

Florilegia Syriaca

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Florilegia Syriaca

*Mapping a Knowledge-Organizing Practice in the
Syriac World*

Edited by

Emiliano Fiori
Bishara Ebeid



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Abbreviations

CPG	<i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i>
CSCO	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
ES	<i>Études syriaques</i>
GCS	<i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte</i>
GCS.NF	<i>Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Neue Folge</i>
HCMR	<i>History of Christian-Muslim Relations</i>
JEastCS	<i>Journal of Eastern Christian Studies</i>
LM	<i>Le Muséon</i>
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
OCA	<i>Orientalia Christiana Analecta</i>
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
OLA	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta</i>
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
PdO	<i>Parole de l'Orient</i>
PO	<i>Patrologia Orientalis</i>
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i>
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
VChr	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

Notes on Contributors

Sergey Minov

Research Fellow, Institute for Oriental and Classical Studies, HSE University, Moscow

Yonatan Moss

Leeds Senior Lecturer in Comparative Religion and Director of the Center for the Study of Christianity at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Flavia Ruani

Chargée de recherche, Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, UPR 841, CNRS, Paris-Aubervilliers

Emiliano Fiori

Associate Professor of Early Christian Literature, Ca' Foscari University of Venice; PI of the ERC Starting Grant project "Florilegia Syriaca. The Intercultural Dissemination of Greek Christian Thought in Syriac and Arabic in the First Millennium CE" (FLOS)

Bishara Ebeid

Assistant Professor of Arabic, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Marion Pragt

fwo Post-doc researcher, KU Leuven

Grigory Kessel

Research Associate, Austrian Academy of Sciences / University of Manchester; PI of the ERC Starting Grant project "Transmission of Classical Scientific and Philosophical Literature from Greek into Syriac and Arabic" (HUNAYNNET)

Vittorio Berti

Associate Professor of the History of Christianity, University of Padua

Herman G.B. Teule

Emeritus Professor of Eastern Christianity, Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands; emeritus extraordinary Professor, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven

Patristic Tradition, Trinitarian Doctrine, and Metaphysics in Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī's Polemics against the Melkites

Bishara Ebeid

Introduction

The West Syrian theologian Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī¹ lived between the eighth and ninth centuries. Due to his relative adjective (*nisbah*) “al-Takrītī”, ancient authors and some modern scholars considered him bishop of Tagrit, a city situated in present-day Iraq between Baghdad and Mosul, whose Metropolitans represented the Miaphysite Syrian Patriarch in Mesopotamia from the sixth century on. However, since there is no evidence that he was a priest and/or bishop in the contemporary sources and documents, scholars today assert that he was a layman, probably, as S. Kh. Samir maintains,² a father of a daughter whose name was Rā'īṭah.

Some Armenian chronicles describe Abū Rā'īṭah as a great *vardapet*, a title usually given to apologists and teachers of theology. His being a teacher (in Syriac *mallpōnō*) in his Church, and precisely in the centre of Tagrit, might lead one to see behind his *nisbah* a form of connection with this city as an educational centre. Indeed, in the seventh century the Metropolitan see of Tagrit was

-
- 1 The main detailed study on Abū Rā'īṭah's life and writings is Sandra T. Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'īṭah* (HCMR 4; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 32–56. See also Sandra T. Keating, “Abū Rā'īṭa l-Takrītī,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History Volume 1 (600–900)* (ed. D. Thomas and B. Roggema; HCMR 11; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 567–581, here 567–571; Sandra T. Keating, “Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī's ‘The Refutation of the Melkites concerning the Union [of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ]’ (III),” in *Christians at the Heart of Islamic Rule: Church Life and Scholarship in 'Abbasid Iraq* (ed. D. Thomas; History of Christian Muslim Relations 1; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 39–53, here 39–45 and Sidney H. Griffith, “Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidmah Abū Rā'īṭah, a Christian mutakallim of the first Abbasid century,” *Oriens Christianus* 64 (1980): 161–201, here 164–165.
 - 2 Cf. Samir Kh. Samir, “Création et incarnation chez Abū Rā'īṭa. Étude de vocabulaire,” in *Mélanges en hommage au professeur et au penseur libanais Farid Jabie* (Section des Études Philosophiques et Sociales 20; Beirut: Publications de l'Université libanaise, 1989), 187–236, here 191.

transformed into a Maphrianate,³ and from the ninth to the eleventh century, the golden age of the city, it became one of the most important educational and cultural centres for the West Syrians in Mesopotamia.⁴ Consequently, “al-Takrīṭī”, if it does not allude to Abū Rāʾīṭah’s birthplace, could mean the place where he lived and worked. In my opinion, our author was a collaborator in the educational project of the West Syrian Patriarch Cyriacus (d. 817),⁵ who, as it seems from the canons of the synods he summoned in Beth Bathin (794) and in Ḥarrān (812/3), aimed to improve the intellectual level of the priests and monks of his Church, so that they could polemicise with Chalcedonians (Melkites) and East Syrians.

Indeed, Abū Rāʾīṭah was one of the most prominent apologists and theologians of his time. He belonged to the generation of those Christian authors who felt the necessity to translate, express and even write theology in Arabic, the new *lingua franca*.⁶ As an apologist and a teacher, he was involved in discussions with non-Miaphysite Christians, defending Miaphysite theology, as well as with Muslim scholars, defending Christian doctrine against Islamic accusations, and at the same time encouraging Christians to remain faithful to their religion and not to convert to Islam.⁷

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- 3 On the meaning of Maphrian and Maphrianate, and on Tagrit as the see of the West Syrian Maphrianate in Mesopotamia, see George A. Kiraz, “Maphrian,” in *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, et al. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 264–265.
- 4 For more details on Tagrit as a Christian center, among others, see: Philip Wood, *The Imam of the Christians. The World of Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, c. 750–850* (Princeton, NJ–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021), 121–135; Amir Harrak, “Tagrit,” *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, et al. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 395–396; Jean-Maurice Fiey, “Tagrīt: Esquisse d’histoire chrétienne,” *L’Orient Syrien* 8 (1963): 289–342; Lucas Van Rompay and Andrea B. Schmidt, “Takritans in the Egyptian Desert: The Monastery of the Syrians in the Ninth Century,” *Journal of the Canadian Society of Syriac Studies* 1 (2001): 41–60; Harald Suermann, “Ḥabīb ibn Ḥidma Abū Rāʾīṭa: Portrait eines miaphysitischen Theologen,” *JEastCS* 58 (2006): 221–233, here 225–227; Samir, “Création,” 189–190.
- 5 On this important figure, see Witold Witakowski, “Quryaqos,” *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (ed. S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, et al. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 347–348.
- 6 The fundamental work on Christian Arabic literature remains Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (5 vols.; Studi e Testi 144–148; Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944–1953). On the encounter of Christian Arabs with Muslims and their production in the Arabic language, especially of the first generation, and its content, see Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). See also the first chapter of Bishara Ebeid, *La Tunica di al-Masīḥ. La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell’Oriente nel X e XI secolo* (2nd ed.; Rome: Valore Italiano—Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2019).
- 7 Cf. Keating, *Defending*, 12–19.

Abū Rā'īṭah wrote only in Arabic. His works have mostly an apologetic character and should be considered the starting point of the Miaphysite Christian theological production in the Arabic language.⁸ His writings can be categorised into two main groups: 1) polemics against non-Miaphysite Christians, mainly Chalcedonians, and 2) apologetic works in relation to Muslims.⁹

Scholars of Christian Arabic texts and theology usually tend to seek behind all works of Christian Arabic literature a direct or, in the best cases, indirect relationship with Islam. However, I believe that this approach and method is not always correct and sometimes leads to erroneous conclusions. In fact, many Christian Arabic theological works were written to defend what their authors deemed the proper doctrine against that of other Christians; intra-Christian polemics continued to exist even if Christians in the Middle East had to face the same “new opponent”, Islam. This does not mean that they ignored the “new religion” or that they did not take it into consideration, but, as far as intra-Christian polemics are concerned, one should carefully examine the originality of the theological thought of each author (especially those of the first generation), and at the same time, his dependence on his tradition, and the original theological development he produced. In other words, intra-Christian polemics written under Islam should be read and examined within their Christian tradition, while also taking into consideration, of course, their “new opponent”.¹⁰

Following this tendency, scholars who studied the writings and thought of Abū Rā'īṭah maintain that his main enemies were Muslims, and that, therefore, his writings should be read from this perspective.¹¹ An exception to this

8 For a description of his works and the topics discussed therein, see Keating, *Defending*, 56–65; Keating, “Abū Rā'īṭa”, 571–581. An edition of all his extant writings with German translation was made by Graf in Abū Rā'īṭa, *Writings*. An edition of his writings (supposedly) related to Islam with English translation was made by Keating, *Defending*, 73–357. It must be mentioned that there are partial editions of some of his writings made by Salim Daccache.

9 Cf. Keating, “Habīb”, 40.

10 See, for example, my suggestion in Ebeid, *Tunica*.

11 See, for example, the studies of Griffith, “Ḥabīb”; Harald Suermann, “Der Begriff Sīfah bei Abū Rā'īṭa”, in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid period (750–1258)* (ed. S.Kh. Samir and J.S. Nielsen; Studies in the History of Religion 63; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 157–171; Octavian Mihoc, “Hermeneutische und argumentative Modelle im Traktat über Christologie von Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā'īṭah l-Takrīṭi,” in *Begegnungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Beiträge dialogischer Existenz. Eine freundschaftliche Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Martin Tamcke* (ed. C. Rammelt, C. Schlarb, and E. Schlarb; Theologie 112; Münster: Lit Verlag, 2015), 380–397; Sara L. Husseini, *Early Christian-Muslim Debate on the Unity of God: Three Christian Scholars and Their Engagement with Islamic Thought*

approach is the study by F. Benevich, who tried, more than others,¹² to read this author within his tradition, especially of the sixth and seventh centuries.¹³ Even if the problem of Islam was becoming very serious and the number of conversions was increasing,¹⁴ I am convinced that, at Abū Rā'īṭah's time, Miaphysites still considered the Chalcedonians to be their main opponents. This explains, in fact, why the majority of his writings were written against them. Therefore, when examining his works, one should read Abū Rā'īṭah within his own tradition and the controversial literature thereof.

