Chialà

E X T R A C T A



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SYMPOSIUM SYRIACUM XII

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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ḤABĪB'S CHAPTERS: NEW CONSIDERATIONS¹

Bishara Ebeid

1. Introduction

The assembly of bishops in 612 AD is considered to be the “Nestorianization” of the Church of the East, i.e. the application of the *two-qnomē* (two hypostases) concept in its Christological doctrine. It is usually said that the first to apply such a doctrine in that church was Babai the Great († 628) in his *Liber de Unione*², interpreting the *Liber Heraclides*³ of Nestorius⁴. It is notable, however, that some Greek Chalcedonian authors, such as Leontius of Byzantium († 543) and Leontius of Jerusalem († probably the end of the 6th century), and Syrian Jacobite authors, such as Philoxenus of Mabbug († 523) and Jacob of Serugh († 521) wrote against groups of “Nestorians”, the former against the Greeks and the latter against the Syrians, claiming that these Greek and Syriac speaking groups used the two-ὑποστάσεις and *two-qnomē*, or/and two-πρόσωπα and *two-parsopē* formula in their Christological doctrine. Two of these authors, namely Leontius of Jerusalem and Philoxenus of Mabbug, preserved for us, through citations in their works, some parts of Nestorian works in Greek and in Syriac⁵.

It is not surprising to know of the existence of Nestorian works in Greek, since Nestorius himself, as well as “Ps.-Nestorius” wrote in Greek, and these works, along with those of Theodore of Mopsuestia, became sources for the Greek speaking Nestorians. The surprise is to discover that prob-

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Th. Hainthaler for her critical remarks after I presented my paper at the XII Symposium Syriacum. These remarks led me to make a deeper research so I can present better my hypothesis regarding Ḥabīb's Christology. I am also grateful to Fr. Mark George sj who controlled my English and made the necessary corrections to this paper.

² Cf. Babai Magnus, *Liber de Unione* (CSCO 79, Syr. 34), ed. A. Vaschalde, Louvain 1915; (translation: CSCO 80, Syr. 35).

³ Cf. Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide de Damas*, ed. P. Bedjan, Paris – Leipzig 1910; English translation: G. R. Driver – L. Hodgson (tr.), *Nestorius. The Bazar of Heraclides*, Oxford, 1925.

⁴ Cf. W. Baum – D. Winkler, *The Church of the East. A Concise History*, London – New York 2003, 37-39.

⁵ Cf. S.P. Brock, “Nestorianism”, in S.P. Brock – A.M. Butts – G.A. Kiraz – L. Van Rompay (ed.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage (= GEDSH)*, Piscataway NJ 2011, 306.

ably before the translation of Nestorius into Syriac was made in 539/540⁶, and before the spread of Nestorius' and Ps.-Nestorius' thought in Eastern Syriac lands, we can find a nucleus of Nestorian Christology in progress, i.e. a knowledge of Nestorius' and some of Ps.-Nestorius' metaphysical system, and fragmental texts attributed to him.

In my article, published in *OCP* 2016⁷, through an analysis of the Christological statements of the synods of the Church of the East until 612 AD, statements found in the *Synodicon Orientale*, I tried to show the co-existence of two Christological currents within the same church, namely *paršopā-qnomā* and *two-qnomē*⁸. In this paper I would like to focus on the Christology of Ḥabīb, a monk who belonged to the Church of the East who lived during the end of the 5th century and the beginning of the 6th century. Through an analysis and a re-reading of his Christology, expressed in some of his chapters (*tractus*)⁹, I will show that the Christological current to which Ḥabīb belonged¹⁰ should be considered, already at the end of the 5th century, an *elaboration in progress* of the *two-qnomē* Christology. In other words, even if *Ḥabīb*, as L. Abramowski and A. de Halleux demonstrated, had a strong Theodorian Christology¹¹, we can see in him, or better to say, in the Christological current to which he belonged, the first steps of a "Nestorian Christology" in Syriac language.

⁶ Cf. L. Van Rompay, "Aba I", in S.P. Brock – A.M. Butts – G.A. Kiraz – L. Van Rompay (eds.), *GEDSH*, 1; S.P. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East in the Synods of the Fifth to Early Seventh Centuries: Preliminary Considerations and Materials", in *Aksum-Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodius of Thyateira and Great Britain*, Athens 1985, 125-142, here 126.

⁷ Cf. B. Ebeid, "The Christology of the Church of the East. An Analysis of the Christological Statements and Professions of Faith of the Official Synods of the Church of the East before A.D. 612", *OCP* 82 (2016), 353-402.

⁸ This was the view of de Halleux, which I tried to demonstrate through my analysis of the *Synodicon Orientale*; see also A. de Halleux, "La christologie de Martyrius-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme", *OCP* 23 (1957), 5-32, here, 29.

⁹ *Tractus* is the term used for what we call here chapters. Those who analyzed Ḥabīb's thought, A. de Halleux and L. Abramowski, also used this term, i.e. *tractus*.

¹⁰ That Ḥabīb expressed the Christology of the monastic community to which he belonged, see L. Abramowski, "From the controversy on 'unus ex Trinitate passus est': The protest of Ḥabīb against Philoxenus' Epistula Dogmatica to the monks", in A. Grillmeier – Th. Hainthaler (ed.), *Christ in Christian Tradition*, II/III: *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604). The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451 to 600 (Jesus der Christus im Glauben der Kirche*, Freiburg 2002), Oxford 2013, 545-620, here 558.

¹¹ See the work of Abramowski, "From the controversy" and the work of A. de Halleux, "Le Mamlēā de 'Ḥabīb' contre Aksenāyā. Aspects textuels d'une polémique christologique dans l'église syriacque de la première génération post-chalcédonienne", in C. Laga, J. A. Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (ed.), *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert Van Roey for His Seventieth Birthday* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 18), Leuven 1985, 67-82.

2. Methodological remarks

Ḥabīb's chapters are preserved in the confutations that Philoxenus of Mabbugh wrote against him. Despite this, we find these citations to be extracted and presented apart¹². In fact, A. de Halleux and L. Abramowski compared these extracts with the existing quotations in the two confutations of Philoxenus, and showed that they are almost the same, with some non-essential differentiations¹³. For this reason I will follow in my analysis the text of the extracts. In addition, since the authenticity of some of the citations of Ḥabīb as presented in Philoxenus' confutations is still in discussion¹⁴, I will take into examination some of those whose authenticity, in the opinion of Abramowski, is more certain.

It is clear, however, that we cannot arrive at a complete image of Ḥabīb's Christology, since we have just some citations from his work, and they are coming from polemics against him. At the same time, we should not let this stop us from piecing together an idea of his Christological thought. We must consider that in classical times, when someone cited another work, yes he might, for some reason, make an incomplete citation, but usually his citations were faithful to the original text, without any manipulation¹⁵. If, as A. de Halleux and L. Abramowski perfectly noted, there is some manipulation in some citations of Ḥabīb found in Philoxenus' confutations¹⁶, it is helpful to note that in these citations we have not a direct quotation, but an interpretation of Ḥabīb's thought attributed to Ḥabīb himself by his opponent Philoxenus. This means that we need always be prepared to distinguish between a direct citation/quotation and an attributed interpretation. In Abramowski's chapter on Ḥabīb's Christology, she analyzed also the doctrines attributed to Ḥabīb by Philoxenus, and tried to demonstrate which of them could be authentic and which are simply manipulations of Ḥabīb's thought.

L. Abramowski studied Ḥabīb's thought in the context cited by Philoxenus, and compared it with the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, trying to demonstrate that Ḥabīb's Christology has nothing to do with

¹² Cf. Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario (extraits de l'adversaire)*, ed. (with French translation) M. Brière – F. Graffin, *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 186 [41.1]), Turnhout 1982, 10-33.

¹³ Cf. Abramowski, "From the controversy", 545-549; de Halleux, "Le Mamlelā de Ḥabīb", 81.

¹⁴ See, for example, the problem of the citations of the *dissertatio I* of Philoxenus' second confutation in Abramowski, "From the controversy", 548-549; see also the comparative analysis of de Halleux and the conclusion of his study in de Halleux, "Le Mamlelā de Ḥabīb", 81.

¹⁵ Cf. F. Montanari, "Remarks on the citations of authors and works in ancient scholarship", in *Trends in Classics* 8 (2016), 73-82.

¹⁶ Cf. Abramowski, "From the controversy", 548.

Nestorius' or Ps.-Nestorius' thought, since she did not find any application or use of the term *qnomā* (hypostasis) in his Christology. Her conclusion is to affirm the Theodorian character of the Christology of Ḥabīb and his monastic community. However, in my reading of Ḥabīb's chapters, I was surprised to find this passage in chapter 34, to which I will return in my further analysis:

Because of the union, in fact, the one who assumed and the one who was assumed is one Christ, one Son, one Jesus, one only begotten, of one worship and one glory; in brief, *He is in everything one except the nature (kyanā) and hypostasis (qnomā)*.

This passage was not considered by Abramowski to be an application of the term *qnomā* in Christological doctrine. I, however, see in it a real application of this term. For this reason I decided to make a new reading and a new analysis of Ḥabīb's chapters. My intention then, in this paper, is not to see *how* Ḥabīb's thought was interpreted by Philoxenus, something already done well by Abramowski, but *why* Philoxenus interpreted Ḥabīb's thought in this way, and attributed to him the doctrine of two *qnomē*¹⁷.

L. Abramowski, rejects Philoxenus' interpretation, concluding that Ḥabīb, being Theodorian, did not hold such a doctrine. She also affirmed that Ḥabīb probably held a Christology of two natures and "one *parṣopā*", even if the term *parṣopā* does not appear in any one of Ḥabīb's citations¹⁸. I will try to show, then, not that Abramowski's reading was wrong or problematic, but that reading Ḥabīb with another perspective and methodology could give us a new consideration regarding his Christology, so it can be seen not just as Theodorian, but also as a changing point in the Theodorian Syriac circles, and the starting point of the two-*qnomē* Christological current.

With this paper I would like to show the following: 1) That some Nestorian and Ps.-Nestorian opinions were already in fragmental form at the time of Ḥabīb, known by East Syriac monastic groups, and maybe were translated into Syriac before the translation of Nestorius' *Liber Heraclides*. This means that Ḥabīb himself made use of them or knew the metaphysical elaboration of their Christology. 2) That Ḥabīb and his monastic community formed the beginnings of the two-*qnomē* Christological current within the Church of the East — furthermore, they were used by later authors to affirm the orthodoxy of the two-*qnomē* Christology.

¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁸ At various points in her article, L. Abramowski referred to this omission, but she also had a very specific comment on it; see Abramowski, "From the controversy", 606-609.

To demonstrate this, I will analyze and read Ḥabīb through Ḥabīb himself, taking into consideration the confutation of Philoxenus. In addition, I will compare Ḥabīb with other authors, prior and contemporary to him, namely Nestorius (such as *Liber Heraclides*), Ps.-Nestorian works, and later Nestorian authors. (Many of these texts are found in the collection of Abramowski and A. Goodman)¹⁹. I will also look at the Synod of the year 612²⁰. To demonstrate that our monk probably used some Nestorian and Ps.-Nestorian Greek sources, I will refer to the work of the anonymous author cited by Leontius of Jerusalem²¹ who certainly used such sources in composing his work.

In my analysis I will also read behind some of Ḥabīb's expressions metaphysical and technical terms, i.e. *qnomā* and *parṣopā*, to see if they could be applicable to Ḥabīb's Christology even if we do not find them in the citations we possess from his work. One additional note regarding the technical Syriac term *qnomā* and its translation. *Qnomā* is the Syriac translation of the Greek ὑπόστασις (hypostasis)²², even though not all scholars accept this translation, especially in the Christological field and in texts that belong to the Church of the East²³. It is noted that the same technical terms and philosophical concepts were sometimes given different meanings and metaphysical uses by the different Christian confessions of the same language²⁴. Nevertheless, in my paper I will maintain the term *qnomā* transliterated. When the term hypostasis will be used in my analysis, I mean the same metaphysical sense of *qnomā* as it appears in the Syriac texts we are examining. If by the term hypostasis I would like to express another metaphysical meaning, this will be noted and explained in the context of that use.

¹⁹ Cf. L. Abramowski – A.E. Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts*, I: *Syriac Text*; II: *Introduction, Translation and Indexes*, Cambridge 1972.

²⁰ Cf. *Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil des synodes nestoriens*, ed. (with French translation) J.B. Chabot, Paris 1902, 562-580 (text), 580-598 (translation).

²¹ The citations are found in Leontius of Jerusalem, *Adversus eos qui duas affirmant Christi personas, nullamque in ipso conjunctionem confitentur (Contra Nestorianos)*, in PG 86, Paris 1865, 1399-1768; on the authenticity of these citations, and that they come from a Nestorian author of the 6th century, see L. Abramowski, "Ein nestorianischer Traktat bei Leontius von Jerusalem", in R. Lavenant, III. *Symposium Syriacum 1980: Les contacts du monde syriaque avec les autres cultures (Goslar 7 – 11 Septembre 1980)* (OCA 221), Rome 1983, 43-55.

²² Cf. Y.P. Patros, "La cristologia della Chiesa d'Oriente", in E. Vergani – S. Chialà (ed.), *Storia, Cristologia e tradizioni della Chiesa Siro-orientale. Atti del 3° Incontro sull'Oriente Cristiano di tradizione siriana Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 14 maggio 2004*, Milano 2006, 27-42, here 29-31.