The following is a list of his polemical writings against the Chalcedonians that have come down to us:¹⁵

- 1) "Introductory letter to Aṣot Smbāt Msaker: Refutation of the Melkites on the Union [of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ]".¹⁶
- 2) "Second letter to Aṣot Smbāt Msaker: Evidence for the Threefold Praise of the One Who was Crucified for Us".¹⁷
- 3) "Refutation of the Melkites".¹⁸

(9th Century C.E.) (HCMR 21; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 77–104, 193–198; Keating, "Habīb," Sandra T. Keating, "The Rationality of Christian Doctrine: Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī's Philosophical Response to Islam," in *Heirs of the Apostles: Studies on Arabic Christianity in Honor of Sidney H. Griffith* (ed. D. Bertaina et al.; Arabic Christianity 1; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 157–178, and Sandra T. Keating, "An Early List of Šifāt Allāh in Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī's 'First Risāla on the Holy Trinity,'" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 36 (2009): 339–355. In another paper, I examine Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian apologetical doctrine and its relationship with the Islamic doctrine on the divine attributes, and how reading our author within the context of his tradition and taking into consideration all his writings in this regard leads to a more correct understanding of his view on the hypostases and the attributes, see Bishara Ebeid, "Abū Rā'īṭah al-Takrītī's Trinitarian Doctrine: Between Miaphysite Tradition and Islamic Challenge," *Adamantius* 27 (2021): 6–28.

- 12 One can find a similar approach in Keating, "Rationality." However, as I shall demonstrate in this chapter, her study and analysis of Abū Rā'īṭah within the context of his tradition was not deep, and therefore, in my opinion, she came to some incorrect conclusions.
- 13 One of those scholars that tried to read some of Abū Rā'īṭah's thought within the context of his Miaphysite tradition was Fedor Benevich, "Christliche Trinitätslehre vor dem Islam: Ein Beispiel von Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī," *Oriens Christianus* 96 (2012): 149–164.
- 14 See, for example, Keating's opinion in "Habīb," 40.
- 15 The English titles given are based on Keating, *Defending*, 71–72, with some slight changes.
- 16 It is the letter that Abū Rā'īṭah gave to Nonnus of Nisibis to be read by Aṣot Smbāt Msaker before the disputation with Abū Qurrah, Text number III according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 65–72 (text).
- 17 It is the second letter that Abū Rā'īṭah wrote to Aṣot Smbāt Msaker after the disputation between Nonnus of Nisibis and Abū Qurrah, where he refutes in detail the argumentations of the Melkite Abū Qurrah. Text number IV according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 73–87 (text).
- 18 Probably, it is a treatise that Abū Rā'īṭah wrote after the first two, since in the manuscripts

- 4) "Evidence for the Threefold Praise for the One Crucified for Us".¹⁹
- 5) "From the 'Book of the Confession of the Fathers'".²⁰
- 6) "Christological Discussion".²¹

Abū Rā'īṭah's argumentation against the Chalcedonian doctrine is based on: 1) the Bible, by mentioning some biblical verses and giving them an exegesis that demonstrates the wrong doctrine of the Melkites and the Orthodoxy of the Miaphysites;²² 2) the faith of the three Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381) and Ephesus (431);²³ 3) a correct use of metaphysics, by explaining how the metaphysical terms used in the Christian doctrine should be understood; 4) rational argumentations, syllogisms and analogies based on the tradition of the Syriac Aristotelian culture,²⁴ in which Abū Rā'īṭah probably shared,²⁵ and on the way of making Kalām, mainly of the Mu'tazilites,²⁶ the most influential Islamic school at the time of the author;²⁷ 5) liturgical

it is considered as his fourth letter. Text number VII according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 105–130 (text).

- 19 This treatise was probably written after the first two, and I think it was written before the third work in our list here. Text number V according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 88–93 (text).
- 20 Some quotations found in an Arabo-Coptic Florilegium called *I'tirāf al-Ābā'* (the Confession of the Fathers, cf. Georg Graf, "Zwei dogmatische Florilegien der Kopten. B. Das Bekenntnis der Väter," *OCP* 3 (1937): 345–402, here 398–399). Text number IX according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 160–161 (text).
- 21 It is a Christological disputation that, according to one tradition, occurred between Abū Rā'īṭah, Abū Qurrah, and an East Syrian Metropolitan. Text number XI according to Graf's edition, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 163–165 (text).
- 22 See, for example, how he uses the Bible in his anti-Melkite writings, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 90–91, 124–125 (text). See also Sandra T. Keating, "The Use and Translation of Scripture in the Apologetic Writings of Abū Rā'īṭa al-Takrītī," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*. (ed. D. Thomas; HSCMR 6; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 257–274; Mihoc, "Hermeneutische," 383–389; Suermann, "Ḥabīb," 230.
- 23 See, for example, Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 67–68, 75, 79 (text).
- 24 Cf. John W. Watt, "The Syriac Aristotelian Tradition and the Syro-Arabic Baghdad Philosophers," in *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond. Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries* (ed. D. Janos; Islamic History and Civilization 124; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 7–43.
- 25 See Keating, "Rationality," 158; Suermann, "Ḥabīb," 227–228, 230–231, 232; Mihoc, "Hermeneutische," 392–397.
- 26 Cf. Albert N. Nader, *Le système philosophique des Mu'tazila (Premiers penseurs de l'Islam)* (Recherches 3; Beyrouth: Les Lettres orientales, 1956). See also Montgomery W. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), 209–250; Montgomery W. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology. An Extended Survey* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 46–55.
- 27 Cf. Watt, *Formative*, 221. See also chapters 8 and 9 of Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (London: Phoenix, 2005).

elements taken from the Melkite tradition to demonstrate that their liturgical texts contradict their own doctrine;²⁸ and 6) the patristic tradition, by quoting, directly and indirectly, passages by Church Fathers that confirm the Orthodoxy of the doctrine of his Church.

One of the aims of this chapter is to understand why Abū Rā'īṭah considers problematic the Trinitarian doctrine of the Melkites, and why discussing with the Melkites concerning the Trinitarian dogma does not necessarily mean that, in his mind, or among his audience, there were Muslims or Christians recently converted to Islam, as some scholars maintain.²⁹ To realise this goal I shall analyse and examine two of Abū Rā'īṭah's works: his *Refutation of the Melkites* and his *Introductory letter to Aṣot Smbāt Msaker*,³⁰ where he refutes the Melkite Trinitarian doctrine. My analysis will demonstrate that, for Abū Rā'īṭah, the error of the Melkites is to be identified in their metaphysical system, developed at and after the Council of Chalcedon (451), which, once applied to their Trinitarian doctrine, created risky consequences.

For those who study the development of the theological thought of the Miaphysites from the sixth to the eighth century, it is known that this polemical element is not an innovation by Abū Rā'īṭah.³¹ In their controversial writings against Chalcedonians and "Nestorians", the Miaphysites accused both of having an erroneous understanding and use of metaphysical concepts such as "substance", "hypostasis" and "person"; for this reason, they maintained, the Trinitarian doctrine of both was corrupted.³² The Miaphysites tried to

28 Such element was treated in his second letter to the Armenian ruler on the Trisagion; Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 80–83 (text). See also Suermann, "Ḥabīb," 232; Bishara Ebeid, "Miaphysite Syriac Patristic Florilegia and Theopaschism: Abū Rā'īṭah's Defence of the Christological Trisagion Hymn," *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 14 (2021): 231–269.

29 See the last section of this chapter where I enter in dialogue with S. Keating and her opinion in this regard.

30 For methodological reasons, I will follow Graf's edition.

31 Regarding this, see Bishara Ebeid, "Metaphysics of Trinity in Graeco-Syriac Miaphysitism: A Study and Analysis of the Trinitarian Florilegium in MS BL Add. 14532," *Studia graeco-arabica* 11 (2021): 83–128.

32 On this issue, among others, see Roberta C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies. Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976); André de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbug. Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Universitas Catholica Louvaniensis. Dissertationes ad gradum magistri in Facultate Theologica vel in Facultate Iuris Canonici consequendum conscriptae III.8. Louvain: Imprimerie orientaliste, 1963); David A. Michelson, *The Practical Christology of Philoxenos of Mabbug* (Oxford Early Christian Studies; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); David A. Michelson, "Philoxenos of Mabbug: A Cappadocian Theologian on the Banks of the Euphrates?" in *Motions of Late Antiquity: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Society in Honour of Peter Brown* (ed. J. Kreiner and H. Reimitz; Cultural Encounters in Late

find proofs for their doctrine in the patristic tradition—in fact, the *consensus patrum* was used by each Christian confession as a proof of proper Orthodoxy.³³ One of the consequences of this method was the compilation of patristic and dogmatic florilegia.³⁴

As we shall see, Abū Rāʾīṭah also considers the consensus with the Church Fathers as evidence for the correctness of his Trinitarian and Christological doctrine. Unfortunately, scholars who studied his writings did not show a real interest in his patristic background and how he used the Church Fathers and the patristic material; they only limited themselves to mentioning his use of some Fathers, their names and the reasons that led him to refer to them.³⁵ As already mentioned, the main aim of this chapter is to fill this gap in the scholarship on Abū Rāʾīṭah's thought and writings. The patristic tradition in his Christological polemical writings against the Melkites was studied and analysed in another study of mine;³⁶ in the present chapter, I will examine his direct and indirect use of the Church Fathers in his Trinitarian and metaphysical polemics against the Melkites. Furthermore, my analysis shall demonstrate his close relationship to the Miaphysite movement of compilation of patristic florilegia against various heresies. It is necessary, however, to start with a summary of Abū Rāʾīṭah's arguments against the Trinitarian doctrine of the Melkites and their metaphysical system after Chalcedon.

Antiquity and the Middle Ages 20; Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 151–174 and Iain R. Torrance, *Christology after Chalcedon. Severus of Antioch and Sergius the Monophysite* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1988).

33 Cf. Franz-Josef Niemann, “Consensus patrum,” *Religion Past and Present* (2011). Last retrieved 16/10/2020. Online http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_03210. See also Patrick T.R. Gray, “The Select Fathers’: Canonizing the Patristic Past,” *SP* 23 (1989): 21–36.

34 On the Miaphysite florilegia, see John W. Watt, “Rhetorical Education and Florilegia in Syriac,” in *Les auteurs syriaques et leur langue* (ed. M. Farina; ES 15; Paris: Geuthner, 2018), 95–110. See also Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity,” 99–128. In addition, it must not be forgotten that patristic and dogmatic florilegia were also used by Chalcedonians in the same way and for the same aim, cf. Marcel Richard, “Les Florilèges diphysites du v^e et du vi^e siècle,” in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (vol. 1; ed. A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1951), 721–748 and Marcel Richard, “Notes sur les florilèges dogmatiques du v^e et du vi^e siècle,” in *Actes du vi^e Congrès International d’Études Byzantines (Paris 27 Juillet–2 Août 1948)* (Vol. 1; Paris: Sorbonne, École des hautes études, 1950), 307–318.

35 See, for example, Keating, “Rationality,” 158, 167; Keating, “Habib,” 50–52 and Suermann, “Der Begriff,” 169.

36 See Ebeid, “Miaphysite,” 245–261.

1 Abū Rā'īṭah's Metaphysical System and His Trinitarian Doctrine

In the introduction to his *Refutation of the Melkites*, Abū Rā'īṭah presents the main metaphysical issues that one should take into consideration when discussing with Melkites:

What made Melkites describe that the nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is something different from them [i.e., the three hypostases], and that it exists in its perfection in each one of them without being [identified] with them, or they [identified] with it? Is it possible that the nature of God is not his hypostases and his hypostases are not his nature, as the Melkites described? What are the nature and the essence, what is the difference between them, and according to what definition should one use each of them? Is there [any] existent [entity] except the substance and the accident? What is a hypostasis, that is, a person? What is the relationship between the property and the thing to which it belongs: does it complete it or indicate it? How was it possible for them [the Melkites] to confirm that Christ (may he be praised!) is one hypostasis, after having affirmed that in him there are two natures, two wills and two actions? Why did they refuse to describe him one nature and one hypostasis from two natures, divinity and humanity, after they have been united and combined?³⁷

According to Abū Rā'īṭah, who follows his Miaphysite polemical tradition against Chalcedonians, the main problem for the Melkites is the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon.³⁸ He specifies that their Christology obligated them

³⁷ "ما دعا الملكية ان تصف ان كان الاب والابن والروح القدس شيء غيرها موجود بكاله في كل واحد منها من غير ان يكون إياها ولا هي إياه. وهل يجوز ان يكون كان الله غير اقاتيه واقاتيه غير كانه كما وصفت الملكية. وما الان الأشياء الكيان والذات. وما الفرق بينهما وعلى كم نحو يقال كل واحد منهما. وهل من الموجود غير جوهر او عرض. وما القنوم أى الشخص. وما موقع الخاصة من الذى هي له خاصة مكلمة هي له ام دالة عليه. وكيف جاز عندهم ايجابهم المسيح سبحانه قنوماً واحداً من بعد ما الحقوا له وفيه كيانين ومشيتين وفعلين. وما علة امتناعهم (؟) من غير ان يصفوا كياناً واحداً وقنوماً واحداً من كيانين اللاهوت والناسوت من بعد اتحادهما واجتماعهما"

Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 105 (text). The English translation is mine.

³⁸ Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 78–79.

to modify their metaphysical system, and therefore, concepts like nature, substance, hypostasis, person, and property took on a new use and understanding, and the relationship between these metaphysical categories received a new definition. Following his Miaphysite tradition, Abū Rā'īṭah accuses his opponents of holding a dualistic Christology and considers them Nestorians,³⁹ since the content of their Christology is similar to that of Nestorius and his followers, but with a different use of terminology.⁴⁰ According to his point of view, the Melkites could not affirm that in Christ there are two natures/substances and at the same time that he is one hypostasis, without in fact distinguishing between nature/substance and hypostasis/person, and considering them as two different metaphysical categories.⁴¹ Such remark, once applied to the Trinitarian doctrine, leads one to maintain that the three divine hypostases, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are something different from the divine nature and substance that they share.⁴² As a consequence, such a doctrine makes the Trinity become a quaternity (i.e. three hypostases and one substance).⁴³ Abū Rā'īṭah probably had in mind some Chalcedonian authors, who, in their attempt to polemicise against Tritheism, proposed a 'Tetradite' solution like, as Dirk Krausmüller has demonstrated, the one of Anastasius of Sinai, who came to the point of considering the common substance as a quasi-hypostasis added as fourth to the three hypostases of the Trinity.⁴⁴

Abū Rā'īṭah is well aware that Melkites could easily apply his same rational demonstration to the Trinitarian doctrine of his own Church, maintaining that, for Miaphysites, the three divine hypostases are three gods because of the Miaphysite identification of nature/substance and hypostasis.⁴⁵ His solution is to confess and affirm that: 1) God is the three hypostases and the three hypostases are God; 2) the three hypostases share all the natural and substantial characteristics of the Godhead; 3) the three hypostases are distinguished, each through a property which cannot be shared neither with the other hypostases nor with the substance itself; and 4) the number three is not applied to the substance, which remains one, but to the hypostases and the properties.⁴⁶

39 For this accusation against Nestorians by Miaphysites, like Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug, see Ebeid, *Tunica*, 279.

40 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 106–108 (text).

41 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 108 (text).

42 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 108–111 (text).

43 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 111–113 (text).

44 See Dirk Krausmüller, "Under the Spell of John Philoponus: How Chalcedonian Theologians of the Late Patristic Period Attempted to Safeguard the Oneness of God," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 68 (2017): 625–649, here 641–643.

45 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 113 (text).

46 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 113–124 (text).

Indeed, the main problem among Miaphysites during the sixth and seventh centuries was the discrepancy between the metaphysical systems they used in their Trinitarian and Christological doctrines respectively. On the one hand, they had to hold to their Miaphysite Christology, which implied the coincidence of nature/substance and hypostasis;⁴⁷ on the other hand, however, they

47 The Miaphysite Christology, developed against the Chalcedonian and the 'Nestorian' Christologies, created some problems of metaphysical nature to the same Miaphysites. Affirming that Christ is one composite substance/nature of two substances/natures, and that he is one hypostasis/person led Miaphysites to identify in some way, and only in their Christology but not in their Trinitarian doctrine, two metaphysical categories: on the substance/nature coinciding with hypostasis/person. When, in the second half of the sixth century, this identification was applied to the Trinitarian doctrine by some Miaphysite intellectuals and theologians, such as John Philoponus (d. ca. 570), it caused the emergence of a Trinitarian doctrine where the three divine persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, were considered three single divine natures/substances. The followers of these doctrine were called Tritheites by their opponents, and their doctrine was called Tritheism. On Tritheism, among others, see Alois Grillmeier, "The Tritheist Controversy in the Sixth Century and its Importance in Syriac Christology," in *Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol. 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604). Part 3: The Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch from 451 to 600* (ed. A. Grillmeier et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 268–280; Theresia Hainthaler, "John Philoponos, Philosopher and Theologian in Alexandria," in *Christ in Christian Tradition. Vol. 2: From the Council of Chalcedon (451) to Gregory the Great (590–604). Part 4: The Churches of Alexandria with Nubia and Ethiopia after 451* (ed. A. Grillmeier and T. Hainthaler; London: A.R. Mowbray, 1996), 107–146; Johannes Zachhuber, "Personhood in Miaphysitism. Severus of Antioch and John Philoponus," in *Personhood in the Byzantine Christian Tradition: Early, Medieval, and Modern Perspectives* (ed. A. Torrance and S. Paschalides; New York: Routledge 2018), 29–43 and Johannes Zachhuber, *The Rise of Christian Theology and the End of Ancient Metaphysics: Patristic Philosophy from the Cappadocian Fathers to John of Damascus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 145–169. This tritheistic doctrine was rejected by most Miaphysites, and it was also anathematized through synods and by hierarchs. During this controversy over Tritheism, another Trinitarian controversy arose between two Miaphysite hierarchs: Damian of Alexandria (d. 605) and Peter of Callinicum, the patriarch of Antioch (d. 591). Without entering into much detail, both hierarchs, while combating Tritheism, tried to give alternative comprehensions of how the one God is also three hypostases: Damian distinguished in an extreme way the hypostasis from the substance, identifying the hypostasis with the property (idiom); whereas Peter considered each hypostasis, taken and seen individually, as a concrete and perfect substance. Consequently, the two hierarchs disagreed, and each considered the other's doctrine erroneous. For the controversy and the doctrines of Damian and Peter see, among others, Albert van Roey, "Le traité contre les Trithéites (CPG 7245) de Damien d'Alexandrie," in *Philohistôr: Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii* (ed. A. Schoors and P. van Deun; OLA 60; Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 229–250; Dirk Krausmüller, "Properties Participating in Substance: the Trinitarian Theology of Severus of Antioch and Damian of Alexandria," *Journal of Late Antique Religion and Culture* 12 (2018): 15–29; Rifaat Y. Ebied, "Peter of Anti-

felt the necessity to find the correct definition for the metaphysical terms they used, in order to ensure that: 1) Christ is the incarnate God; 2) He is a perfect God and perfect man, which means 3) that neither the three divine persons were all together incarnate, nor the humanity in Christ was the totality of the human hypostases; 4) He is one substance from two, and at the same time he is also one hypostasis; and finally 5) the Trinity is not a Tritheism, that is, the three divine hypostases are one Godhead and the one Godhead is the three divine hypostases. In fact, after having faced internal Trinitarian problems (the dispute on Tritheism) because of the peculiar metaphysics of their Christology, they needed to (re)formulate and produce a (new) and unified metaphysical system for both doctrinal levels, Trinitarian and Christological, and to use it against Chalcedonians and Nestorians. This metaphysical system, in addition, had to be based on Church Fathers whose authority was undiscussable. I am convinced that the Miaphysites realised this goal through the compilation of patristic dogmatic florilegia, especially those that deal with Trinitarian topics, where they had to (re)define the different metaphysical concepts and categories and the relationships between them. If their Christology was called Miaphysite, the (re)formulation of their Trinitarian doctrine through this new metaphysical system should be called “Miaphysite Trinitarian doctrine”.⁴⁸

In the collection of Syriac Miaphysite patristic florilegia of the British Library, four manuscripts preserve a Trinitarian florilegium with metaphysical content. This florilegium is preserved in two versions, shorter and longer. The shorter version, which I have already analysed according to one manuscript,⁴⁹ contains 65 chapters and is preserved in MSS BL Add. 14532, fol. 94^v–133^v; BL Add. 14533, fol. 73^r–89^r; and BL Add. 14538, fol. 119^v–133^v. The longer version contains 108 chapters and is preserved in MS *London, British Library* Add. 12155, fol. 2^v–32^v. In our ERC project “FLOS. Florilegia Syriaca”, we aim to provide a critical edition of both versions. In addition, I aim to examine the metaphysical and theological content of the longer version in a future study.⁵⁰

och and Damian of Alexandria: The End of a Friendship,” in *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (ed. R.H. Fischer; Chigaco: The Lutheran School of Theology, 1977), 277–282; Rifaat Y. Ebied, “Peter of Callinicus and Damian of Alexandria: The Tritheist Controversy of the Sixth Century,” *PdO* 35 (2010): 181–191 and Zachhuber, *The Rise*, 170–183. See also Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity”, 88–98.