²³ Cf. S.P. Brock, "The Christology", 131.

²⁴ For example, the term hypostasis was used in Greek by both Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius, and each one used it in different way; the same can be said of the term πρόσωπον.

By the term “Nestorian” or “Nestorian Christological current” I mean a specific group of Christians, Syrian as well as Greek speakers, who taught that in the one Christ there are two natures and two hypostases, without meaning by such doctrine that this one Christ is divided into two individuals-subjects, i.e. two sons or two christs. These Nestorians, in fact, followed the Antiochene Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, elaborated by Nestorius and developed in Ps.-Nestorius’ works. They adopted it, elaborated and developed it in their own way and considered it an expression of orthodoxy. For the Church of the East, this happened officially in the year 612, and since our author lived prior to this date I will call simply this church to which he belonged the “Church of the East”. Finally, in this paper I will use the distinction followed by most scholars today, regarding the terms Monophysitism/Monophysites and Miaphysitism/Miaphysites²⁵.

2. *Ḥabīb in his historical context*

We possess almost nothing about Ḥabīb’s life²⁶. What is known about him comes from the works of Philoxenus of Mabbug written against him. We know, in fact, that Philoxenus, during the years 482-484 AD, disseminated Miaphysite thought among the Eastern Syriac and Western Syriac monastic communities in the north of Mesopotamia, spreading his theopaschite doctrine. In the Eastern Syriac communities there was a notable negative reaction against that propaganda. Philoxenus, knowing this reaction, wrote an encyclical letter on faith, based on the theopaschite expression “God is dead”²⁷. A response to this letter was written by a monk from the Sassanid Empire, who belonged to the East Syrian Christian community of Persia and resided in a monastic community in the north of Mesopotamia — he became known as Ḥabīb²⁸. He wrote a few chapters (*memlē*) against the Christology of Philoxenus and his theopaschite doctrine — this

²⁵ Cf. S.P. Brock, “Il dibattito cristologico del V e VI secolo nel contesto del dialogo teologico moderno”, in E. Vergani – S. Chialà (ed.), *Le Chiese siriache tra IV e VI secolo. Dibattito dottrinale e ricerca spirituale. Atti del 2° incontro sull’Oriente cristiano di tradizione siriana* Milano Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 28 marzo 2003, Milano 2005, 73-92, here 76-77.

²⁶ For more details see de Halleux, “Le Mamlēā de ‘Ḥabīb”, 67-71; Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 545-547.

²⁷ The *Epistula dogmatica* is known also as *Epistula de fide ad monachos*, cf. Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Epistula dogmatica*, ed. (with French translation) M. Brière – F. Graffin, *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 186 [41.1]), 38-57. Regarding this episode in Philoxenus’ life see, A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog : sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie*, Louvain 1963. 46-48.

²⁸ It is not clear if the word Ḥabīb in the polemical works of Philoxenus against this monk refers to his real name or it is simply the Syriac vocative of “my dear”, i.e. the literal meaning of the Syriac word “Ḥabībā” (ܚܒܝܒܐ), cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 547.

work, however, has not been preserved in complete form. What we have and know from it is to be found only in the two confutations²⁹ with which Philoxenus answered Ḥabīb and polemicized against his Christology. This means that the work of Ḥabīb was written during the years 485-486. We do not know, finally, if there are other works of the monk Ḥabīb.

4. *Ḥabīb's Christology*

In my analysis I will present the Syriac text of Ḥabīb with my own English translation. I will mention the number of each cited chapter at the beginning of the English translation, since in my analysis I will follow another order of the chapters. The analysis will be presented according to the following points/questions:

- 4.1. Ḥabīb's Christological background: Just Theodorian?
- 4.2. Some metaphysical definitions in Ḥabīb's chapters
- 4.3. Final remarks: Two-*qnomē* Christology?

4.1. Ḥabīb's Christological background: Just Theodorian?

I will present here some of Ḥabīb's chapters in which we can find Theodorian background. They are not the only chapters, but my intent here is to demonstrate how Ḥabīb elaborates his Theodorian sources and develops the Theodorian Christology using other sources. We can begin with the doctrine of the "assumption":

ܠܳܐ ܳܡܳܘܳܬ ܳܠܳܘܳܕ ܳܡܳܘܳܬ ܳܠܳܘܳܕ ܳܡܳܘܳܬ ܳܠܳܘܳܕ 16. Then, you also wrote: «His essence in His becoming remained unchanged», and you dared to utter the expression which only *the pagans* think: «God became». So if He became some

²⁹ The first one is his brief confutation: Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Refutatio*, ed. (with French translation) Brière – Graffin, *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 186 [41.1]), 32-37; the second one is his ten *memre against Ḥabīb*: Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Memre contro Ḥabīb*, 1-2, M. Brière, ed. (with Latin translation), *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 75 [15.4]), Paris 1927; Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Memre contro Ḥabīb*, 3-5, M. Brière, ed. (with Latin translation), *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 176 [38.3]); Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Memre contro Ḥabīb*, 6-8, ed. (with French translation), Brière – Graffin, *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 181 [39.4]); Philoxenus of Mabbug, *Memre contro Ḥabīb*, 9-10, ed. (with French translation), Brière – F. Graffin, *Sancti Philoxeni Episcopi Mabbugensis dissertationes decem de uno e sancta trinitate incorporato et passo (Memre contre Habib)* (PO 183 [40.2]).

thing that was not [before], then how
 did He remain [as He was] before, with-
 out undergoing change? Then, *remain-*
ing as He was, in any case, [means] He
did not become; however, He assumed a
body which is from the Blessed Mary.

As L. Abramowski has observed, in this chapter Ḥabīb's problem is the expression "God became", found in the *Epistola dogmatica* of Philoxenus³¹. According to our monk, such an expression stands in contradiction to the changelessness of God's essence. Only pagans could accept to attribute this expression and doctrine to God. Our author is also aware that Philoxenus and the other Miaphysites underline in their teaching that God in His incarnation, or becoming man, did not change His essence³². For Ḥabīb, however, it is impossible to simultaneously affirm that "God became" and at the same time "He did not change," and remaining as He was. The only solution is to use the expression "assuming (or taking on)" a body. It is clear that we have here a Theodorian background. The bishop of Mopsuestia, in fact, polemicizing against Apollinaris of Laodicea and his followers, refused the literal understanding of John 1:14 that "the Word became flesh". He knew that his adversaries used it to affirm that God underwent change³³. He, therefore, gave another understanding of it; it should be understood as the appearance of God in flesh. This does not mean, however, that the flesh was not real. The expression in fact "assuming flesh" affirms, according to Theodore, the reality of the flesh³⁴.

Returning to Ḥabīb's thought, I maintain that he had in mind the following question: If these Miaphysites such as Philoxenus, affirm that God did not change His essence, why, then, did they continue to use expressions

³⁰ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 14.

³¹ Cf. Abramowski, "From the controversy", 570.

³² See on this point de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog*, 559-506.

³³ «Yes I do think that a brief response [ought to be] made against *my adversaries*. For they say "He was made," [out to be interpreted] as "He was changed" – a stated position I believe they do not modify, at least so it seems to many. But the evangelist has deftly interpreted this when he added to "He was made" [the words] "He dwelt among us", Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John's Gospel*, quoted from F.G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, London – New York 2009, 100.

³⁴ «Thus "The Word was made flesh" [means] to "appear". But "to appear" here [signifies] not that He did not assume true flesh, but rather that He was made [flesh]. For when He says "He assumed," he is not speaking [here] about what appears [to have happened], but about what is true. When [it is said] "He was made", this [should be understood] as "He appears." One must then agree with the Evangelist that He has not been turned into flesh. It is in this sense that we understand the meaning of this word», Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, quoted from F.G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, London – New York 2009, 136.

contrary to this dogma? Our monk mentions several expressions used by Philoxenus which he finds to be in contradiction to the unchangeability of God's essence:

18. Then, you wrote: «*The spiritual became corporeal and the invisible visible*». So, did He remain in what He became? And from this moment onward, is He corporeal and not spiritual, or both spiritual and corporeal? And if it was the first [possibility], how He could not be changed? If, instead, it was the second [possibility], how it could be a union between divinity and humanity? Therefore, say that God the Word assumed a body through which He was seen, and in this way you decline from the error you have.

18. תהי' אתה נא. אתה כתיב. «הרוחני הפך
לגוף וראה». האם נשאר בזה שפך? והלא
הוא הרוחני והבלתי נראה. והוא הפך ל
גוף וראה. האם נשאר הרוחני והבלתי נראה
או הפך לגוף וראה? והאם היה זה
הראשון או השני? והאם היה זה
הראשון והוא הפך לגוף וראה. והאם
היה זה השני והוא הפך לגוף וראה. והאם
היה זה השני והוא הפך לגוף וראה. והאם
היה זה השני והוא הפך לגוף וראה.³⁵

Affirming that God became human, consequently saying that the spiritual became corporeal and the invisible visible, is not a problem for Philoxenus and the Miaphysites — for Ḥabīb and his community, however, it is a big issue. Did God the Word from the moment of the incorporation remain as was, spiritual and invisible, or did He, becoming man, stop being spiritual and invisible, becoming instead corporeal and visible? It is clear that the question here regards the properties of the divine nature and their preservation after the union in Christ — that is, a non-confusion of humanity and divinity — since otherwise, this means that the divine essence of Christ lost its natural properties, and he stopped being divine — even if Philoxenus and his followers continued to claim that God becoming man did not change His essence.

On the other hand, knowing that the Miaphysites could say that in His becoming corporeal and visible, God remains spiritual and invisible, Ḥabīb wonders how it could be possible then to speak of union in Christ. It is clear that his problem is the non-distinction between two different realities, i.e. humanity and divinity. Underlining then, one subject, God-Word, and saying that God the Word became man or has been incarnated, does not in any way mean union (אחיבה). L. Abramowski points out that for Ḥabīb, «the important word is union and not becoming of John 1:14»³⁶. The only way, for our author, through which someone can affirm a real union between divinity and humanity is the expression “God assumed a

³⁵ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 16.

³⁶ Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 572.

body” (جسد للميزة), which describes the “how” of the union in Christ³⁷. In other words, for Ḥabīb the concept of “becoming” is understood in terms of “non-union”. For him, there is no union between two different realities when they, after the union, stop to be as they were before; it is, in fact, not union, but confusion and mixture. The concept of “assumption” is to be considered a replacement for “becoming”, so God did not “become” a body, but rather “assumed” a body. In this statement, I see an elaboration of Theodorian Christology. Here we have not just a union between the Assumer and the assumed as Theodore underlines³⁸, but assumption as a description (the how) of the real union, which replaces the concept of becoming. This is something that, as it presented here by our monk, could be considered an innovation in Theodorian thought.

We can notice the same in the rest of his statement. Following again the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia³⁹, our monk affirms that through the body, God the Word was seen⁴⁰. This is an elaboration of Theodore’s doctrine that in the flesh His glory was seen as the Only Begotten of the Fa-

³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁸ «It is evident here what must appropriately be said of human nature, and what distinctions [have] to be made to distinguish this [assumed man] from the divinity, since they exist together in the union. For a unity exists when all [the attributes] are referred to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But whenever the natures are scrutinized separately, [to determine] what each is affirming, [one must note] how [what is stated] coheres with its nature, and how this accords with the rule regarding how things are to be attributed to each nature. For, whenever, they are joined together in a unity of person, both natures are said to be [united] in participatory way, when they are in an agreement because of the unity. For, in this situation, what is distinct by nature is also affirmed to clearly exist in a conjoined way [to the other nature], because of the unity of the person», *On the Incarnation*, quoted from McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 146-147. See also, «We also speak in a similar way, O illustrious [Apollinaris], about Christ our Lord: that the form of the slave subsists in the form of God. The assuming One is not the assumed one, nor is the assuming One the assumed one! The unity, however, between the assumed and the Assumer cannot be separated, seeing that this [unity] is not able to be sundered in any way», Theodore of Mopsuestia, *In opposition to Apollinaris*, quoted from F.G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, London – New York 2009, 154.

³⁹ «Then the evangelist returned to following the order of his text, lest [his] statements that “He was made flesh” and “he appeared” block [Christ’s] majesty from being seen. So he adds: “And we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” For [it is] not because of [Christ’s] many deeds that I make known who he is. Nor do we rashly consent to believe in him. But because of what we have seen, we have truly accepted him as the Only Begotten Son. For what we have seen amply demonstrates the majesty of the one who has appeared. Because of what came to be, he can be none other than the Only Begotten who perfectly possesses the image of his Father», *Commentary on John’s Gospel*, quoted from McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 100.

⁴⁰ It is important to note that Abramowski did not comment on this important affirmation of our monk, which truly goes beyond Theodore’s Christology, cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 571-572.

ther⁴¹. Such elaboration, in addition, could be found not just in our monk. It could be found in one Ps.-Nestorius' work, written probably during the second half of the 5th century, entitled "Various chapters and diverse questions", and was translated from Greek into Syriac in the first part of the 6th century⁴². In this work we can read the following:

'The Word became flesh', is assigned to the dispensation (economy) (ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ), and does not signify either a transformation of the nature, or a composition. Now the dispensation of God is the taking of (assumption) (ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ) flesh, apt for the divine revelation, no necessity being laid upon it that it should submit to God without his nature, but (it was something) which is indicating *the invisible one* (ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ) *in visible flesh* (ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ), whilst in the appearance of the equality of honour it was leading and bringing near the spectator to the invisible one ... So 'he became flesh' (indicates that) the word took the flesh and so was revealed⁴³

Similarities between this work and our monk's are evident, and not only in this point, as I will demonstrate later in my analysis. If, then, as we said, this text was translated into Syriac in the first part of the 6th century, this means that our monk knew it in Greek, or knew its Greek source. I maintain also that the community of Ḥabīb, or as we called it his "Christological current", was behind such translation into Syriac. This, in fact, demonstrates that some Ps.-Nestorian works were known and translated in East Syrian monastic communities before the same Nestorius was translated into Syriac; I will return to this point later in my conclusions.