48 See the analysis of one of these Trinitarian florilegia in Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity”, 99–128.

49 See Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity”, 99–119.

50 It must be mentioned that Albert van Roey has already examined the patristic quotation in the first part of this florilegium’s long version, that is, the first 29 chapters, see Albert van

the three hypostases.⁵⁶ In addition, he provides the reader with a patristic florilegium, that is, patristic quotations that, according to him, demonstrate the Orthodoxy of the Miaphysite doctrine in question. Before passing to the florilegium, Abū Rā'īṭah introduces it and affirms:

after the testimonies of Moses, we must follow the sayings of the holy [and] pure Fathers who were columns and fortifications for the Church through the way they polemicised against the apostates from the religion of Christ ...⁵⁷

After this introduction, where our author declares the importance of the patristic tradition for the correctness of the faith, he starts quoting some Church Fathers as follows.⁵⁸

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium⁵⁹

1 قال ديوناسيوس الطاهر تلميذ بولس وحسبه ذلك من
الفضل والشرف في ميمر له يقال له نعت الاسماء الالهيات
رداً منه على الجحاد. قال

Dionysius the pure, the disciple of Paul—which gave him superiority and honour—, said, confuting the heretics, in a discourse called the *Description of the divine names*:

ليست رئاسة اللاهوت كلها حياة فكيف يحق الكلمة
الطاهرة اذ وصفت بانه كما ان الاب يقيم الموتى ويحييها
كذلك والابن يحيي من يشاء. وايضاً المحيي الروح.

Is not the whole of the most high Godhead life? How right, then, is the holy word when it claims: “Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, the Son also gives life to whom he wills”. And also: “who gives life is the Spirit”.

Καὶ εἰ μὴ ὄλην εἶναι φασὶ τὴν ζωαρχίαν, πῶς ἀληθῆς ὁ φήσας ἱερός λόγος: “Ὡσπερ ὁ πατήρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ ζωοποιεῖ, οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱός, οὗς θέλει, ζωοποιεῖ” καὶ ὅτι “Τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ ζωοποιούν”;⁶⁰

56 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 124–125 (text).

57 “وقد ينبغي ان تتبع شهادات موسى قول الإباء القديسين الذين كانوا للبيعة أعمدة ودعائم بما جاهدوا الخائدين عن دين المسيح ...”

Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 125 (text). The English translation is mine.

58 However, note that Graf's German translation of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings had already identified some of these quotations; see Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 152–158.

59 Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 125–130. The English translation is mine. Please note that I do not agree with some passages of Graf's reading and his German translation.

60 Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, II.1, 123, 6–8.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

2

ومن قوله And from his saying:

فانه وان كانت النعوت على كل موصوفة وحدانية وثلاثية فليست كالحداية ولا الثلاثية المذكورة منّا او من أحد من الموجودة وثلاثا نصف توحيدها المعتلى على كل نصدق ذلك وولود اللاهوت يصف المعتلى على الاسم والجوهر في نعت الالهى.

Although the descriptions 'uniqueness' and 'trinity' are said on everything about which such statement can be made, it is not like the 'uniqueness' and 'trinity' which are stated by us or by someone else among the existents. And even if we do not describe [the Trinity's] singleness, which is above all, we accept [all] this and [even] the generation of the Godhead to describe the divine, the above-name and the [above-]substance.

Διὸ καὶ μονὰς ὑμνουμένη καὶ τριάς ἢ ὑπὲρ πάντα θεότης οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδὲ μονάς, οὐδὲ τριάς ἢ πρὸς ἡμῶν ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν ὄντων διεγνωσμένη, ἀλλὰ ἵνα καὶ τὸ ὑπερνωμένον αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ θεογόνον ἀληθῶς ὑμνήσωμεν, τῇ τριαδικῇ καὶ ἐνιαίᾳ θεωνυμίᾳ τῆν ὑπερώνυμον ὀνομάζομεν, τοῖς οὖσι τὴν ὑπερούσιον.⁶¹

Comment on the previous quotations:

أفلا تنظرون في قول هذا الاب الفاضل الواصف بأن رئاسة اللاهوت كلها حياة اى الاقانيم الثلاثة ويستشهد بها. فلولا ان الاقانيم هي اللاهوت كيف كان يستشهد بان رئاسة اللاهوت كلها حياة لان الاب والابن والروح القدس كلها حياة. وايضاً ان اللاهوت المعتلية على كل ثلاثة اذ هي لديهم شيء اخر غير الاقانيم.

Don't you see in the saying of this virtuous father that he describes the whole of the most high Godhead, that is, the three hypostases, as life and he affirms it? If the hypostases were not the Godhead, how could he affirm that the whole of the most high Godhead is life, since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all life? And moreover, how the Godhead [who is] above all would be three if they [*scil.* the Melkites] affirm that it is something else than the hypostases?

3

ثم ان اغريغوريوس ذا العجائب يقول في ميمرله كتبه في الايمان ذات الاجزى قال:

And Gregory Thaumaturgus says in his discourse that he wrote on the *Faith according to parts*:

يا واصفي اللاهوتية الثلاثية لاهوتا واحدا وربوية واحدة لأن اب الرب علم لم يزل مولودا منه ومثال الرب الروح كذلك والاب رب والابن اله. وقد قيل في الله انه روح.

O you who describe the divine Trinity one Godhead and one lordship, [it is so] because the Father of the Lord is cause; He [the Lord] is always generated from Him; and the image of the Lord is the Spirit as well. The Father, then, is Lord and the Son is God. It is also said on God that He is Spirit.

Λέγομεν δὲ καὶ μίαν θεότητα καὶ μίαν κυριότητα καὶ μίαν ἀγιότητα τὴν τριάδα· ὅτι τοῦ πνεύματος ὁ κύριος· οὕτως γὰρ καὶ ὁ πατήρ κύριος καὶ ὁ υἱός θεός καὶ περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἴρηται ὅτι "πνεῦμα ὁ θεός".⁶²

61 Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, XIII,3, 229, 6–10.

62 Ps.-Gregory Thaumaturgus, *On Faith in Parts*, 176, 13–18.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

Διαδραμῶν τὰ σύμπαντα, καὶ ὑπὲρ πάσαν τὴν κτίσιν
ἀνανεύσας τοῖς λογισμοῖς, καὶ ἐπέκεινα τούτων τὸν
νοῦν ἀνυψώσας, ἐνόησον τὴν θεῖαν φύσιν· ἐστῶσαν,
ἄτρεπτον, ἀναλλοίωτον, ἀπαθὴ, ἀπλήν, ἀσύνητον, ἀδι-
αίρετον, φῶς τον, ἀπαθὴ, ἀπλήν, ἀσύνητον, ἀδιαίρετον,
φῶς ἀπρόσιτον, δύναμιν ἄφατον, μέγεθος ἀπεριόρι-
στον.⁶⁷

Ἐκεῖ Πατὴρ καὶ Υἱὸς καὶ ἄγιον Πνεῦμα, ἡ ἄκτιστος
φύσις.⁶⁸

- 9 : **ومن قول في ميمرله ثاني ردأ على انوميوس الاراطيق. قال:** And from his saying in his second discourse
Against Eunomius the heretic, he said:

ان الابن موصوف مثالا للاب مولودا منه لانه شعاع مجد
الله وقوة وحكمة وير لا كالمكتسب ولا كالمملوك لا بل
جوهر حي فاعل.

The Son is described an image of the Father gen-
erated of Him, since He is the beam of God's
glory, [His] power, wisdom, and righteousness,
not like an acquired or possessed thing, but [as]
a living [and] active substance.

Εἰκῶν δὲ εἴρηται καὶ ἔστιν ὁ Υἱὸς γεννητὴ, καὶ ἀπαύγα-
σμὰ ἐστι τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ σοφία, καὶ δύναμις,
καὶ δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ, οὐχ ὡς ἕξις, οὐδὲ ὡς ἐπιτηδειό-
της, ἀλλ' οὐσία ζῶσα καὶ ἐνεργῆς.⁶⁹

Comment on the previous quotations

أفلا تعتبرون من قول هذا الحكيم الطاهر ان كان الله المتفاوت من الخلق ادراكه المعتلى على كل شيء هو الاب والابن
والروح القدس.

Don't you learn a lesson from the saying of this pure wise [father], [who says] that the nature of God,
which is inconsistent with the comprehension of the creatures and is over everything, is the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Spirit?

- 10 **ومن قول في رسالة كانت منه الى اغريغوريس اخيه في
فرق ما بين الجوهر والاقنوم قال:** And from a saying in a letter he [sent] to his
brother Gregory on the *Difference between sub-
stance and hypostasis*, he said:

لا يعجب من وصفنا الله بعينه متوحدا
Do not be surprised if we describe God Himself
united

67 Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, *Homily on Faith*, PG 31: 465, 28–33.

68 Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, *Homily on Faith*, PG 31: 465, 40–41.

69 Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, Book II, Section 17, 5–9 (PG 29: 605, 21–25).

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

والثامًا متفرقا. and separated conjunction.

Μὴ θαυμάσης δὲ εἰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ συνημμένον καὶ διακεκριμένον εἶναι.⁷⁰

καὶ διακεκριμένην συνάφειαν.⁷¹

11 من قوله: From his saying:

من انه جهة مدروكة في الحواس جاز لنا ان نصف بتفهم
منا متفرقا متوحدا جميعا معا.

Because there is a side that can be comprehended with the senses, we are allowed to describe [Him], with awareness, to be, at the same time, both separated and united.

Πόθεν οὖν φαμεν τὸ διακεκριμένον ἅμα καὶ συμφυῆς ἐκ τῶν κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἡμῖν προφαινομένων ἀναλογίζεσθαι;⁷²

12 ثم ان اغريغوريس اسقف نيسيس الطاهر في ميمر كتبه
رد فيه على انوميس. قال:

And Gregory the bishop of Nyssa the pure, in a discourse he wrote to refute Eunomius, said:

واذا لله اسماء كثيرة مسمى بها في القصص والنبوات
والناموس وفض ربنا المسيح كلها اقتصارا منه على المعرفة
اكثر ذلك الايمان وامر ان يسمى باسم الاب والابن
والروح القدس المرفوع على فهم الذي هو بحق الذي هو
واحد وغير واحد اعني الواحد في الجوهر. وكذلك اقترض
علينا ان نصمد له باسم واحد. فاما الخواص الدالة على
الاقانيم فنقسم. وذلك الايمان باب وابن وروح قدس فهو
منقسم بلا تباين ومتوحد بلا اختلاط.

While God has many names with which he is named in the stories [i.e., historical books], in the prophecies, and in the law, our Lord Christ has dissolved them all limiting himself to making known the most important thing, namely faith. He commanded that He [God] should be named with the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which is enough to understand Him [God], i.e. who truly is, who is one and [at the same time] not one: I mean, one in substance (and therefore He ordered us to give Him one name); while for the properties that indicate the hypostases, He is divided, and therefore the faith is in a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is indeed divided without separation and united without mixture.

πολλῶν γὰρ ὄντων καὶ ἄλλων ὀνομάτων, οἷς τὸ θεῖον διασημαίνεται ἐν ἱστορίᾳ τε καὶ προφητείᾳ καὶ νόμῳ, πάντα καταλιπὼν ὁ δεσπότης Χριστὸς ὡς μᾶλλον ἡμᾶς προσάγεσθαι δυναμένης τῆ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος πίστει ταύτας τὰς φωνὰς παρατίθεται, ἀρκεῖν ἀποφηνάμενος παραμένειν ἡμᾶς τῆ τοῦ πατρὸς τε καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ

70 Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 38, Section 4, 87–88.

71 Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 38, Section 4, 90–91.

72 Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 38, Section 5, 5–7.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

- ἀγίου πνεύματος κλήσει εἰς κατανόησιν τοῦ ὄντως ὄντος, ὅπερ καὶ ἔν ἐστι καὶ οὐχ ἔν. τῷ μὲν γὰρ λόγῳ τῆς οὐσίας ἔν ἐστι, διὸ καὶ εἰς ἔν ὄνομα βλέπειν ὁ δεσπότης ἐνομοθέτησε· τοῖς δὲ γνωριστικοῖς τῶν ὑποστάσεων ἰδιώμασιν εἰς πατρός τε καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ πνεύματος ἀγίου πίστιν διήρηται, ἀδιαστάτως τε μεριζόμενον καὶ ἀσυγχύτως ἐνούμενον.⁷³
- 13 ومن قوله في ميمرله موصوف بالمواعظ، قال: And from his saying in a discourse characterised as *Catechesis*, he said:
- ان يكون معدود مفرد عن العدد موجود منقسم مدرك بالوحدة مابين بالاشخاص غير منقسم في الطبيعة. [It is possible] that something can be counted and excluded from count, exist as divided [but] comprehend as unity, divided according to individuals, [but] undivided according to nature.
- Πῶς τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἀριθμητὸν ἐστὶ καὶ διαφεύγει τὴν ἐξἀρίθμησιν, καὶ διηρημένως ὁράται καὶ ἐν μονάδι καταλαμβάνεται, καὶ διακρίεται τῇ ὑποστάσει καὶ οὐ διώρισται τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ;⁷⁴
- 14 ومن قوله في ميمره الأول يرد فيه على انوميوس في وجود الثلاثة، قال: And from his saying in his first discourse *Against Eunomius* on the existence of the three [hypostases], he said:
- انا اوجبنا ان الكيان الغير مرئي والذي ليس بمركبي هو الثلاثة الطاهرة. We state that the invisible nature, which is not seen, is the Holy Trinity.
- καὶ τῆς μὲν ἀκτίστου φύσεως τὴν ἁγίαν τριάδα εἶναι διωρισάμεθα.⁷⁵
- 15 ومن قوله في رده على ما وضع اوناميس، قال: And from his saying in his *Refutation of what Eunomius exposed*, he said:
- في كيان الله اب وابن وروح قدس In the nature of God there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit.
- θεία δὲ φύσις ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

73 Gregory of Nyssa, *Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius*, Sections 5, 8–6, 6.74 Gregory of Nyssa, *Catechetical Oration*, Chapter 3, 5–8.75 Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Book I, chapter 1, section 295, 6–7.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

- 16 ثم ان اغريغوريوس الفاضل الذي استوجب ان يوصف
بناطق الالهيات بصدق منطقته على الله وشرفه في ميمرله
كتبه في نعت الفصح الطاهر دعوة منه لرعيته بعد قول كان
منهم اليه. قال:
من غير ان تجيبوا الدعوة الغريبة والمشورة بسرورها المفارقة
عن الحق،
المفضية عن الايمان الصحيح الثابت بالاب والابن والروح
القدس تلك اللاهوت الواحدة والقوة الواحدة.
μηδὲ ξένης φωνῆς ἀκούοντες, ὑποκλεπτούσης καὶ δια-
σπειρούσης ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς ὄρη.⁷⁶
καὶ ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ὑγιούς πίστεως ἀπαγούσηςΚ, τῆς εἰς
Πατέρα, καὶ Υἱόν, καὶ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, τὴν μίαν θεότητά
τε καὶ δύναμιν.⁷⁷
- 17 ومن قوله في ميمرله حيث وصف مصالحة الملائكة بعضهم
لبعض، قال:
فاما الباقون من هؤلاء فتأبون في كراماتهم التي انما عظم
خطرها لهدوءهم ومصالحتهم التي انما صاروا واحداً
بالثلاثية الممدوحة الطاهرة التي منها يستضون ويستنبئون
لانها الاله واحد غير مجحود لها ولا مدفوع.
οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ μένουσιν ἐπὶ τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀξίας, ἧς πρῶ-
τον τὸ εἰρηναῖον καὶ ἀστασίαστον, τὸ ἔν εἶναι λαβόντες
παρὰ τῆς ἐπαινετῆς καὶ ἀγίας Τριάδος, παρ' ἧς καὶ
τὴν ἔλλαμψιν. Ἐπεὶ ἀάκείνη εἷς Θεός ἐστὶ τε καὶ εἶναι
πιστεύεται.⁷⁸
- And Gregory the virtuous, who was correctly described the Theologian for his true doctrine on God and His honour, in his discourse that he wrote *On the Pure Easter*, replying to his church who had written to him, said:
Without accepting the foreign invitation, which is known that it hides the truth and separates from it,
and distracts from the right and firm faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God-head and one power.
And from his saying in his discourse where he described the reconciliation of the angels together, he said:
The rest of these [angels], however, remain in their dignity, the significance of which became very big because of their calm and peacefulness, in which they have become one through the praised Holy Trinity, from whom they received their light and are illuminated, because it [the Trinity] is one God, which can be neither denied nor rejected.

76 Gregory of Nazianzus, *First Oration on Easter (Or. 1)*, Section 7, 11–12 (PG 35: 401, 1–2).77 Gregory of Nazianzus, *First Oration on Easter (Or. 1)*, Section 7, 14–16 (PG 35: 401, 4–6).78 Gregory of Nazianzus, *First Oration on Peace (Or. 6)*, Section 13, 6–10 (PG 35: 740, 1–5).

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's Trinitarian Patristic Florilegium

18 ومن قوله في ميمرله على الميلاد الطاهر، قال: And from his saying in his discourse *On the Pure Nativity*, he said:

إذا ما انا وصفت الله فائما اعنى الاب والابن والروح القدس من غير ان تجوز اللاهوت هذه العدة. حذرا لان نصف جماعة الهة ولا تقتصر دونها فنصفها بمسكنة وضيق. When I describe God, I mean, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, without the Godhead exceeds this number [three]. We pay attention, [from one hand] to assert a multiplicity of gods, and [from the other] not to restrict ourselves to a smaller number, so we describe [the Godhead] with poverty and lack.

Θεοῦ δὲ ὅταν εἶπω, λέγω Πατρός, καὶ Υἱοῦ, καὶ ἁγίου Πνεύματος· οὔτε ὑπὲρ ταῦτα τῆς θεότητος χρομένης, ἵνα μὴ δῆμον θεῶν εἰσαγάγωμεν· οὔτε ἐντὸς τούτων ὀρίζομένης, ἵνα μὴ πενίαν θεότητος κατακρίθωμεν.⁷⁹

Comment on the previous quotations

فقد جاز ظني ان ادعوا الصم يسمعوا والعمى ليبصروا فضلاً عن السمع والبصر فان كانت اللاهوت غير الاقانيم كرمكهم فكيف لا تصير الهة كثيرة بمجاز اللاهوت الى غير هذه العدة او صفة ان قصرت دونها كما شهد هذا الاب الطاهر. فتجاوزوا اللاهوت الى غير هذه العدة ان تصير الاقانيم الثلاثة اربعة او خمسة او اكثر من ذلك وصفا حرجاً ان يكون اقل من الثلاثة اى اثنين او واحد. فكيف يقبل اللاهوت زيادة او نقصاناً لمجاوزتها هذه العدة. والا فكيفنا دونها غير الاقانيم لديهم والاقانيم غيرها. وانما يوصف الشيء زائداً وناقصاً اذا ما قبل ذلك في عدد ذاته لا ذات غيره كما انه لا يزيد في عدد الملائكة ولا ينقصها ما يزيد في عدد البشر وينقص.