Another extrapolation beyond Theodorian doctrine that one might notice is the affirmation that the name Christ is a common name for both of the two natures:

ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ
 ܐܘܢܘܡܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ ܕܘܢܘܨܝܢܐ

44. Then you wrote: «If Christ was crucified, [then] God was crucified.» Thus, you should then say that if Christ suffered and died, [so] God has also suffered and died. Do you see how your word is full of hostility against God, because you did not understand that the name "Christ" is common to the divinity and humanity, Sometimes it has been said in a particular way, and other times in general.

⁴¹ See here footnote 39.
⁴² Cf. Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, xlvi.
⁴³ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 112; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 187-188.
⁴⁴ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 26.

The name “Christ” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) can indicate the two natures, since it is common to the divinity and to the humanity. This common name was used in a general way, i.e. indicating the uniqueness of the subject. Other times it was used in a particular way, i.e. referring to one nature and its properties. For this reason, the name Christ can be identified with one of the two natures, when the action he describes belongs to one nature. So “Christ was crucified” means that the man in Christ was crucified, so in this case, the name Christ is identified with the man⁴⁵. However, this does not mean that the action was made by one nature in a separated and isolated way. The natures were always united, with a distinction but without a division. So again, if we say “Christ was crucified”, means yes, that “the man was crucified” the man is nonetheless not the same as other men — he is the temple within whom the Word inhabits. And in this, in fact, Ḥabīb is not just following Theodore’s thought, but presenting it in his own new, different way⁴⁶.

We must note in this chapter the importance of the terms “name” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ), and “common name” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ). For Theodore, Christ is the common person (πρόσωπον/*parṣopā*) of the two united natures. This person indicates, on one hand, the uniqueness of the subject; on the other hand, the duality of the united but distinguished natures⁴⁷. We do not find in Theodore, however, the expression “the name of Christ is a common name” — can we, then, maintain that the term “name” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) in Ḥabīb’s thought has the metaphysical function of Theodore’s “person”? Might this in fact be the reason Ḥabīb does not use the term *parṣopā*, rather than, as Abramowski believes, that this absence was Philoxenus’ omission?⁴⁸ We will return to this question further.

For the moment, however, it is necessary to note that in this chapter the use of the term “name” is very indicative. I think, in fact, that its use by our monk is a differentiation, or let us call it an innovation in Theodorian thought⁴⁹. I believe that in this use there is an influence of Nestorius’ thought, as L. Scipioni had noticed⁵⁰. If Nestorius’ works were not yet

⁴⁵ Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 590-591.

⁴⁶ In chapters 56 and 57 this will be presented further; see the citations I make from Theodore in previous and further notes.

⁴⁷ On this, see F.G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity in Salvation. Insights from Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Washington 2005, 163-170

⁴⁸ See above footnote 18.

⁴⁹ In fact, in Theodore we do not have a use of the term “name” as it is used by Ḥabīb. For the bishop of Mopsuestia, simply being one in subject, i.e. one common person in two natures, means that he is one in name, will, operation, authority, etc.; cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, 144.

⁵⁰ Cf. L. Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia del “Libro di Eraclide” di Nestorio. La formula teologica e il suo contesto filosofico*, Friburgo 1957, 93-97.

known, in complete form, in the Syriac world, it does not necessary mean that his thought was not circulated in some Theodorian circles. The concept of the common name, in fact, is found in Nestorius' second letter to Cyril⁵¹; we can also find it in his *Liber Heraclides*, where we read:

Now I have said that *the name Christ* (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ) *is indicative of two natures, of God indeed one nature [and of man one nature]. One indeed is the name which indicates two and another [that] which indicates one which is not anything else ... Thou sayest therefore that Christ himself is one thing and another, because you predicate of him the different natures of divinity and of humanity*⁵²

This passage of Nestorius reveals the importance of the concept name, “ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ”, and shows that it has a metaphysical meaning⁵³. Such a note is very helpful so we can understand more the function of name in our monk's work. It is worthy to notice as well that the concept of “name” had a very important place in Babai the Great's doctrine. He distinguished clearly between a name of *kyanā* (natural name) and a name of *parṣopā* (personal name), giving to each term a metaphysical definition⁵⁴. In this, Babai was not just following Nestorius — this distinction was already in use among the Syrians of the East, as we noticed in our author, whose source was also a source for Babai and other Nestorian authors. To demonstrate this, I will continue arguing the concept of the name “Christ” in Ḥabīb's following chapters:

ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܝܣܝ 56. We avoid, therefore, both expressions as they are said in an isolated way, because they need [further] explanation. They complete [each other] with the expression: «Jesus Christ died for our sins»⁵⁵. “Christ”, in fact, is the name

⁵¹ «Πιστεύω τοίνυν, φασί, καὶ εἰς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ». σκόπησον ὅπως τὸ “κύριος” καὶ “Ἰησοῦς” καὶ “Χριστός” καὶ “μονογενής” καὶ “υἱός” πρότερον θέντες τὰ κοινὰ τῆς θεότητος καὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ὡς θεμελίουσιν ὀνόματα τότε τὴν τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως καὶ τοῦ πάθους ἐποικοδομοῦσι παράδοσιν, ἵνα τῶν ὀνομάτων τῆς φύσεως ἑκατέρας *κοινῶν* τινῶν σημαντικῶν προκειμένων μῆτε τὰ τῆς υἰότητος καὶ κυριότητος τέμνηται μῆτε τὰ τῶν φύσεων ἐν τῷ τῆς υἰότητος μοναδικῷ συγχύσεως ἀφανισμῷ κινδυνεύη ... πρότερον θεῖς τὸ *κοινόν*, ὡς μικρῶ πρότερον ἔφην, τῶν φύσεων ὄνομα», Nestorius, *Second letter to Cyril*, ed. (with Italian translation) M. Simonetti, *Il Cristo, II: Testi teologici e spirituali in Lingua Greca dal IV al VII Secolo*, Milano 2003⁵, 366.

⁵² G.R. Driver – L. Hodgson (tr.), *Nestorius. The Bazaar of Heracleides*, Oxford, 1925, 209-210; for the Syriac text see Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide*, 292.

⁵³ See above footnote 50 from Scipioni.

⁵⁴ See Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia*, 146.

⁵⁵ Cf. I Cor. 15, 3.

ותבין כי המילה "הטבע" היא המילה
 המורה על הטבע והכלכלה, והמילה "האדם"
 היא המילה המורה על הטבע בלבד, בלי הכלכלה.
 ואם תאמר "האדם מת", אתה מתכוון להגיד
 שיש הפרדה בין האדם, שמת, לבין הכלכלה,
 והוא מת בלעדיו. ואם תאמר "אלוהים מת",
 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין אלוהים,
 שמת, לבין הטבע, והוא מת בלעדיו.
 ואם תאמר "האל מת", אתה מתכוון להגיד
 שיש הפרדה בין האל, שמת, לבין הכלכלה,
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 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין האל, שמת,
 לבין הכלכלה, והוא מת בלעדיו.

that indicates the nature and the economy;
"man", however, is the name that indicates
the nature without the economy, simply as
other men. If you say «the man is dead»,
you would have separated him, who
died, from the economy, and you would
have limited him in the word of his na-
ture with all men. And if you say, «God is
dead», you would have calumniated the
nature of divinity, and you would have
frustrated the economy of the humanity.
For that we use the name that indicates
the economy and the nature together,
saying «Christ is dead», so that death
occurs not [only] according to the order
of his nature, but according to [both] the
economy and nature. If [you say] «God is
dead», He would have been died accord-
ing to the economy and not according to
the nature. And if [you say] «the man is
dead», he would have died according to
the power of his nature and not accord-
ing to the will, nor according to the econ-
omy. How, [then], did he die for us; not
the one who dies according to His will, but
according to the power of his nature?

ותבין כי המילה "הטבע" היא המילה
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 שיש הפרדה בין האדם, שמת, לבין הכלכלה,
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 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין אלוהים,
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 שמת, לבין הטבע והכלכלה, והוא מת בלעדיו.
 ואם תאמר "אלוהים מת", אתה מתכוון להגיד
 שיש הפרדה בין אלוהים, שמת, לבין הטבע,
 והוא מת בלעדיו. ואם תאמר "האל מת",
 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין האל, שמת,
 לבין הכלכלה, והוא מת בלעדיו. ואם תאמר "האדם מת",
 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין האדם, שמת,
 לבין הטבע והכלכלה, והוא מת בלעדיו. ואם תאמר "אלוהים מת",
 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין אלוהים, שמת,
 לבין הטבע, והוא מת בלעדיו. ואם תאמר "האל מת",
 אתה מתכוון להגיד שיש הפרדה בין האל, שמת,
 לבין הכלכלה, והוא מת בלעדיו.

57. Now it is not so, but the one who chose
 to die for us, *He died [truly] for us*. If He
 did not have a nature through which He
 could realize *His will*, He would not want
 [to die for us]! Not because the death occurred
according to the nature, [means] that this happened
 neither *according to the economy* nor *according to the will*, but
 [death] occurred *according to the nature*,
 because of *the temple of His body*, and
 happened *according to the economy* be-
 cause *the Word* was *inhabited* in it. And
 [the death] was realized for us *according*
to the will through the one *Jesus Christ*,
the Son of God.

⁵⁶ Habib, *Tractatus de adversario*, 30.
⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

In Chapter 56 Ḥabīb explains the meaning of Christ, again basing his explanation on the concept of name. Christ is the name (ܘܢܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܡ ܕܢܘܪܐ) that indicates both the nature and the economy (ܘܢܝ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܡ ܕܢܘܪܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ). If we take into consideration what was said above, i.e. Christ is the common name of the united natures, indicating the unity of subject and the diversity of natures, we can perfectly understand what he means by “the name that indicates the economy and the nature”.

For our monk, to say without further explanation “God is dead” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) or “the man is dead” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) calls for a more apposite interpretation⁵⁸. Such expressions, presented out of context, could be understood wrongly: Can God be dead? If just the human being was dead, then how, soteriologically can the death and resurrection be understood as God’s salvific action? Ḥabīb avoids such risks by using one unique expression that indicates both things: that death was of the humanity, and salvation of God. This expression is based on the common subject, that is “Christ”.

Saying “Christ is dead” (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ), and knowing that Christ is the union of divinity and humanity, you can easily consider death to have happened according to humanity, while the salvific action behind the death and the resurrection is of God. Christ, in addition, is the name of the nature and the economy. This means that using this name it must be always understood that the natures are united in this one subject. As a consequence, in our text economy is to be understood as the salvific action of the Word through the humanity to which He was united. Thus, when our monk says “according to nature”, he means naturally; when, however, he says “according to economy”, he means an action taken by the one subject through one of his natures. With the term “nature” then, our author is not referring just to the humanity, as Abramowski maintained⁵⁹, but to one of the two natures in the economy: the temple (the body) or the One who inhabits (the Word).

Therefore, only under this condition, according to economy, can one affirm that “God is dead”, since this means that the death occurred in the humanity, one of the two united natures in the economy, but without considering it separated from the other nature, the divinity. When we say, in addition, “the man is dead” according to nature we mean, in fact, that the death happened truly. The last expression, however, is risky and unsafe, because, in this case, we cannot affirm that the death occurred according to economy and according to the will of the One who assumed human flesh, becoming a man. Ḥabīb affirms that the One who chose to die for us is

⁵⁸ Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 598.

⁵⁹ Contrary to L. Abramowski’s conclusion, cf. *ibid.*, 620, I believe “nature” in Ḥabīb’s affirmation does not indicate just the humanity.

Christ, the common person who acts as One through his two natures⁶³.

However, we have a clear differentiation between our monk and Theodore. It is clear, in fact, how again our monk develops his Theodorian backgrounds, adopting them to his new context. In this development he used some key-concepts, “name” and “economy”, to explain the unity of subject and the distinction of natures in Christ. Such terms we can find also in Nestorius, who used them for the same reason⁶⁴. Again I think that the link between Ḥabīb and Nestorius is more indirect. It seems that probably our monk knew the second letter of Nestorius sent to Cyril, but he also was informed on other thoughts of Nestorius and his teaching through other Nestorian works, i.e. Ps.-Nestorius’ sayings⁶⁵, or oral fragmental sayings attributed to Nestorius. Ḥabīb uses such doctrines as an instrument to develop his Theodorian Christology, adopting it to his East Syrian Christology, so he could polemicize against Philoxenus with this way⁶⁶. What makes me sure of such an affirmation is the following text, which comes from the Ps.-Nestorius work of the 5th/6th century cited above:

Now [*the name*] ‘Christ’ (ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) is the indicator of the divine *dispensation* (economy) (ܕܥܝܘܒܐ) of which the dispenser dwelt within him ... If in that which he was – *God suffered*, then the invisible and incorporeal one suffered; if in becoming what he had not been, then he who was not God in nature suffered,

is the one who underwent suffering when he hung on the cross after being arrested by the Jews; the former [is said to be crucified] in the sense that He was with him in the way stated above», Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, quoted from McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 142.