It is allowed for me, I think, to call the deaf to hear and the blind to see, let alone those hearing and seeing. Thus, if the Godhead was not the hypostases, as you pretend [i.e. Melkites], how, then, there is not a multitude of gods, that is, [how does] the Godhead not exceed towards a number other than this [i.e., three], or how does [the Godhead] not become inferior than this characteristic [of being Trinity], as this pure father witnessed? You, then, make the Godhead exceed towards a number other than this [i.e., three], so that the three hypostases become four or five or even more, [or exceed] towards an embarrassing characteristic, so that they become less than three, namely two or one. How then, does the Godhead receive increase or decrease by exceed towards a number other than this [i.e., three]? Otherwise, is its nature for them something else than its hypostases? Indeed, a thing is described to be increased or decreased [only] if it receives [increasing and decreasing] in the number of its own essence and not in the [number] of the essence of something else, just as when [we say that] the number of human beings increases and decreases: this does not mean that the number of the angels increases or decreases as well.

79 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration on the Nativity (Or. 38)*, Section 8, 14–17 (PG 36: 320, 21–25).

Abū Rā'īṭah presents his patristic quotations according to a chronological order, starting from the earliest Father to the most recent, after having selected them according to two criteria: 1) their content is on the subject he treats; 2) the selected Church Fathers are accepted by both Miaphysites and Melkites, as he declares in the introduction of another Christological florilegium he produced in another work.⁸³

A careful examination of the Arabic text provided by Abū Rā'īṭah and the Greek original reveals that he does not translate from the Greek, and even that he does not quote from the Fathers' works according to the complete version, as he relies on a previous Syriac translation of patristic quotations. In fact, the peculiar way Abū Rā'īṭah quotes the Fathers is similar to that of the florilegia and their sources, like Severus of Antioch's *Against the Grammarian* and Peter of Callinicum's *Against Damian*.⁸⁴ He starts by mentioning the name of the Father, sometimes with an appellation, then the title of the work; sometimes, although not consistently as in the florilegia and in their sources, he adds precise details regarding the quotation, i.e. from which book and/or chapter the relevant passage is quoted. In addition, as the florilegia and their sources do, when the next quotation is from the same Father, Abū Rā'īṭah simply writes "and from his saying" (ومن قوله), without repeating the Father's name.

Quotation number 7 is an important indication that Abū Rā'īṭah selected his patristic quotations from a pre-existing florilegium/source. After mentioning that the next quotation is from the same previous Father, i.e., Athanasius, and after having given the title of the quoted work, Abū Rā'īṭah says: "he [Athanasius] said after a while" (قال بعد قليل), which is probably how he translates in Arabic the Syriac "ܟܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܝܥܐ ܡܠܠܐ". In fact, usually when the compiler of a florilegium or an author like Severus or Peter of Callinicum quotes more than one passage from the same work, the second passage is usually indicated through expressions like the already mentioned "ܟܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܝܥܐ ܡܠܠܐ", "ܟܘܢܐ ܕܘܫܝܥܐ ܡܠܠܐ" (and

paper concerning his Trinitarian doctrine and its relation to the Muslim doctrine on the divine attributes, where I also refer to his metaphysical principle, that is, that the hypostases are the substance, and the substance is the hypostases, Ebeid, "Abū Rā'īṭah".

⁸³ "وقد ينبغي لنا ان نتبع هذا القول ببعض شهادات بعض الآباء الطاهرة المقبولة من المؤمنين عامة ومن
ابن قرة واشياعه"

⁸⁴ Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 83 (text). See also Ebeid, "Miaphysite," 246–247.
Cf. Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*; Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*. See also van Roey, "Un florilège trinitaire," and Giuseppe Furlani, "Un florilegio antitriteistico in lingua siriacca," *Atti del Regio Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 1X, 8 [83] (1924): 661–677.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's text (see previous table)	Florilegium's text
<p>ومن قوله ان الاب والابن والروح القدس الاله الاجناد هو الرب. فانما نسيح للاب والابن والروح القدس. وكذلك نعمد باسم الاب والابن والروح القدس هو الرب ذو الاجناد.</p>	<p>And when the cherubim praise God three times, saying 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord Sabaoth', they praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And that is why we are baptised [in the name of the Holy Ghost] just as we are in the name of the Father and of the Son; [and we become sons of God and not sons of Gods]. For the Lord Sabaoth is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. For the Godhead is one and three is one God.⁹⁰</p>
<p>8 ثم ان باسيلوس [الطاهر الذي احاطت عنايته باقطار الارض حتى صارت باسرها ممتلئة بين عينيه] في ميمر كتبه في الايمان [وصف فيه تفاوت ادراك الله واعتلائه عن كل درك قال:]</p>	<p>And after a few things The Lord Sabaoth, therefore is the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.⁹²</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>...]</p>

90 Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: Chapter XLVII, 143–149.

91 MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 13^v.

92 Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: Chapter XLVII, 149–150.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's text (see previous table)	Florilegium's text
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ان الابن موصوف مثالا للاب مولودا منه لانه
 شعاع مجد الله وقوة وحكمة وبر لا كالمكتسب ولا
 كالمولود لا بل جوهر حي فاعل.

...
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...⁹⁵

Of the same from the *Second [Discourse] against Eunomius*

The Son is said and he is begotten image, he is the replenishment of the glory of God, the Wisdom, Power and Justice of God, not by way of possession or of quality, but he is living and active substance [and the shining of the glory of God. This is why he shows in himself the whole Father, whose entire glory shines in him].⁹⁶

10 ومن قول في رسالة كانت منه الى اغريغوريس اخيه
 في فرق ما بين الجوهر والاقنوم [قال]:
 لا يعجب من وصفنا الله بعينه متوحدا
 والتثاما متفرقا

...
 ...
 ...
 ...
 ...⁹⁷

Of Saint Basil from the *Letter to his brother on substance and hypostasis*

But do not be surprised if we say the same thing is both united [and divided, and if we discover some new and paradoxical, as it were enigmatical, united separation] and separated conjunction.⁹⁸

95 MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 16^r.

96 This passage could not be found in Peter of Callinicum's *Against Damian*; thus, the translation is mine.

97 MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 14^r.

98 Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: Chapter XLVIII, 154–157.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's text (see previous table)	Florilegium's text
<p>[إذا انا تمسكت بذكره خاشعة لله خافية واقتصر على كلمات قليلة تزرة واتخذت الروح هادياً. وقبل في السماء]. حفظت لربي ذلك ما حييت كاحتفاظي بموازرة مناجي صحيح واتمسست بقدر الطاقة ان اقنع عندي ان يعبد الاب والابن والروح القدس.</p>	<p>ܘܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ ܘܗܘܝܗ¹¹²</p>
	<p>Of the same from the <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit</i></p>
	<p>I would keep to the end as close associate and companion that source whence I have received illumination as in this world I walk, and would urge others, as best I can, to worship Father, Son and Holy Ghost, [one Godhead and power, to whom be all glory and honour and power for ever and ever, Amen.]¹¹³</p>

It is notable that not all the quotations made by Abū Rā'īṭah are found in the Trinitarian florilegium under examination. However, from a linguistic point of view, it is evident that Abū Rā'īṭah translates his quotations into Arabic from Syriac. By comparing the Arabic and Syriac texts, one can easily notice that the Arabic translation is very literal and sometimes hardly comprehensible. In addition, the Fathers' names, their appellatives, and the titles of their works follow the Syriac tradition in some way, as found in the Syriac florilegium taken into consideration.

Moreover, if we consider the original Greek, the Arabic translation in Abū Rā'īṭah's work, and the Syriac translation in the Trinitarian florilegium, we observe the following: a) the Syriac translation of the florilegium is based on the original Greek; b) the Arabic text is sometimes an exact and complete translation of the Syriac quotation in the florilegium, as in quotations 3, 11, 12, and 17; c) at other times, as in quotations 4, 9, 13, 16, and 18, the Arabic text is a partial translation of the Syriac quotation; d) in two cases, namely in quotations 8 and 10, Abū Rā'īṭah puts together separated parts of the same patristic quotation; e) in one case, namely quotation 5, the Arabic text is a mix of two Syriac quotations that, however, come from the same work, and were reordered in a free

¹¹² MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 13^r.

¹¹³ Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: Chapter XLVII, 274–278.

way by Abū Rāʾīṭah; f) only one part of the last quotation, i.e. no. 20, is found in the Syriac florilegium; and finally, g) both texts, the Arabic and the Syriac, are almost in total agreement as to the rubrics that introduce the quotations.

Some of these remarks (especially f), as well as the fact that some of Abū Rāʾīṭah's quotations are not found in the Syriac Trinitarian florilegium of MS BL Add. 12155, might lead one to affirm that our author did not use this specific florilegium as a source for his patristic quotations. Before coming to such conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the Syriac quotations of the previous table belong to three chapters in the aforementioned Trinitarian florilegium, namely chapters 30, 31, and 39, which deal with the main metaphysical question in Abū Rāʾīṭah's polemical writing, which affirms that 'God is the three hypostases and the three hypostases are God'. In the following three tables, I shall present each chapter's title and its patristic quotations. The quotations present in Abū Rāʾīṭah's *Refutation of the Melkites* are colored:

1) Chapter 30 (ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ), BL Add. 12155, 13^r-14^r

Title	Patristic quotations
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, <i>Homily on Faith</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration on Easter (Or. 1)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration on Easter (Or. 1)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration on Peace (Or. 6)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Nativity (Or. 38)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on Himself (Or. 26)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Lights (Or. 39)</i>
ܐܘܪܘܚܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܐ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Lights (Or. 39)</i>
Demonstrations of the holy Fathers who teach that the substance and the nature of the Holy Trinity, which is the Godhead, is the three hypostases of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that the substance is not one thing, i.e. the Godhead, and the hypostases are another thing. ¹¹⁴	Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>On Incarnation and against the Arians</i>
	Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>On Incarnation and against the Arians</i>
	Ps.-Gregory Thaumaturgus, <i>On Faith in Parts</i>
	Ps.-Gregory Thaumaturgus, <i>On Faith in Parts</i>
	Ps.-John Chrysostom, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>
	Epiphanius of Salamis, <i>Panarion</i>
	Epiphanius of Salamis, <i>Panarion</i>
	Cyril of Alexandria, <i>On Worship in Spirit and Truth</i>
	Severus of Antioch, <i>Cathedral Homily 42</i>
Severus of Antioch, <i>Letter to Eupraxius Cubicularius</i>	
Severus of Antioch, <i>Letter to Eupraxius Cubicularius</i>	
Severus of Antioch, <i>Letter to Isidore the Count</i>	
Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>	

114 The English translation is mine.

2) Chapter 31 (ⲗⲉ ⲙⲉⲗⲉⲥⲁ), BL Add. 12155, 4^{rv}:

Title	Patristic quotations
ⲉⲃ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Basil of Caesarea, Letter 38
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Basil of Caesarea, Letter 38
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Third Oration on Peace (Or. 23)</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration to Hero the Philosopher (Or. 25)</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nyssa, Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Severus of Antioch, Cathedral Homily 70
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Severus of Antioch, <i>Letter to John and John the Priests and Abbots</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Severus of Antioch, <i>Letter to John and John the Priests and Abbots</i>
<p>On the fact that we say that what is united and what is separated are the same, and that the three are one according to the Godhead and the one is three according to the properties, and that He is one and not one, and that the same is numbered and escapes from number.¹¹⁵</p>	

3) Chapter 39 (ⲗⲉ ⲙⲉⲗⲉⲥⲁ), BL Add. 12155, 16^{rv}:

Title	Patristic quotations
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Against Eunomius</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Basil of Caesarea, Against Eunomius
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	John Chrysostom, <i>Homilies on the Gospel of John</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>
ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ⲉⲃⲉⲛ	Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i>
<p>On the fact that each of the hypostases, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, when it is seen by itself and for itself (that is, regarded on its own), is confessed by the holy Fathers as God, substance, and nature.¹¹⁶</p>	

These chapters are found both in the shorter and longer versions of the Trinitarian florilegium, and I think that there is a close relationship between the

115 The English translation is mine.
116 The English translation is mine.

(cont.)

Title	Patristic quotations
Father, Son and Holy Ghost as names or characteristic properties of hypostases. And the examination of patristic statements which lay it down is that the same divine mystery is at once united and divided, both one and not one. ¹⁶²	<p>Theodosius of Alexandria, <i>On the Holy Trinity</i> Basil of Caesarea, <i>Letter 52</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration against Julian (Or. 4)</i> Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Against Eunomius</i> Cyril of Alexandria, <i>Dialogues on the Holy Trinity</i> Cyril of Alexandria, <i>Dialogues on the Holy Trinity</i> Severus of Antioch, <i>Critique of Julian's Tome</i> Basil of Caesarea, <i>Letter 38</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Third Oration on Peace (Or. 23)</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration to Hero the Philosopher (Or. 25)</i> Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius</i> Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Catechetical Oration</i> Severus of Antioch, <i>Cathedral Homily 70</i></p>

This is not the place to discuss the relationship between the Trinitarian florilegium and *Against Damian*; it is evident, however, that there is a link between them and Abū Rāʾīṭah. To better understand the relationship between our author, the Trinitarian Syriac florilegia and their main sources, see in the following page Table 6.1 that summarises the results of the comparative analysis presented above.

A careful comparison between Abū Rāʾīṭah's text, Peter of Callinicum's work and the quotations in the Trinitarian florilegium leads to the following remarks: a) the length of the quotations in Abū Rāʾīṭah's text is almost the same as in the florilegium; b) quotations 1, 2, 6, 7, 15 and 17 are missing in the florilegium while present in *Against Damian*; c) quotations 14 and 19 are missing in both the florilegium and *Against Damian*; d) quotation 9 is present in the florilegium but missing from *Against Damian*; e) since the quotations found in Peter's work come from three chapters of his third book, the hypothesis that quotations 9, 14 and 19 could be found in the missing parts of *Against Damian* is not reasonable; f) quotation 20 is present completely in *Against Damian*, but partially in the florilegium; g) quotations 10 and 11 are two passages taken from letter

¹⁶² Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: Chapter XLVIII, 1–12.

TABLE 6.1 Trinitarian Florilegia and their main sources

	Abū Rā'īṭah's patristic quotations	Quotations in MS BL Add. 12155	Quotations in <i>Against Damian</i>
1	Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, <i>The Divine Names</i> , II.1	–	Book III, ch. 47
2	Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, <i>The Divine Names</i> , XIII.3	–	Book III, ch. 47
	Comment by Abū Rā'īṭah on the previous		
3	Ps.-Gregory Thaumaturgus, <i>On Faith in Parts</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 47
4	Ps.-Gregory Thaumaturgus, <i>On Faith in Parts</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 47
5	Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>On the Incarnation and against the Arians</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 47
6	Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>First Letter to Serapion</i>	–	Book III, ch. 47
7	Ps.-Athanasius of Alexandria, <i>Sermo Major on Faith</i>	–	Book III, ch. 47
8	Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, <i>Homily on Faith</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 44
9	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Against Eunomius</i>	Chapter n. 39	–
	Comment by Abū Rā'īṭah on the previous		
10	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Letter 38</i>	Chapter n. 31	Book III, ch. 48
11	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Letter 38</i>	Chapter n. 31	Book III, ch. 48
12	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius</i>	Chapter n. 31	Book III, ch. 48
13	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Catechetical Oration</i>	Chapter n. 31	Book III, ch. 48
14	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Against Eunomius</i>	–	–
15	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius</i>	–	Book III, ch. 47
16	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration on Easter (Or. 1)</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 47
17	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>First Oration on Peace (Or. 6)</i>	–	Book III, ch. 47
18	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Nativity (Or. 38)</i>	Chapter n. 30	Book III, ch. 47
	Comment by Abū Rā'īṭah on the previous		
19	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>On Pentecost (Or. 41)</i>	–	–
20	Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Spirit (Or. 31)</i>	Chapter n. 30 (part.)	Book III, ch. 47

38 attributed to Basil of Caesarea, present as one unique passage in *Against Damian*, but separate in the Trinitarian florilegium as in Abū Rā'īṭah's text, as is evident in the following table:

Abū Rā'īṭah's text

Against Damian's text

Don't you see in the saying of this virtuous father that he describes the whole of the most high Godhead, that is, the three hypostases, as life and he affirms it? If the hypostases were not the Godhead, how could he affirm that the whole of the most high Godhead is life, since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all life? And moreover, how the Godhead [who is] above all would be three if they [*scil.* the Melkites] affirm that it is something else than the hypostases?¹⁶³

For Dionysius, hearer of the apostolic voice and especially rich in the knowledge of divine and profound thoughts, who had felled with exact theology most of the absurd heresies before they appeared, clearly destroyed this one too, their queen (so to say), the oldest of them and even perhaps indeed the wickedest of them all, for could anyone discover a worse blasphemy against God? For saying: "The whole Godhead possesses lordship over all", and professing it Father, Son and Holy Ghost, is nothing but uprooting from the very foundations the new-fangled insanity which godlessly makes the Godhead in the full sense 'something other' than Father Son and Holy Ghost. Look, then at what he says: "But because the whole Godhead possesses lordship over all by virtue of Godhead, whether paternal or filial, it would, I think, be impossible to say how often in the theology the word 'Lord' is resoundingly proclaimed of the Father and of the Son: but the Lord too is the Spirit". And let us look at the other passage: "Therefore, he says, thought the all-transcending Godhead is glorified as unity and trinity". And in what way is the all-transcending Godhead a trinity when (according to the dangerous teaching of the wise in themselves) it is something other than the three hypostases, since they can nowhere show us any Trinity except Father, Son and Holy Ghost?¹⁶⁴

All these observations led us to the following hypotheses concerning the sources of Abū Rā'īṭah's patristic quotations in his *Refutation of the Melkites*: 1) Abū Rā'īṭah had more than one source; 2) it is plausible that he was in direct or at least in indirect relation with the copyist(s) of the Trinitarian florilegium attested in MS BL Add. 12155 and copied in other manuscripts in a shorter version;¹⁶⁵ and therefore, 3) he knew the text of *Against Damian*, which is one of the main sources of this florilegium, and he used it for the purposes of his

163 The English translation is mine.

164 Peter of Callinicum, *Against Damian*, 4: 340, 85–105.

165 It must be mentioned that during Abū Rā'īṭah's life, that is, during the patriarchate of Cyriacus, his city was a center where manuscripts of different theological, ascetical, liturgical, and other content were produced and copied; for more details, see Wood, *The Imam*, 125–126.

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's statement	Chapter title in Florilegium	Quoted Fathers and works	Main topics of quotations
فلننظر ما الصفات التي لا يجوز ان يوصف بها احد سوى الله تبارك اسمه على الوجه الربوي الحقيقي لا لحال مشاركة غيره ولا باستعارة من القول. فن صفة الله الحقيقية المتفق عليها انه جوهر بسيط حي لم يزل ولا يزال على كل غير محدود من شيء علم حكيم خالق باري نور خير فعال لما يريد مالك الكل. فما رأيكم اتصفحون عن ذنب من وصف الاقائيم بهذه الصفات على ما وصف الله بها على الوجه الربوي ... فان صفحتهم عن وصف الاقائيم بهذه الصفات فمختلفون انتم بذلك لصدق وصفه اياها بها. فاحذ الامر من اما ان تكون الاقائيم هي الجوهر نفسه والجوهر الاقائيم ليصير من ذلك بعينها واحد وثلاثة. واما ان يكون غير الجوهر فتصير بذلك الهة أربعة ¹⁶⁹ ... فالأقائيم موصوفة بكل صفات الله منوعة بها على النحو الذي يجوز وصفها به لوجوده فيها واشتراكها فيه. ¹⁷⁰	Chapter 77 (fol. 26 ^{rv}) جلس مع صدقة صحة صحة صحة صحة	Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i> Basil of Caesarea, <i>Letter 214</i> Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>	Each hypostasis participates in the concept of the substance, that is, manifests the common characteristics of the substance to which it belongs, and in addition manifests the particular properties. Hypostasis is not the substance, since the latter comprehends all hypostases belonging to it. The hypostases that participate in the same concept of substance have as common the same natural characteristics but differentiate through the particular properties. The participated concept of substance is seen in all its hypostases; therefore, they are equal. God is three according to the hypostases, but one according to the concept of substance.
Let us see the attributes with which nothing except God (his name be praised!) can be described according to [his] being truly Lord and	Chapter 78 (fol. 26 ^v) صحة صحة صحة	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Against Eunomius</i> Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on the Holy Lights (Or. 39)</i> Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutation of the Confession of Faith of Eunomius</i>	

¹⁶⁹ Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 116 (text).¹⁷⁰ Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 117 (text).