⁶³ «So also when our Lord speaks of his humanity and his divinity, He uses this “I” as referring to the *common person*; and, in order to let us know by all these [remarks] that He is not speaking about the one and the same nature, He indicates this by making distinctions when He says “I myself do not judge” and says in another place “If I judge”... », Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John’s Gospel*, quoted from McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 104.

⁶⁴ «Πανταχοῦ τῆς θείας γραφῆς, ἡνίκα ἅ μνήμην τῆς δεσποτικῆς οἰκονομίας ποιῆται, γέννησις ἡμῖν καὶ πάθος οὐ τῆς θεότητος, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος τοῦ Χριστοῦ παραδίδοται», Nestorius, *Second letter to Cyril*, 368.

⁶⁵ We can find the same use in the Nestorian anonymous cited by Leontius of Jerusalem, which in my opinion, indicates the existence of some Greek works, based on Nestorius teaching, who were circulating among the Theodorians and our monk knew them, directly or indirectly: «Ὁ Αἰγύπτιος τὸ φυσικὸν ἀδύνατον δογματίζει καὶ τὸ οἰκονομικῶς δυνατὸν ἀναθεματίζει», PG 86, 1500 B; see also PG 86, 1500 BC: «Εἰ τὸ ἀκτίστως ἔχειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἢ ἀμηχανία τῆς φύσεως οὐκ καὶ ἐὰ καὶ το κατ’ οἰκονομίαν ἔχειν τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου τὴν ἀξίαν ὁ Αἰγύπτιος οὐκ ἐᾷ, μεταξὺ ἄρα τῆς φύσεως; Καὶ τοῦ Αἰγυπτίου, οὐδὲν ἔχει τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οὔτε τὴν ὑπόστασιν οὔτε τὴν ἀξίαν».

⁶⁶ Seeing how this thought is close to the concept of πρόσωπον of Christ in Nestorius, who called it “πρόσωπον of economy”, “voluntary πρόσωπον”, cf. Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia*, 60, this makes us also think that Nestorius’ doctrine was circulated, maybe in Greek fragmental form, if it was in written form, or, perhaps was known in oral fragments only.

according to your blasphemy, O heretic. For you have first altered the unalterable nature, and have then brought it nigh unto suffering, and have subjected the impassible and immortal substance to a double suffering. But, he says, *the impassible suffered in accordance with his will* (ܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ). – Then his will changed his nature, in that it was found to be more powerful than his nature, he will striving with his nature. But, he says, *he willed to suffer*. – He willed therefore that he should not be God, for impassibility belongs to God only ... And if, as though in good faith, they ask us: *Who was it that was born?* We replay: *The temple of God the Word* while God the Word was not a participation in the beginning of birth, even though it was the glory of the birth, nor did he share the sufferings, even though it was the glory of suffering. Again they ask: *Who was it who was born?* We answer *The dispensation (economy) of God the Word*. – and: *who was he who suffered?* We replay again: *The dispensation (economy) of God the Word*. Do not though therefore make answer to them from the nature of him that was taken; and do not say merely that a man was born, and that a man suffered, but concerning the honour of him who suffered, speak with them thus; *Of what fashion are the dispensation (economy) of God the Word, and the temple of God the Word?* For they dispensation (economy) indicating the honour of God⁶⁷ ... ‘Christ’ is the name, not of the substance, but of *the dispensation (economy)* (ܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ)⁶⁸

The similarities between our author’s doctrine and the one of Ps.-Nestorius presented here are very significant: the concept of name; Christ as the name of the economy; the suffering of God according to his will because of the unity with the humanity; the use of the term “temple of God the Word”, the function of the economy as the subject of the salvific action of God through the humanity. All this shows a strong relationship between the two authors.

Another important element in Ḥabīb’s chapter 56 regards the name “man.” For him, “man” (ܪܘܚܢܐ) indicates the nature (ܪܘܚܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ). Again we have the term “name” (ܪܘܚܢܐ), and I think that also here this term has a metaphysical function, and is a key term for understanding our monk’s doctrine. The name man indicates the nature, which I believe means the natural properties of the common human nature. Can we read, then, behind such a definition a metaphysical function of person (*parṣopā*) or the one of hypostasis (*qnomā*)? The rest of the sentence adds another detail that helps us to understand what exactly our monk is talking about:

... “man”, however, is the name that indicates the nature without the economy,

⁶⁷ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 113-115; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 190-193.

⁶⁸ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 121; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 202.

simply as other *men* (ⲁⲓⲃⲏ ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ). If you say “*the man* (ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ) is dead”, you would have separated him, who died, from the economy, and you would have limited him in the word of *his nature* (ⲁⲓⲃⲏⲛⲓ) with all *men* (ⲁⲓⲃⲏ).

This “man” is united to the Word; as a name without any reference to the economy, it should be understood that he is simply like other men. In this case, can we understand that the term “man”, for our monk, in relation to the term “men”, is a singular and individual human being? Ḥabīb continues his argument, that regarding the death of Christ, if it is said just “the man was dead”, i.e. without mentioning that this man is united to the Word, is part of the economy of God, this means that he is separated from the economy and is limited in the word of his nature, and he is considered to be the same as all men (ⲁⲓⲃⲏ).

Thus, the difference between this man of the economy and the other men is his status of being united to the Word — both, however, belong to the same common nature. The mentioning of the terms “name”, “nature”, “all men”, and “man” makes me decline to read behind the word “man” (ⲉⲛⲁⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ), the concept of human singular nature-hypostasis (i.e. individual person), rather than simply human nature understood as an abstract nature. For our monk, “man”, as well as “God”, means concrete natures and not abstract realities. In this case “man” as name, for Ḥabīb, indicates the human nature, since it is his nature to which he belongs; but at the same time man is also comprehended as individual, so in Christ this man is understood as a single human being united to the Word, forming together the economy of God. Can we then, apply the term hypostasis (*qnomā*) to the concept of man? I will return at another point to this question.

Why then, does Ḥabīb, who is grounded principally in Theodorian Christology, since he uses Theodorian expressions like “Assumer”, “assumed”, “inhabitant”, “temple”, have to reformulate and elaborate this Christology, presenting it in a different way, and in doing so, using other sources? I think the answer is to be found in the new opponent that this Theodorian has in front of him, and in the new questions this adversary posed to him. Philoxenus, in fact, affirmed not just that “God became”, but also used a strong theopaschite expression “God is dead”; he propagated his theopaschitism, adding this dimension even to the Trisagion⁶⁹. This forced the community of Ḥabīb to react in this way. The problem is not just whether the humanity in Christ was perfect, as at the time of Theodore

⁶⁹ On his propagation of this addition to the Trisagion see T. Bou Mansour, “The Christology of Philoxenus of Mabbug”, in Grillmeier – Hainthaler (ed.), *Christ in Christian Tradition*, II/III: *From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590-604)*, 478-455, here 480-481. He, in fact added the expression “who was crucified to us” to the Trisagion, giving it Christological interpretation.

the doctrine of the God's becoming. However, does saying that the Word assumed a body preserve, for our monk, this double consubstantiality⁷⁴. To support his opinion, Ḥabīb cites a phrase from Phil 2,6-7: «He who is the likeness of God assumed the likeness of a servant». This scriptural citation is a clear proof for him that the one who is consubstantial with the Father is not consubstantial with us, and the one who is consubstantial with us is not consubstantial with the Father. After this, he links it with the Christology of the Assumer and the assumed in the one Christ. So, the distinction between the one who assumed, who is called in the verse “the likeness of God”, and the one who was assumed, who is called “the likeness of a servant”, forms the basis for affirming that the one Christ, who is both the Assumer and the assumed, is the “Son of God” according to the divinity and the “son of man” according to the humanity.

Again we see a similarity with the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia, when he comments on such Pauline verses. He uses them to affirm that a distinction between the two natures is a must. The Assumer and the assumed are not equal in nature, even though they are united in one person, Christ⁷⁵. Again in Ḥabīb's citation we do not find the term *parṣopā*, but we have the affirmation that the Assumer and the assumed are the one Christ⁷⁶. The innovation in Ḥabīb's thought is the use of the terms “Son of

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, 577-579.

⁷⁵ «Is the one who has been assumed in the form of an assuming God or the assumed form of a slave? You assert that the form of the assuming God is the form of the assumed slave. Why do you resort to such clever questions, and why do you not distinguish these [natures] as do the divine Scriptures, and not seek to introduce into your life a completely reasonable understanding of how to worship God? For how is the assuming one like the one assumed, or in what way are God and a human being, the slave and the master, the form of God and the form of the slave, equal? For you see how [the Scripture] clarifies in a thorough way the distinction of the natures, and calls the former the form of slave and the latter the form of God, the Assumer and the one assumed. [The sacred writer] compiles these distinctions to teach us about the one “person”», Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on Philippians 2:5-11*, see McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 113-114.

⁷⁶ Theodore of Mopsuestia, in his catechetical homilies speaks about the distinction of the two natures, using the titles “likeness/form of God” and “likeness/form of a slave”, linking them with the Assumer and the assumed, without mentioning, in this context, the term “person” as the subject of the union. I think such a passage could be the real basis and source of Ḥabīb's thought: «That One who is in the ‘form of God’ has assumed the ‘form of slave’. But the ‘form of a slave’ is not the ‘form of God’. The One who is in the ‘form of God’ is by nature God; he is the one who assumed the ‘form of a slave’, whereas the ‘form of a slave’ is by nature the man assumed for our salvation ... Let us also attach ourselves to this teaching and mentally embrace the distinction of the natures: that the One who assumed is God and the Only Begotten Son. But the ‘form of the slave’ who was assumed is human; God assumed what is good in our race — that one who was assumed and dwells in the [divine] fullness and provides us with a way to share in his grace», Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homilies*, see McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 162.

God” (ܐܠܗܐ ܗܘܐ) and “son of man” (ܒܢ ܐܢܫܐ), as synonyms for the “likeness of God” (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܘܫܐ) and the “likeness of a servant” (ܐܢܫܐ ܕܘܫܐ), and of the “Assumer” (ܐܘܫܘܡܐ) and the “assumed” (ܐܘܫܘܡܐ ܕܘܫܐ). This special use, in my opinion, needs further comment.

The question that we must ask is whether these titles simply indicate the two natures in Christ, the divine (ܐܠܗܐ) and the human (ܐܢܫܐ), or is there something else behind their usage in such a way? If they simply indicate the natures, why then, does Ḥabīb affirm that Christ is truly son of God according to his divinity? Is he trying to say that Christ is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity? The consubstantiality, in fact, is of the Word to the Father. So Christ being truly the Son of God according to his divinity does not simply indicate one of the natures in Christ, the divine. By such an affirmation, I think, Ḥabīb points to the fact that the Assumer, who is the likeness of God and the Son of God, is the Word, a hypostasis (*qnomā*) of the Trinity, and for this reason he is consubstantial to God the Father.

Can we, then, affirm the same thing with the second group of titles? Can we say that they indicate a human hypostasis which is the assumed man, the likeness of a servant, and for that Christ is the son of man? The key to such a reading is the consubstantiality, which could be realized between hypostases of the same nature, since the general and abstract nature is the common thing to which they belong. We see in the text that Ḥabīb does not mention such an affirmation, but this could nonetheless be interpreted in such way by his readers, as Philoxenus did. Consequently, he accused Ḥabīb of having declared two hypostases (*qnomē*) in Christ.

We see, in addition, an indirect influence of Nestorius’ thought⁷⁷ on Ḥabīb’s formulation and use of Phil 2, 6-7. In his *Liber Heraclides* Nestorius links the consubstantiality with the likeness; he says that «the likeness of God is consubstantial with this *ousia* in that it is a natural likeness (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܘܫܐ), but by the union, the likeness of God which is naturally God’s (ܐܠܗܐ ܕܘܫܐ), became in schema the likeness of servant»⁷⁸. The key point here is not just the link between the likeness and the consubstantiality, but also the use of the term “natural likeness,” which is “naturally God’s”; in our monk’s chapter we read that Christ is «naturally (ܕܘܫܐ) the son of man according to his humanity», which corresponds, in the continuity of Nestorius’ text cited above, with the term “naturally the likeness of

⁷⁷ According to Abramowski, Philoxenus in citing this chapter suggests that Ḥabīb was a follower of Nestorius and his doctrine, but she rejects this notion; see Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 578-579.

⁷⁸ Driver – Hodgson, *Nestorius*, 167; for the Syriac text see Nestorius, *Le Livre d’Héraclide*, 244.

the servant” (ܠܠܟܢܘܢ ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ)⁷⁹. Taking this into consideration and reading it with our interpretation presented above, we can say that this hypostasis is naturally consubstantial to the other hypostases, i.e. they belong to the same nature, and therefore this hypostasis is called a natural likeness of the common nature. Again, we find that the opinions of Nestorius were circulating, maybe in fragmental way or oral way, or, which seems to me more convincing, through sources who already knew Nestorius’ doctrine and developed it, probably in Greek language⁸⁰.

Chapter 33, in my view, could also be read according to this understanding:

ܠܠܟܢܘܢ ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܐܠܗܝܘܢ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ. ܘܡܠܝܚܘܢܘܢ ܡܝܢ ܘܫܒܘܬܐ ܡܝܢ ܥܡܝܢܐ.⁸¹

33. If you say “from the Father”, you tell the truth, and if you say “from the Virgin”, you tell the truth, since, in fact, *the Word is naturally from the Father, and also the man is naturally from the Virgin. And the body is not consubstantial with the Father* because it is a creature and it is done and it is the seed of Abraham. *And the Word is not consubstantial to the Virgin* because He is not created by another one and He is not made, but He is the Creator and the Maker of all beings. In addition, *He* [the Word] assumed *the man*.

Yes, in this chapter, as L. Abramowski noted, Ḥabīb underlines the distinction between the natures in Christ⁸², but he is probably trying to develop another affirmation, one that he could not declare openly. The Word (ܠܠܟܢܘܢ) is naturally from the Father, our monk says clearly now, and surely, by saying “the Word”, he means this distinct hypostasis generated from the Father, and that for this reason they are consubstantial. Ḥabīb also affirms that the man is naturally from the Virgin. He uses the word “the man” (ܠܠܟܢܘܢ) and not “humanity”. Mentioning the second affirmation in a parallel way with the first leads me to see in his use of the word “man”,

⁷⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ The Greek Nestorian cited by Leontius of Jerusalem is clear evidence of my hypothesis, i.e. that some Nestorian opinions were circulating among some Theodorians and Nestorians, including our monk. We read that the titles “Son of God” and “son of man” are hypostatic names, or names of hypostases, which means that they indicate hypostases and not simply natures: «Τὸ φύσει Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὸ φύσει υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὑποστάσεως ὀνόματα, ὧν χωρὶς οὐκ ἐνδέχεται ὀρθῶς ὁμολογεῖν τὸν Χριστιανισμὸν, καὶ ἀμφοτέρω ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ Χριστῷ ὁμολογεῖται, οὐκ ἐν ἑκατέρω ἀμφοτέρω», PG 86, 1593 D. This idea comes from earlier Greek Nestorian sources.

⁸¹ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 20.

⁸² Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 580.

the desire to express human hypostasis, i.e. a single human being who was born from the Virgin, and he is thereby consubstantial with us.

The rest of the chapter has the same mechanism. The body (ܩܘܡܐ) is not consubstantial with the Father, and the Word (ܠܘܓܘܣ) is not consubstantial with the Virgin. Again, we can affirm that for him, “consubstantiality” means “sharing the same nature”; the body does not belong to the divine nature, and the Word does not belong to the human nature. This helps me to make another interpretation, that “man”, “body” and “Word”, being singular realities (*qnomē*), indicates, as L. Scipioni noted for Nestorius, the real content of a thing⁸³, while “nature” indicates the reality by itself, i.e. what is real, as opposed to an illusory thing⁸⁴. We see that these two concepts are very closely related. Again I repeat that this could be comprehended just by reading and interpreting Ḥabīb through Ḥabīb, who probably had as sources Greek Nestorian works which were circulating among the Theodorians⁸⁵.

I am convinced that such a reading can be applied to Ḥabīb’s thought, not just because Philoxenus accuses him of saying that in Christ there are two hypostases (*qnomē*), but also because of the use of his doctrine by later Nestorian authors. I present here two citations of later East Syrian, i.e. Nestorian texts: the first is from Shahdost (Eustathius) of Tarihān (*floruit* in the first half of the 8th century)⁸⁶, titled “Against those who confess one hypostasis”⁸⁷; the second is the “Creed, chapters and responses delivered by the Persian bishops to Kosroes [the Persian emperor] in the year 612”⁸⁸.

Say to me now: This *prosopon of the unity* of the whole Trinity, is it conjunctive or that of God the Word – about whom it is said: ‘The Word became flesh’ and: ‘The form of God, took the form of a servant’. And in this *prosopon*, moreover, was united the human nature also; all nature of men is perceived in him, of men and of women in common. Or [is it] that *one hypostasis, man, he sends forth, who is the form of a servant; and from the seed of Abraham was he taken ... Therefore in this one prosopon of Christ not only natures are perceived in one conjunction, but also hypostases preserving their properties, namely that of God the*

⁸³ Cf. Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia*, 53.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁵ As I said above, these sources could also be sources for the anonymous Nestorian cited by Leontius of Jerusalem: «Εἰ θεότητι Θεὸς ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ἀνθρωπότητι ἄνθρωπος ὁ Λόγος, ἐν δυσὶν ἄρα ὑποστάσεσιν ἐστὶν ὁ Λόγος Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὡσπερ καὶ ἐν δυσὶ φύσει Θεὸς καὶ ἄνθρωπος », PG 86, 1596 B.

⁸⁶ Of him, see E.G. Mathews “Shahdost”, in S.P. Brock – A.M. Butts – G.A. Kiraz – L. Van Rompay (ed.), *GEDSH*, Piscataway NJ 2011, 370.

⁸⁷ On this work, see Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, xxvi-xxxii.

⁸⁸ On this work, see *ibid.*, xlii-xliv.

Word, complete hypostasis like Father and Holy Spirit, and that of the man Jesus a complete hypostasis like Abraham and David from whose seed he was taken⁸⁹

By the fact of this saying 'He shall be called Son of God', he has taught us concerning the wondrous conjunction of the union, without separation, which from the commencement of his being formed, existed between the human nature that was taken, and God the Word who took it, so that henceforth we know as one *proson* our Lord, Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*; who is born before the worlds, without beginning, *of the Father in the nature of his godhead*, and born, in the last times, of the holy virgin, *the son of David, in the nature of his manhood*, as God had earlier promised to the blessed David: 'Of the fruit of your womb shall I set upon your throne'. And after the issue of these things, the blessed Paul expounded the promise, saying to the Jews concerning David: 'From the seed of this man, God had raised up, as he promised, Jesus, [to be saviour]. And again, to the Philippians, he wrote thus: 'Think within yourselves that which also Jesus Christ [thought] who, though he was in the form of God, assumed the form of Servant.' For whom else would he be calling 'the form of God' but Christ in his godhead, and whom else again would he be naming 'the form of servant' but Christ in his manhood? And the former, he said, took, while the later was taken. Therefore it is not possible to confuse the properties of the nature, for it is impossible that he who took should be he who was taken, or that he who was taken should be the taker. For that God the Word should be revealed in the man whom he took, and [that] the human nature which was taken should appear to creation in order of him who took it [that] at the same time in his undivided union should be confessed the one Son of God, Christ, this we have learned and do maintain⁹⁰.

Noting the second citation, which is from the letter of the bishops of the synod of 612 to the Persian emperor, we see a great similarity to, and use of, Ḥabib's thought:

Ḥabib's text

The Scriptures, however, teach like this: «*He who is the likeness of God assumed the likeness of a servant* (ܐܘܢ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ)». And the one who assumed (ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ) and the one who was assumed (ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ) are the one Christ (ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ) and he is truly

The bishops' letter

And again, to the Philippians, he wrote thus: 'Think within yourselves that which also Jesus Christ [thought] who, though he was in 'the form of God, assumed the form of Servant' (ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ). For whom else would he be calling 'the form of God' (ܐܘܠܘܢܐ ܐܘܠܘܢܐ) but Christ in his god-

⁸⁹ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 10; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 10-11.

⁹⁰ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 90-91; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 153-154.

tively to 'one hypostasis' (ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܥܢܐ). Since then, of those who gradually sprang up, some said: 'One hypostasis of phantasia, from the godhead alone, without the nature and the true hypostasis of the man'. Phantastically, like Mani and Marcion (ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܥܢܐ) and Bar Daisan and those like them. And some said: 'Without phantasia, and in truth, from God the Word and a half of the manhood, [that is the manhood] deprived of the soul, while God the Word filled the place of the soul', like Arius and Eunomius, and those like them. And some said: 'One hypostasis from the godhead and manhood, without the intellect, whilst the godhead filled the place of the intellect', like the Appolinarians, devoid of intellect, and the rest of their companions. And some of them said: 'One hypostasis of an ordinary man, without the godhead', like the senseless Paul of Samosata, and the whole company, barren of understanding. And some said: 'One hypostasis of God alone who was changed into flesh whilst he had not taken flesh. The Word became flesh, etc.', like Eutyches (ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܥܢܐ), with Severus and Jacob of Sarug and Aksenaya of Garmek (ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܥܢܐ), and the rest of the whole band, foreign to God...⁹⁵.

The question we must ask regarding Ḥabīb's text is why he puts these three heretics together. What is common between them? Eutyches did not consider the humanity in Christ real⁹⁶. Marcion was accused of not considering the incarnation to be real — he understood the humanity in Christ in docetic terms⁹⁷. For our monk, then, this is the common doctrine of both: Christ is considered just divine. The notion that the Word assumed a body is not acceptable to them, and for this reason they did not affirm the reality of the body.

The later Nestorian author, mentioned above, notes that this unique reality in Christ, the divine, is considered, for both groups — Marcion and Mani, as well as the Miaphysites and Monophysites — to be one hypostasis. It is thus clear that this Nestorian author had as a source Ḥabīb's Christological current, and interpreted it with terms of one and two hypostases, since hypostasis (*qnomā*) in this case affirms the reality of the nature, i.e. it is a concrete nature⁹⁸. It is also important to note that the later Nestorian author mentions the name "Philoxenus" (ܩܢܘܡܐ ܘܥܢܐ) among the Monophysites and Miaphysites.

In fact, as Abramowski noted, Ḥabīb in this chapter directs his polemic against Philoxenus' refutation of the traditional Antiochene terms for ex-

⁹⁵ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 38; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 61-62.

⁹⁶ On Eutyches and his doctrine see G.A. Bevan – P.T.R. Gray, "The Trial of Eutyches: A new Interpretation", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 101 (2009), 617-57.

⁹⁷ On Marcion and his doctrine see P. Foster, "Marcion: His Life, Works, Beliefs and Impact", *The Expository Times* 121 (2010), 269-280.

⁹⁸ Regarding this, see Patros, "La cristologia", 29-31.

4.2. Some metaphysical definitions in Ḥabīb's chapters?

To support my reading presented above, I will analyze at this point some chapters where we can find several metaphysical rules and definitions made by our author. This should help us better understand Ḥabīb's Christology, even if we do not possess his complete work. Let us start with chapter 4:

4. So, the hypostasis descended and the nature did not? And how does the hypostasis change [its location] to [another] place where it was not, and [yet its] nature remains without changing [its place]? Or did the nature also descend and ascend? And how it is not a blasphemy to say that God naturally or hypostatically changes from one place to another place? Either give evidence as to how [this could happen], or else omit it, since you do not know what you say. Show evidence regarding this [in the Scriptures], or avoid the expressions that are full of dispute and madness. And do not think according to your ignorance, i.e. it is written concerning Christ: «the Son of God descended from heaven», and «[the Son of God] ascended to heaven», and « [the Son of God] was sent», and «[the Son of God] was given». These [sentences] are examples of what you [maintain], that the Son is one of the hypostases. However, the Son is not only a hypostasis, but also a nature.

4. So, the hypostasis descended and the nature did not? And how does the hypostasis change [its location] to [another] place where it was not, and [yet its] nature remains without changing [its place]? Or did the nature also descend and ascend? And how it is not a blasphemy to say that God naturally or hypostatically changes from one place to another place? Either give evidence as to how [this could happen], or else omit it, since you do not know what you say. Show evidence regarding this [in the Scriptures], or avoid the expressions that are full of dispute and madness. And do not think according to your ignorance, i.e. it is written concerning Christ: «the Son of God descended from heaven», and «[the Son of God] ascended to heaven», and « [the Son of God] was sent», and «[the Son of God] was given». These [sentences] are examples of what you [maintain], that the Son is one of the hypostases. However, the Son is not only a hypostasis, but also a nature.

According to Abramowski, Ḥabīb in this chapter is responding to the polemic Philoxenus had raised against the opinion of the Theodorian school, according to which «sentences containing words expressing locality, such as 'he came down', 'he dwelt', 'he inhabited', or 'he sojourned (lived in a

thought we find in one Syriac fragment, the 266th according to Loofs' numeration. If, however, these fragments are of Ps.-Nestorian works, this affirms our opinion that Ḥabīb's background is not just Nestorius, but also some Ps.-Nestorian writings. That Ḥabīb read these writings in Greek is a possibility; for some Greek fragments of this homily see F. Loofs (ed.), *Nestoriana. Die Fragmente des Nestorius*, Halle 1905, 332-335. But having these fragments in Syriac language, cf. *ibid.*, 363-364, makes me wonder if some writings attributed to Nestorius were translated into Syriac very early. This is another possibility, as I mentioned above.

¹⁰³ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 10-12.

tent)' are statements about the 'volition, the actions and effects (of the Son of God)»¹⁰⁴. Reading this chapter attentively, we can discover something more behind the affirmations our monk gives.

Philoxenus taught that the hypostasis of the Word, the Son of the Father, descended and was incarnated. As Abramowski noted, Philoxenus's proofs are the scriptural verses which say that "the Son of God ascended", and "the Son of God descended" etc.¹⁰⁵ Ḥabīb, however, challenges him, asking if he means by this that the hypostasis descended but the nature does not, or if both the nature and the hypostasis descended.

It is clear to me that our monk is affirming, in such questions, that the hypostasis should be understood as a concrete nature, i.e. the real content of a thing, as I stated above. The questions, then, that he makes in this chapter, reveal that the discussion was regarding the "οὐσία ἀνυπόστατον" and the "ὑπόστασις ἀνούσιον". Hypostasis, according to our monk's thought, cannot be deprived of nature, so if we say that the hypostasis descended from heaven and became incorporated means automatically that also the nature descended and was incorporated, this is blasphemy against God, since this introduces in Him, i.e. in the divine nature of the Word, change. Ḥabīb, in addition, is aware that for Philoxenus, the title "Son" indicates one of the hypostases. However, this hypostasis is not deprived of the nature, and for this our monk affirms that the title "Son" is not only a hypostasis, but also a nature.

This affirmation, in my view, should be read with more attention. Affirming that the term "Son" is the subject of this Christological discussion reveals that our monk introduces an application of the term hypostasis (*qnomā*) into the Christological field. Even if it is not said directly, in the context of this chapter, the descending and ascending of the Son-Christ, is not just a Trinitarian discussion, on the contrary, it has a Christological dimension.

How can we link now all this together, that is, the Theodorian opinion regarding the movements of the Son of God that L. Abramowski noted, the question regarding "οὐσία ἀνυπόστατον" and "ὑπόστασις ἀνούσιον", and the affirmation that the title "Son" indicates hypostasis and nature? I think the key to understand the relation between all this is what we have already seen above from Ḥabīb's thought, and also his affirmation in this chapter that the Scriptural verses Philoxenus uses as proof are written regarding Christ, and not just on the Word. To me, in fact, this reveals that the word "Son" (ⲛⲓ) has a specific metaphysical meaning in our monks' doctrine.

I maintained before that behind the titles "Son of God" (ⲛⲓ ⲁⲓ ⲁⲓ ⲛⲓ)

¹⁰⁴ Abramowski, "From the controversy", 560.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

as the union of the two natures, and who is not identified just with the Word¹⁰⁸. This one Christ is also one Son according to his divinity and according to his humanity. We have here an identification between the Christ and the Son. Can we apply then what we have said on the term “Son” above, to Christ?

In her analysis of this chapter, L. Abramowski maintained with certainty that our monk had mentioned here the term *parṣopā* but Philoxenus omitted it¹⁰⁹. I can agree with such an opinion partly, I think behind the use of the term “Son” we can understand the Cappadocian doctrine regarding the idioms. “Son” reveals the property of “sonship”, which for Theodore, Nestorius and the Antiochenes, and then for the entire Nestorian tradition is identified with the πρόσωπον, *parṣopā*¹¹⁰. For Ḥabīb however, the concept of “name” has this metaphysical understanding.

The same L. Abramowski noted that the “name” in Ḥabīb’s doctrine is something different from the hypostasis by itself, at least in Trinitarian doctrine, which, according to my opinion, is something that Nestorius¹¹¹ and Ps.-Nestorius¹¹² also affirm. She, in fact, mentions the following: «Ḥabīb is using a distinction between the (divine) hypostasis and its ‘name’ and title ... It is possible to approach the matter closely by considering the terms ‘Son’ and ‘Spirit’ to be ‘names’»¹¹³. For Ḥabīb, in consequence, I see that the title “Son” indicates simply the property — it is the name of the hypostasis of the Word, and indicates it as nature and hypostasis. The title “Son of God” reveals the property of “sonship” of a divine hypostatized nature, that is, the hypostasis of the Word with its property of sonship. The same we can affirm for the title “son of man”. It is a property of a human hypostatized nature; “son”, as name, remains a property. Again I notice an influence on our monk’s thought by the Ps.-Nestorian work of the 5th / 6th century I mentioned above:

He who was taken in outside of the substance of the Son but not (outside) of the sonship (ܐܘܢܝܘܬܝܢ). Therefore the two natures are called one Son (ܐܘܢܝܘܬܝܢ). That which is of God, is common to the substance; but that which is of the Father, (signifies) who he (sc. the Father) is, and that which is of the Holy Spirit, signi-

¹⁰⁸ See McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity*, 238-241.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 550-551, 599.

¹¹⁰ We can see this, for example, in Babai the Great; see Scipioni, *Ricerche sulla cristologia*, 142.

¹¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 58-59.

¹¹² Cf. Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 122; for the Syriac text, see *ibid.*, I, 204-205. It is the same work I mentioned above, that was written some years before our monk’s work, but was translated into Syriac some years after his chapters.

¹¹³ Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 565.

fies who he (sc. the Spirit) is. But not in the same way that they are distinct in the hypostases are the parsopa of the Trinity distinct in the nature, or in power, or in will, or in creativeness, or in operation ... *For whenever we name the name of God (ܐܠܗܐ ܘܢܗܘܐ) alone, we designate the Trinity, but if we wish to speak of one of the hypostases, or prosopa, we make use of the addition of 'Father', 'Son', or 'Holy Spirit'. Then we are able to understand which hypostasis the word (sc. 'God') speaks about and (whom it) designates*¹¹⁴

This use of the term “Son” helps Ḥabīb to avoid introducing any kind of change into God’s essence. Affirming that the Son ascended and descended, means the property of sonship and not the hypostasis and nature. The property, in addition, reveals its nature-hypostasis, i.e. the one of the Son of God. For Ḥabīb, then, in Christ one is the Son as common property (sonship), one, however, is also the “Son of God” as a hypostasis-nature who is distinct from the “son of man” as hypostasis-nature. It is the same dialectic that we can find in Theodore, Nestorius and others regarding the two πρόσωπα and the one common πρόσωπον in Christ¹¹⁵.

What makes me sure of this interpretation of Ḥabīb’s thought is the general context of the chapter. Ḥabīb, in fact, explaining his Christology shows that the existence of two distinct natures in the one Christ and one Son does not mean division or separation; he compares it with the Trinitarian doctrine. Furthermore, he does not apply the term hypostasis (*qnomā*) in his Christology¹¹⁶, but again we can read it behind his explanation here, applying our interpretation of Ḥabīb’s thought. It is in fact a hint of trying to use such a term, but not openly; this is a work in progress that needed time to mature.

Returning to our monk’s chapter, within the Trinity, the hypostases do not divide the one God, the one divine nature — but for the knowledge (ܐܘܠܘܡܢܐ) of them we say one hypostasis and another hypostasis. “Knowledge of the hypostasis” means recognizing its particularity, i.e., that the hypostases are distinct because of their particular properties, i.e. their names; this distinction does not in any way mean separation or division. For Ḥabīb, this kind of distinction without division can be applied also in Christology.

Affirming, then, two natures in Christ, does not mean separation or division. He underlines this doctrine, saying that we indicate the natures

¹¹⁴ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 122; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 204-205.

¹¹⁵ In Theodore, see McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity*, 163-170; in Nestorius, see G. Chesnut, “The Two Prosopa in Nestorius’ Bazaar of Heraclides”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978), 392-409.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 599.

(*لعمارة بيتنا*) by saying “temple” (*محل*) and “inhabitant” (*ساكن*), or “Word” (*كلمة*) and “body” (*جسد*). We can affirm that this distinction of the two natures is manifested through the different properties that each nature has — thus, the temple is not the inhabitant, and the Word is not the body. But why does he use these titles: “temple” and “inhabitant”; “Word” and “body”; “God” and “man” — and not simply “divinity” and “humanity”?

Taking into consideration the parallelism he makes with the Trinitarian dogma, we see behind these titles the concept of “hypostatized natures”, not simply natures. We can be certain regarding the term “Word”, that it is a divine hypostasis-nature. Ḥabīb is trying to say that in Trinitarian doctrine, saying “one hypostasis and another hypostasis” does not divide the one nature. In Christology likewise, affirming one nature-hypostasis (hypostatized nature) and another nature-hypostasis does not divide the one subject into two, since the one subject has the common property of sonship, as well as the name Christ, as we noted above. Christologically, the uniqueness of the subject of Christ for our monk is not to be found at the level of nature or hypostasis but in that of personal property, while in Trinitarian doctrine, the uniqueness is to be found in the natural property, the common divine nature.

The link between Trinity and Christology, i.e. that affirming one hypostasis and another hypostasis (in Trinitarian dogma) does not mean division, and that affirming one nature and another nature (in Christological dogma) does not mean separation, can be found in a passage of Nestorius’ *Liber Heraclides*: «Confess then, the taker (*مأخوذ*) as he took, and the taken (*مأخوذ*) as he was taken, wherein [each is] one and in another, and wherein [there is] one and not two, after the same manner as the Trinity»¹¹⁷. In the remainder of this Nestorius passage, we have the affirmation of the two hypostases in Christ. He bases this on Phil 2,5-7; here we can again see an (indirect) influence on our monk’s thought¹¹⁸.

The following chapter could be a support for my interpretation, and could also illustrate more of Ḥabīb’s metaphysical system:

2. And in this [next thought] of yours I was greatly impressed: «How are in the one Christ two natures confessed?». *Did you not recognize the properties and species?* In the unique nature of the essence, in fact, you made *division*. You did not

¹¹⁷ Driver – Hodgson, *Nestorius*, 207; for the Syriac text, see Nestorius, *Le Livre d’Héraclide*, 289.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 289-293. See also *idid*, 425.

.ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ *preserve the perfection of nature, but you*
 119 ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ *did separation [in it], as Arians do. You*
 ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ *did not understand the knowledge of na-*
 ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ *tures*¹²⁰, *but you confused [them], like*
 ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐ *Apollinaris.*

The refusal of Philoxenus to confess in Christ two different natures led Ḥabīb to see in his doctrine both Arianism and Apollinarism. Furthermore, his explanation of why he sees similarities between Philoxenus' doctrine and these two heresies, helps us to understand better his metaphysical system. L. Abramowski says that the connection Ḥabīb makes to Arianism should be understood as a reference to Trinitarian dogma, while the one with Apollinarism to Christological¹²¹; I completely agree with her.

However, we can see behind these similarities something more, since in the context they are cited by Philoxenus, as Abramowski notes, Ḥabīb was accused of teaching two hypostases, and a union according to person (*paršopā*). The first accusation is considered by her to be a misunderstanding by Philoxenus, even though she acknowledges that Ḥabīb used the term *paršopā* in his work. She points out that Philoxenus, even if in this case he attributes personal union to Ḥabīb, when he makes direct citations of our monk, he carefully avoids such use of this term¹²². Regarding the use/non-use of *paršopā* by Ḥabīb I will return later, but at this point I want to understand why Philoxenus “misunderstood” Ḥabīb, and attributed to him the doctrine of two hypostases?

In response to Abramowski, I see that when Ḥabīb accuses Philoxenus of having not recognized the properties (ܩܘܪܕܢܐ) and the species (ܩܘܪܕܢܐ) means that he is concentrating his polemic on the natural properties that must be conserved in all hypostases that share a common nature. For him, affirming that in Christ there is one nature/one hypostasis and identifying Christ with God the Word means that the second hypostasis of the Trinity would no longer be consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit; rather, it would now be a new nature, mixture of humanity and divinity. This new nature would then be consubstantial with neither the Father, nor with us humans.

Furthermore in his view, to admit that this new nature is of the Word would mean that in the Trinity there is now a division, since the three hypostases would no longer share the same divine nature. Arius says exactly

¹¹⁹ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 10.

¹²⁰ See Abramowski's consideration on reading “nature” in the plural, and not as the French translation in the singular, Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 556.

¹²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 556

¹²² Cf. *ibid.*, 557.

this with his doctrine, considering the Word as the first creature of God, that He could not be *homoousios* with the Father.¹²³ This in fact is our reading of Ḥabīb's accusation that Philoxenus did not preserve the uniqueness of the essence and the perfection of the nature, but rather made a separation, as Arius did. It is clear that we have what Abramowski calls "Trinitarian Christology", commenting on chapter 20, where our monk also accuses Philoxenus of following Arius and Eunomius' teaching that the Son is of another substance from that of the Father¹²⁴. This accusation is consistent with my analysis of Ḥabīb.

Ḥabīb's Trinitarian Christology is also consistent with the other accusation he throws at Philoxenus, namely Apollinarism. If the similarity with Arius' doctrine regards the recognition of the species — the natural properties common to all the hypostases of the same nature — then, in Ḥabīb's view, the similarity with Apollinaris should be in his failure to recognize the properties of each nature in Christ, his failure to distinguish the natures, and recognize the difference between them.

For Ḥabīb, confessing one nature in Christ means confusion, composition of a third nature from divinity and humanity. In this "third" nature, the species are no longer preserved, nor are the properties, through which the ontological difference between the two natures of Christ could be distinguished. Apollinaris, in fact, was accused of teaching one nature in Christ, imperfection of the humanity of Christ, and confusion between the natures and a theopaschism¹²⁵; this is the reason our monk finds similarity between Philoxenus' doctrine and that of Apollinaris.

Is Ḥabīb the first one to see such a similarity between the Miaphysite and Monophysite doctrines, and those of Arius and Apollinaris? I could find no such linkage by Theodore, Nestorius or Ps.-Nestorian works, in any of their correspondence.

In Nestorius however, we can find the idea that Arius and Apollinaris shared the confusion of the natures, the teaching of one nature of Christ, and theopaschism¹²⁶. Having a Syriac fragment of a Nestorius' work that contains such opinion¹²⁷ convinced me that Ḥabīb goes beyond this doctrine, presenting it with originality, based, in addition, on the thought that

¹²³ Regarding the doctrine of Arius, see R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, London 1987.

¹²⁴ Cf. Abramowski, "From the controversy", 573.

¹²⁵ On the accusations against Apollinaris, see Ch. Raven, *Apollinarianism: An Essay on the Christology of the Early Church*, Cambridge 1923, 233-272.

¹²⁶ Cf. F. Loofs (ed.), *Nestoriana*, 108; Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide*, 294-298, 335-336.

¹²⁷ Cf. F. Loofs (ed.), *Nestoriana*, 368 (fragment nr. 208).

was already developing among the Nestorians, as found in the Ps.-Nestorius of the 5th/6th century¹²⁸.

The question to examine now is the following: Why does Philoxenus, referring to this chapter, accuse Ḥabīb of teaching two hypostases? I think the answer could be given by the Nestorian tradition, which seems to have used the doctrine of Ḥabīb's Christological current and community to support the teaching regarding the two hypostases (*qnomē*) of Christ. As an example I give some citations from a work written by Ḥenanisho' the monk († 7th century)¹²⁹ entitled "Chapters of disputation which are made in brief against those heretics who confess the unity of composition in Christ, by Rabban Ḥenanisho' the monk, sister's son of Mar Elijah who founded Rabban's monastery in Assyria"¹³⁰:

... He who is above all boundary is free from composition, and he who is bound by composition, is bound under boundary. *If the Word was compounded, he was cut off (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ) from the Father, and if he is in his Father, he is not receiving composition ... The birth from the Father is hypostasis (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ) like the Father and the birth from Mary is hypostasis (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ) like her ... He who is different in his properties (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ), is different in his natures, and he who is different in his natures is also separate in his hypostases ... He who ascended upon the clouds shall in like manner come, and the hypostasis of the Word (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ) does not go and come ... It is nonsense to speak of a nature without hypostasis, like a father without a son, for which there is no occasion. If the Word is united with the Father and the body, and with the Father is simple, and with the body is compounded, he is divided (ܩܘܡܘܬܐ) against himself, so that he does not exist as one ...*¹³¹

Returning to the text of our monk, to avoid both heresies, Ḥabīb underlines the importance of recognizing the properties and species as a metaphysical condition, so we can confess two distinct natures in the one Christ without destroying the double consubstantiality. Furthermore, the consubstantiality could be realized just among hypostases of the same nature. Once again, the key to understanding Ḥabīb is Ḥabīb himself; in this case we call his doctrine Trinitarian Christology.

In chapter 2 he rejects the idea that the hypostasis-nature (hypostatized nature) of the Word descended/ascended. (The same Nestorian Ḥenanisho'

¹²⁸ Against Arius: Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 119-120; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 200-202; Against Apollinaris: Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 109; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 183-184.

¹²⁹ On this author, see A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, 134.

¹³⁰ On this work, see Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, xliv-xlvi.

¹³¹ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 101-103; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 170-173.

makes a similar affirmation). Ḥabīb, as we saw in chapter 1, is trying to avoid any suggestion of separation within the Trinity such that it might be construed as a duality¹³².

The solution, surely, is to be found in the Christology of the inhabitation and assumption, the union of two distinct natures in the one Son. The Trinity, in addition, cannot become quaternity because of this union. In chapter 52 our monk has to defend his doctrine from the accusation of quaternity, which leads me to suspect again that for him, the two natures in Christ are not simply natures, but also hypostases (*qnomē*):

52. Then, you wrote: «He who considers a man with God introduces a quaternity according to his teaching, and cancels the Holy Trinity, and he is considered with the pagans». Who, o stupid, understands essence according to enumeration, and introduces another number for humanity, so that [the Trinity] becomes quaternity? The body has been assumed only for perfection, and for the economy. [Thus], the purple [clothes] is not an addition to a king when he is worshiped [while wearing] them — so too the temple [when it is joined] to its inhabitant! In addition, we call the holy bread “the body of the Son of God”. Thus, the body that He assumed from the seed of the house of David is not [considered] an addition, such that there would be two bodies. This, [the holy bread], however, has been established in memory of that one, [the assumed body]. So also the body that was assumed; only for the economy of the Word was it assumed.

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¹³³ ܐܘܨܘܪܐܘܬܐ

This chapter demonstrates why Philoxenus accused Ḥabīb of teaching two hypostases in Christ. We need to read the citation that certainly comes from his *Epistola dogmatica*, as Abramowski noted¹³⁴: «He who considers a man with God introduces a quaternity according to his teaching, and cancels the Holy Trinity, and he is considered with the pagans». For Philox-

¹³² Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 555. This was also a motivation for later Nestorian authors who reject the Trinity becoming a duality; see for example Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 54; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 93.

¹³³ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 28.

¹³⁴ Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 595.

enus then, the terms “God” and “man” in Christ are comprehended not just as two natures but also two hypostases, and this is the reason for the risk of introducing a fourth hypostasis in the Trinity, making it into a quaternity. This means that my reading and interpretation is correct, even if there is no clear mention of “two hypostases” in the citations we have of our monk.

Furthermore, Ḥabīb’s reply to this accusation of quaternity requires a careful reading. The divine essence (ܩܕܫܐܘܬܐ) is not comprehended according to enumeration. To understand such affirmation, we should again read Ḥabīb through Ḥabīb. He emphasized in other chapters that the Trinity cannot receive separation, that would bring about a duality rather than union within the Trinity — as he said, the Trinity is perfect in its essence.

This same concept of perfection is the motive for saying that humanity cannot be considered “a number” within the Trinity, i.e. among the three hypostases. The key to such an idea is the meaning of “number”/“enumeration” (ܩܕܫܐܘܬܐ) in our monk’s thinking. “Enumeration” in Trinity would mean separation and division; despite there are “three” divine hypostases, these are divine, spiritual and immaterial, that is, the rule of “enumeration” cannot be applied to them, since between them there is no division, but rather a perfect union.

Human hypostases, however, being material and corporeal, are numerated. In consequence, the human hypostasis of Christ, the body that was assumed, belongs to a different essence, and cannot be part of the Trinity, which remains Trinity. Affirming further, that this humanity cannot be another number introduced to the Trinity reveals that for Ḥabīb, Christ’s humanity is not just a nature, but also a hypostasis (*qnomā*) — otherwise, he would answer in a different way. Certainly, the concept of consubstantiality must be also taken into consideration in his answer. Enumeration can be applied to hypostases that belong to the same nature — in such case the number does not divide. Humanity, however, cannot be counted as a hypostasis with the three divine hypostases, since it belongs to another nature or essence — thus in this case the number separates.

The analogies that our author gives to sustain his doctrine support my reading, but before I analyze these analogies, it is worth noting that Ḥabīb based his answer on the doctrine developed by Nestorians. We find the same line of thought in Ps.-Nestorius’ 5th/6th century work¹³⁵:

¹³⁵ Reading the anonymous cited by Leontius of Jerusalem, we can note another development and use of the same understanding of “number” and “enumeration”. This supports our opinion that Ḥabīb based his doctrine on Nestorian works which could be common sources for the anonymous work and the Ps.-Nestorian work of the 5th / 6th century: «Εἰ τοὺς δύο υἱοὺς φησὶ, κατὰ φύσιν ἐλέγομεν εἶναι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἢ ἄμφω κατὰ χάριν, ὄντως καλῶς ἂν ἡμῖν δύο λέγειν υἱοὺς συνήγετε, υἱοὺς γὰρ δύο ἢ πλείους τηνικαῦτα λέγει ἡ ἁγία Γραφή, ἡνίκα ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἴσαν πάντες οἱ συναριθμούμενοι καὶ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον καὶ τρόπον, εἴτ’ οὖν φύσει ἢ θέσει ἄμφω

If the Trinity of equal nature is confessed, how is he who *is not of the nature* of the Trinity, *counted* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ) *with the Trinity as fourth*? And if the Trinity is confessed as godhead, how can godhead *be numbered* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ) *with manhood* so that they are four? If the hypostases of the Trinity are everlasting confessed, how is a temporal hypostasis counted together with an eternal one as fourth? ... If the man who was from us, because he was united to God the Word, *made an addition* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ) *within the Trinity*, God the word also because he was united to the man who was from us *made an addition in the enumeration* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ) *of men*. But if it is not possible that God should be added with men *in enumeration* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ), neither is it possible for man to be added to the hypostases of the Trinity *in number* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ)...¹³⁶.

We can find, in addition, this doctrine of Ḥabīb and the one of Ps.-Nestorius being used by the fathers of the synod of 612 to answer the accusation of quaternity¹³⁷. In fact, this doctrine became a source for the later Nestorian authors, as we read again in the work of Rabban Ḥenanisho', the monk we cited earlier:

If every hypostasis that exists is counted with that which is of his kind, it is fitting that he who was born of Mary and circumcised, *should be counted* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ) *with his consubstantial* (being). If every nature which exists is reckoned with its own hypostases, he who was bound in swaddling clothes, and grew in wisdom and in stature, was not of the nature of the Trinity. And if he was not of the Trinity, how is it possible that we should *introduce quaternity* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ)? ... *If the (divine) substance is perfect and complete nature, how can it receive an addition* (ܠܘܕܘܢܐ)?...¹³⁸

In the same understanding we can put Ḥabīb's affirmation that the humanity was assumed just for the sake of perfection and the economy. To

γεγεννημένοι αὐτῷ ὥστε καὶ ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ ἀλλήλων δύνασθαι λέγειν οὕτως γοῦν καὶ εἴρηται ἡ Μήτηρ τῶν δύο υἱῶν Ζιβεδαίου, καὶ ἐν τῇ Γενέσει τῷ δὲ Ἰωσήφ ἐγένοντο υἱοὶ δύο ... ἔνθα οὖν δύο ἢ πολλοὶ υἱοὶ καὶ ἀδελφοὶ εἴρηνται, καὶ πρωτοτόκια καὶ ὑστεροτόκια λέγεται ὡς ἐν Ἡσαῦ καὶ Ἰακώβ εἰ οὖν φύσει τὸν τε Λόγον καὶ τὸν Χριστὸν ἔφημεν ἐκ Θεοῦ, ἢ χάριτι ἄμφω καλῶς ἂν ἐλογίζεσθε ἡμᾶς ἔδει γὰρ καὶ ἀδελφούς λέγεσθαι αὐτοῦς δύο ὄντας, καὶ θάτερον πρωτότοκον καὶ πρεσβύτερον εἶναι, ε/περ μὴ δίδυμοι, εἰ δὲ ὁ μὲν θέσει ὁ δὲ φύσει ἐστὶ, καὶ ἐτέρου μὲν φύσει, ἐτέρου δὲ θέσει ὁ Χριστὸς Υἱὸς, δῆλον ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει χῶραν ἢ τῶν δύο υἱῶν συναρίθμησις; PG 86, 1611 AB. See also PG 86, 1618 C: « Ἄλλ' οὕτε δύο σφραγίδας, φησὶ, λέγομεν τὸ ἀρχέτυπον καὶ τὸν τόπον, ἀλλὰ μίαν, καίτι ἕτερον καὶ ἕτερον εἰδότες τῷ ἀριθμῷ».

¹³⁶ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 95-96; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 160-162.

¹³⁷ In the text of the Synod of the year 612 we find the same words and the same ideas we just presented from the text of Ps.-Nestorius, based, this Synod, for sure on our monk's Christological current, see *Synodicon orientale*, 572-573.

¹³⁸ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 106; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 178-179.

understand our monk's thought we need to remember his doctrine regarding the economy. The body, in fact, was assumed, according to Ḥabīb, for one specific reason, that through it the Word can realize and perfect His salvation. This is what I can understand behind the affirmation that the assumption was for the perfection. This economy is the one salvific action that the Word through the assumed body, i.e. the one Christ, operates together. Finally, the body being assumed for the economy of the Word obligates us not to consider it a fourth hypostasis in Trinity, since the union between them was real, i.e. without confusion or mixture.

Ḥabīb, to make himself clearer, provides two analogies: the one of the king and his purple clothes, and the one of the Eucharistic bread: The king is worshiped as one subject with his clothes; so even if he is wearing his purple clothes, he is not considered two different subjects. We can say the same regarding the Word who inhabited His temple. He, according to Ḥabīb's thought, is worshiped as one Lord. These two natures, then, are united such that they form one subject who is uniquely adored. The function of the first analogy, then, is to underline the uniqueness of the subject, i.e. one Christ, even if He is two natures.

The second analogy has another objective, to support his doctrine of enumeration, explained above. The holy Eucharistic bread is considered the body of the Son of God (ܩܘܡܘܨܐ ܡܝܢ ܩܘܕܫܐ). Ḥabīb, however, rejects considering this holy bread as a second body of the Son of God. Being, in fact, the holy bread established in memory of the assumed body, it does not belong to the same natural category as the assumed body, and thus cannot be counted as an addition, i.e. cannot be enumerated even if it is called the body of the Son of God.

It is noteworthy that this analogy was in frequent use among the Nestorians. We can find it first of all in Theodore of Mopsuestia, then in Nestorius, and in Nestorian works such as the anonymous cited by Leontius of Jerusalem. For Theodore, however, it was used as a sacramental type — we cannot find any relation between the Theodorian usage and the use by our author. In Nestorius we can find the distinction between the bread according to substance, and the bread according to belief¹³⁹, so that the Eucharistic bread is the body of Christ according to belief and not according to substance¹⁴⁰. We find a similar opinion in the anonymous cited by Leontius of Jerusalem, where, however, we have also the mention of enumeration, so that for him the bread of Eucharist is the body of Christ, the Church is the body of Christ, and the crucified is the body of Christ, but even if they all are called body of Christ, they are not to be considered three bodies,

¹³⁹ Cf. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ's Humanity* 82-90.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide*, 449-445.

i.e. they are not of the same category. Rather, they have the relation of the archetype and the type, so enumeration cannot be applied to them¹⁴¹. Again it is clear that our monk had a source that was common to him and to the Nestorian anonymous, since we have some similarities. What could also confirm my opinion is that we find such similarity in Ps.-Nestorius of the 5th / 6th century, as I will show.

Regarding the second analogy, I was not able to find anything similar in Nestorius or in Theodore of Mopsuestia. In Narsai, however, I found the same analogy in a similar context, i.e. the underlining of the uniqueness of the subject and the uniqueness of his adoration¹⁴². Already L. Abramowski noticed the probable relation between Narsai's thought and Ḥabīb's¹⁴³, but I believe that here, as in other cases, our monk's analogy comes not from Narsai or other Theodorian sources, but rather from Ps.-Nestorian sources, and precisely those whom the author of Ps.-Nestorius of the 5th / 6th century also had — in case that this Ps.-Nestorian work was not Ḥabīb's direct source. Let us look at some passages in this work:

Who was he who suffered? We replay again: *The dispensation (Economy) of God the Word ... Thus also is the Eucharist which is given from the altar – in no ordinary manner do we call it that which is in the nature, but body and blood; for when we understand to what honour it has passed in its consecration, it is from there that we seize upon the attribute of its appellation. Therefore we are misunderstood, when they say that thus there are two sons, and that there are four prosopa (sc. In Trinity) – that would be manifestly absurd. For (several) purple robes are not counted in the case of a king because one is worship ... nor is the dispensation (Economy) made distinct in counting from him who dispenses, but there is one honour, one authority and one worship in the visible temple of the revealed invisible one*¹⁴⁴

Having in the same paragraph and context the subject of economy, the analogy of the Eucharist, the one of the purple clothes of a king¹⁴⁵, the quaternity and the uniqueness of the subject in Christ, should demonstrate a

¹⁴¹ «Ὅτι πολλάκις τὰ διάφορα τῆ φύσει ἑνὶ ὀνόματι προσαγορεύεται, καὶ μιᾶς τιμῆς ἡξίωται δύο δὲ οὐδὲ ὄλως νοεῖται, σῶμα γὰρ πιστεύομεν εἶναι τὴν τε Ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ τὸν ἅγιον ἄρτον καὶ τὸ σταυροθὲν καὶ τὸ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο ἕκαστον τοῦτον, καὶ ὁμῶς οὐ διὰ τὸδε τρία σῶματα λέγειν Χριστοῦ εἰσπραττόμεθα», PG 86, 1618 AB.

¹⁴² See S.P. Brock, "The Christology of the Church of the East", in D. Aflingonov – A. Muraviev (ed.), *Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East*, Moscow 1996, 159-179, here 169-170.

¹⁴³ Cf. Abramowski, "From the controversy", 614-615.

¹⁴⁴ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 114-115; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 192-194.

¹⁴⁵ In the same Ps.-Nestorius we again find this analogy in the same way presented by our author; see Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 107; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 180.

direct relation between these two texts, the Ps.-Nestorius' and our monks'. In fact, it is a clear evidence that Ḥabīb is based on Ps.-Nestorian works that should be considered a development of Nestorius' thought¹⁴⁶.

4.3. Final remarks: Two-*qnomē* Christology?

After we present all this analysis of Ḥabīb's Christological thought, can we say that we really find in him a two *qnomē* Christology? In the citations we have from Ḥabīb, we do not notice any expression that affirms openly the two *qnomē* Christology. However, in the interpretation and analysis I made, we see that for our monk the humanity in Christ can be considered and comprehended as one individual, one human being. We saw in addition, that he applied the term hypostasis (*qnomā*) to the Word in a Trinitarian context that has Christological implications, the so called 'Trinitarian Christology'. The expressions "Son of God" and "son of man" seen through the lens of the concept of "name", identified with the expressions "Assumer" and "assumed", "likeness of God" and "likeness of man", seems to suggest two hypostases-natures, or hypostatized natures.

In addition, when he spoke of the Word in Christological context, he certainly intended it as a divine hypostasis, even if he mentioned only the term nature. Referring to humanity in such passages as "temple", "man", or "body", leads us to understand that the humanity should also be considered a human hypostasis — this, in fact, led Philoxenus to accuse our monk of having preached two *qnomē* in Christ. The metaphysical rule of consubstantiality that can be realized among the hypostases of the same nature, the double consubstantiality in Christ which must not be destroyed, his defense of the accusation of quaternity, and his use of the concepts "number" and "enumeration" — all this sustained and supported my interpretation.

I will now revisit the chapter I presented at beginning of my research in Ḥabīb's Christology, in the introduction of this paper, which also supports my understanding of his thought:

34. *Because of the union, in fact, the one who assumed and the one who was assumed is one Christ, one Son, one Jesus, one only begotten, of one worship and one glory; in a few words, He is in everything one, except the nature and hypostasis. If this, therefore, is not preserved, the "as-*

¹⁴⁶ In the first part of the book of *Heraclides*, which L. Abramowski considers to be Ps.-Nestorius, we find the analogies of the purple clothes of the king, and the one of Eucharist; see Nestorius, *Le Livre d'Héraclide*, 31-32, 41-48.

.*sumption* nor the *“being assumed”* would
 be true, neither the *“habitation”* nor the
“temple”, neither the *“sacrifice”* nor *“the*
one who received the sacrifice”, neither
 the *“offer”* nor *“the one who received it”*,
 “nor the true seal of the Testament”, (be-
 cause there would not be the affirmation
 by the blood naturally), nor “the one who
 died for us is died according to the nat-
 ure”. In fact, *He is immortal*, according
 to your word. Death, therefore, would
 not be overcome if the immortal was the
 one who was raised from the dead. The
 resurrection of the one who was raised
 would not be the pattern for the resurrec-
 tion of our nature, because the one who
 died would not be consubstantial with
 our nature, as your impious word says,
 nor would he be «the first fruits of those
 who have fallen asleep»¹⁴⁸ because, in
 this case, he would not have fallen asleep
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 nor would he be «the first fruits of those
 who have fallen asleep»¹⁴⁸ because, in
 this case, he would not have fallen asleep
 like those who [really] fell asleep.

According to Abramowski, in this passage Ḥabīb is emphasizing the oneness of Christ. This “one”, which is the union of the Assumer and the assumed, could be expressed by many terms: “one Son”, “one Jesus”, “one only begotten”, “one worship” and “one glory” — however, it could not be expressed by the terms “nature” and “hypostasis”. In her view, «one nature and one hypostasis are not concepts applicable to the one Christ, they are not a part of all»¹⁴⁹.

Abramowski’s reading of this chapter is plausible, but there is another possible understanding of the affirmations in this chapter. Ḥabīb confesses openly here that Christ is one in everything except the nature (*kyanā*) and the hypostasis (*qnomā*). The uniqueness is the result of the true union, but true union does not destroy the difference of the natures; for this reason we distinguish between the “one who assumed” and the “one who was assumed”, both, however, form the one Christ. If the one subject cannot be expressed by affirming one nature and one hypostasis, as Philoxenus did, it means that nature and hypostasis are not the level where the union was realized. In Christ then, nature and hypostasis are not one, but two.

¹⁴⁷ Ḥabīb, *Tractatus de adversario*, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. I Cor 15,20.

¹⁴⁹ Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 580.

The way Ḥabīb takes pains to show the distinction between the natures indicates that the distinction is very important for him. He underscores the properties of the two natures, the difference between them, and the double consubstantiality. There is no confusion between them because of the real union. Christ, then, is two according to the natures, i.e. each nature manifests its natural properties. On the other hand, nature without hypostasis cannot exist, so each nature being also *qnomā*, manifests its particular properties. As a consequence, in Christ are united the Word as divine hypnotized nature, the “Son of God” on one hand, and on the other, the “son of man”, a single individual person, a human hypostatized nature. As I see it, the whole distinction that Ḥabīb makes in this chapter between “habitation” and “temple”, between “sacrifice” and “the one who received the sacrifice”, between “the offering” and “the one who received it”, reveals this fact for him: that in the one Christ, there are two *kyanē* and two *qnomē*.

This kind of terminological distinction was taken by later Nestorian authors to underline the double hypostases-natures in Christ. I will present here two examples from the work of Shahdost (Eustathius) of Tarihan mentioned above, to demonstrate such fact:

And he was united in one unity and conjunction, the *temple* (ܬܡܠܚܐ) and its *inhabitant* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ), the *taker* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) and the *taken* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ), the *perfecter* and the *perfected*; *man* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) and *God* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) in the one inseparable union, of one prosopon, of one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God — Yesterday, today and for ever¹⁵⁰

Is Christ *simple* or *compounded*? Is he *man* or *God*? Is he *finite* or *infinite*? Is he the *taker* or the *taken*? Is he of the *form of servant* or of the *form of God*? Is he the *sanctifier* or the *sanctified*? Is he the *offering* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) and the *sacrifice* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) or is he the *receiver* (ܕܘܚܘܢܐ) of these things? *High priest* or *God*? *Judge* or *judged*? *Passable* or *impassible*? ...¹⁵¹

It is clear that the unity is to be found in the one subject, that is, the one πρόσωπον of Christ. In our monk, however, the term πρόσωπον (*parṣopā*) does not appear, and we already mentioned the opinion of Abramowski regarding Philoxenus' omission of this term. The same opinion is presented in her analysis of this chapter¹⁵². With all due respect to her opinion and research, my opinion differs from hers. I believe that Philoxenus does not mention this term because Ḥabīb himself does not use it.

¹⁵⁰ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 10; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 11-12.

¹⁵¹ Abramowski – Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection*, II, 28; for the Syriac text see *ibid.*, I, 43.

¹⁵² Cf. Abramowski, “From the controversy”, 580-581, 608.

The possibility of Ḥabīb himself not using the term *parṣopā* enables us to make new considerations regarding his Christology. He, in fact, belonged to the Church of the East. This Church in her official synods, found in the *Synodicon orientale* of the years 544, 554, 576, 598 AD does not use the term *parṣopā* as *terminus technicus* for the subject of union¹⁵³; we find instead in the Christological statements of these synods the terms “Christ”, “Son”, “Son of God”, “Word”. Furthermore, we notice that the synod of the year 554 defended itself against the accusation of quaternity¹⁵⁴. Belonging to this Church and living in the same period of these synods (he wrote his chapters some years before the synod of 544 AD), our monk’s Christology could be considered a normal reflection of the official faith of his Church. He uses for the one subject the title “Christ” and “Son”, applying to it also the concept of the “common name”. His Christology then, is the one of his Church, developed through sources such as Theodore of Mopsuestia, as well as works by Nestorians, so he could answer the new questions posted by his opponent, Philoxenus.

4. Conclusions

In this paper I have tried to give a new reading to the Christology of the East Syrian monk of the end of the 5th century, analyzing Ḥabīb through Ḥabīb himself, and not just through the context of his opponent’s works where the citations are found. His Christology is the one of his community, an East Syriac monastic community, and we take into consideration what we have from texts of this church from the same period.

It is clear that the expressions used, and the way of formulating Christology in Ḥabīb’s monastic community are East Syriac. Already in this time they certainly used the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia as a major source. This explains why A. de Halleux and L. Abramowski considered Ḥabīb to be a Theodorian. In my re-reading of Ḥabīb’s chapters, however, I could find something more than an East Syriac Christology with a Theodorian background. Because of the Christology of his opponent, i.e. the strong Theopaschite and Miaphysite Christology of Philoxenus, this East Syriac monastic community, in the person of the author of these chapters, Ḥabīb, started to elaborate its Christology using other sources besides Theodore. The comparative analysis I applied to the chapters of Ḥabīb helped me see that some Ps.-Nestorian texts were known to this community and

¹⁵³ Cf. Ebeid, “The Christology”, 363-390. It is also notable that the term *parṣopā* is used by the Synods of the years 486, 585, cf. *ibid.*, 359-363, 377-384; even though, its absence in the rest of the Synods demonstrates that this church preferred not to use it in her official documents.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 369-373.

used by them, as well as some of Nestorius' doctrines, probably in oral or written fragmental form, which were circulating among these East Syrian and Theodorian monks. The similarities with the Ps.-Nestorian Greek text of the 5th century, translated into Syriac at the beginning of the 6th century, leads me to maintain that this translation occurred in this monastic community, and Ḥabīb probably used it in its Greek version. It is also clear that this community used other sources, but what is very interesting is that the chapters of Ḥabīb, and the Christology of his current became a source to later Nestorian authors who belonged to the same Church.

L. Abramowski tried to demonstrate two essential things: 1) the accusation of Philoxenus that Ḥabīb's Christology was a two-*qnomē* Christology cannot be true, and 2) Ḥabīb was totally Theodorian in his Christology. Thus, for her, the absence of the technical term *parṣopā* was Philoxenus' omission. After my re-reading of Ḥabīb's chapters, I maintain that the non-use of this term *parṣopā* can be understood as an East Syriac tradition in that period. Thus, regarding the two-*qnomē* Christology, I can only partially agree with Abramowski's opinion.

It is true that we cannot find the expression two-*qnomē* in any of Ḥabīb's chapters we possess today. However, it was demonstrated in my analysis that the term *qnomā* was used in his "Trinitarian Christology", and in one of his Christological affirmations, where he said openly that such a term as well as "nature", cannot express the uniqueness of Christ. This elaboration could be understood as a new interpretation of concepts like "name", "common name", "nature", "hypostasis", "Son of God", "son of man", "God", "man", "divinity", and "humanity". Philoxenus understood his usage of the terms "God" and "man" to connote two hypostases, and this seems to be the reason he accused our monk and his community of quaternity, i.e. the addition of a fourth hypostasis in the Trinity.

This, for me, indicates, finally, that already this community was working out its metaphysical system, but it had not yet matured. In my opinion, Ḥabīb's Christology is to be considered a starting point for Nestorian Christology within the Church of the East, and a changing point of the Theodorian circles of the same Church.