(cont.)

Abū Rā'īṭah's statement	Chapter title in Florilegium	Quoted Fathers and works	Main topics of quotations
<p>not according to [his] sharing [attributes] of the other [beings] nor according to allegory. Among the true and agreed-on attributes of God are the following: that he is simple substance, living, eternal, unlimited, knowing everything, wise, creator, light, good, acting as he wants, and omnipotent. What do you think, then, would you forgive the error of those who described the hypostases through these attributes by which God is described according to his being Lord? ... If you forgive the description of the hypostases through these attributes, you would be contradictory, for in this way you would have validated the description [of hypostases] through these [attributes]. Thus, [you have to choose] one of two things: that the hypostases are the substance itself, and the substance is the hypostases, and therefore he is one and three [at the same time], or that the substance is not the hypostases and there are four gods ...</p>	<p>Chapter 41 (fol. 17^r)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> ܠܗ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܠܗ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ </p> <p>On the fact that the indicative modes of the property do not damage [God's] condition of simplicity and that the characteristic properties are understood outside of the substance.</p>	<p>Basil of Caesarea, <i>Against Eunomius</i> Peter of Callinicum, <i>Against Damian</i></p> <p>The same is applied to the properties of the hypostases, but not to the hypostases themselves.</p> <p>Therefore, those who acknowledge as hypostases the characteristic properties of the hypostases must say that the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit is not light, life or goodness at all, but accompanies the light, being understood outside the substance.</p>	<p>The characteristics and properties with which God is described, like light, goodness and so on, are understood outside of the substance, therefore God is simple and not composite or compounded.</p>
<p>The hypostases, then, are described with all the attributes of God according to the way God is described with them, since he exists in the [hypostases] and because the [hypostases] share in him.</p>	<p>Chapter 47 (ff. 18^v–19^r)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> ܠܗ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ ܘܠܗܘܬܐ </p> <p>How Basil conceives of the common of the substance (τὸ κοινὸν τῆς οὐσίας).</p>	<p>Basil of Caesarea, <i>Against Eunomius</i> Basil of Caesarea, <i>Against Eunomius</i></p> <p>The three divine hypostases share the same substance; therefore, the characteristics of the divine nature, like light, goodness and so on, may be said of all three.</p>	<p>The three divine hypostases share the same substance; therefore, the characteristics of the divine nature, like light, goodness and so on, may be said of all three.</p>

4 The Patristic Florilegia as the Main Source for Abū Rā'īṭah's *Introductory Letter*

It is known that, between the years 815 and 817, the Melkite bishop of Ḥar-rān Abū Qurrah went to Armenia on a mission to convince the Armenians to abandon the Miaphysite teaching and accept the doctrine of Chalcedon.¹⁷¹ According to Michael the Syrian¹⁷² and some other Armenian sources as the *Chronicle of Vardan* (1271),¹⁷³ the Armenian prince Ašot Smbāt Msaker asked for an advice from the Syrian Orthodox patriarch Cyriacus, who chose a close relative of Abū Rā'īṭah, the archdeacon Nonnus of Nisibis, to be sent to the Armenians. According to another version, however, the same Ašot asked Abū Rā'īṭah to come and defend the Miaphysite teaching in the presence of Abū Qurrah, but Abū Rā'īṭah, for some unclear reason, refused to go to Armenia¹⁷⁴ and sent Nonnus of Nisibis instead. In any case, since Nonnus was young and without great experience in disputing and confuting other Christians, he asked for aid from his relative and teacher Abū Rā'īṭah, who wrote a letter of introduction for him to read before Ašot. In this letter, our author apologises for not coming in person and exposes his defence of the Miaphysite doctrine against the teaching of the Chalcedonians represented by Abū Qurrah. The meeting took place sometime between 813 and 817. After hearing Nonnus and the letter from Abū Rā'īṭah, the prince, Ašot, who had initially accepted Abū Qurrah and his Chalcedonian doctrine, was won back to Miaphysitism and rejected Chalcedonianism. In addition, it is known that, after this event, Abū Rā'īṭah wrote another work against the doctrine of the Melkites and, as he says, against the false claims made by Abū Qurrah.¹⁷⁵ A careful examination of the topics in both

171 We know that, in the year 812, the Patriarch of Jerusalem Thomas (d. 820) asked Abū Qurrah to write a letter to be sent to the king of the Armenians, which was also sent to the Byzantine emperor and translated into Greek. After this event, we know that the same Abū Qurrah started a mission among the Miaphysites in Egypt, Syria and then Armenia to convert them to Chalcedonianism. For more details, see John C. Lamoreaux, "Theodore Abū Qurrah," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History Volume 1 (600–900)* (ed. D. Thomas and B. Roggema; HCMRhips 11; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 439–491, here 439.

172 For details, see Keating, *Defending*, 38–40.

173 Cf. Keating, *Defending*, 36–38.

174 For possible reasons, see Keating's opinion in *Defending*, 36.

175 According to one tradition, Abū Rā'īṭah met and discussed with Abū Qurrah and one Nestorian theologian, a Metropolitan from the Church of the East whose name was 'Abdīšū' (probably 'Abdīšū' ibn Bahrīz), at the court of an unnamed Muslim vizier. If such an event truly occurred, it should probably be dated to 820, cf. Keating, *Defending*, 348–351.

letters shows that, in the first letter, Abū Rā'īṭah deals with some of the topics on which Abū Qurrah had written in his *Epistle to the Armenians*¹⁷⁶ before his mission to Armenia, a fact that demonstrates that our author had some—probably indirect—knowledge of the content of Abū Qurrah's letter.¹⁷⁷ At the meeting before Aṣot, it seems that Abū Qurrah treated further doctrinal points, especially the addition Miaphysites made to the Trisagion hymn,¹⁷⁸ and therefore, once Abū Rā'īṭah knew about these topics from Nonnus, he wrote the second letter where he dealt with them.¹⁷⁹

As Sandra Keating notes, it might be true that Abū Qurrah's mission to Armenia had a political dimension. The Armenian prince Aṣot, who managed to obtain a level of autonomy for his country and thus controlled his lands between the years 804 and 826 by showing loyalty to the Abbasid Caliphate, had himself started to worry about the increasing number of conversions to Islam among the Armenians; therefore, he probably saw in Abū Qurrah's mission a good step to improve relations with Byzantium and ask the Byzantine emperor for help and assistance.¹⁸⁰ Such a fact, with the support of other elements,¹⁸¹ led Keating to suggest that Abū Rā'īṭah had expected that his *Introductory letter* “would be heard by Muslims as well as Christians, and perhaps even by those Christians who were being swayed by the message of Islam”.¹⁸² In conclusion, she leaves the reader with the idea that Abū Rā'īṭah's aim was not simply to refute the Chalcedonian doctrine but also to convince his readers that the “Cyrillian Christological formulation is less vulnerable to Islamic critique than that of Chalcedon”.¹⁸³

I do not entirely reject Keating's opinion on the *Introductory letter*;¹⁸⁴ however, my analysis highlights the importance of reading our author's intra-Chris-

176 For an English translation of this letter to the Armenians, see John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah* (Eastern Christian Texts 1; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 83–95.

177 Cf. Keating, *Defending*, 44.

178 See Abū Qurrah's polemics against the Theopsaschism of the Miaphysites, where he also refutes this addition, Lamoreaux, *Theodore*, 115–117.

179 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 73–87. See also my analysis of this letter in Ebeid, “Miaphysite,” 237–269.

180 Cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 41.

181 Cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 45–47 and footnote 30 on p. 47.

182 Cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 47.

183 Cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 53.

184 In fact, her remark on the presence of some Islamic and Quranic terminology in the *Introductory letter* is a very important element, cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 47–49, which reveals, in my view, the reciprocal influence between Muslims and Christians and the attempt to create a common linguistic (and even philosophical) code.

tian polemics against the Melkites, and in this case, the *Introductory letter*, within the Miaphysite tradition of controversy against the Chalcedonians from the sixth to the eighth century, particularly in relation to the florilegia. In fact, this had already been partially noted by Keating and especially by Benevich,¹⁸⁵ when they affirmed that, in order to better understand some of Abū Rā'īṭah's doctrines, one should take into consideration Abū Qurrah's polemics against the Miaphysites. Only within this tradition is it possible to discover the theological, philosophical, and more generally intellectual purport of Abū Rā'īṭah's writings. In particular, I would like to show that some of the elements considered by Keating as "revealing keys" of the hidden anti-Islamic agenda of Abū Rā'īṭah's *Introductory letter*, as his attention for Trinitarian topics, are in fact traditional theological elements used by Miaphysites in their polemics against Chalcedonians, clearly connecting our author to his patristic sources, especially to the Trinitarian florilegium. Moreover, the fact that Abū Rā'īṭah wrote a second letter on the addition to the Trisagion hymn (considered by the Chalcedonians as a sign of Theopaschism) does not support Keating's hypothesis, since Abū Rā'īṭah provides liturgical and patristic material as a proof; this was of no interest at all to Muslims, and it deals with a doctrine which was unacceptable *a priori* for them,¹⁸⁶ that is, the death of God in the flesh.

The *Introductory letter* has two main polemical aims against the Melkites and their objections to the Miaphysites, also clearly found among the arguments of Abū Qurrah's *Epistle to the Armenians*:¹⁸⁷ 1) the substance is the hypostases, and the hypostases are the substance; 2) the divinity in Christ is perfect even if the incarnate was one hypostasis of the Trinity. It must be mentioned that, from a Miaphysite perspective, the second topic was the reason for developing the metaphysical ground of the first. As Krausmüller notes,¹⁸⁸ Severus of Antioch started reflecting on this topic in his *Against the Grammarian*, which led him to develop the concept of the substance as the sum total of its hypostases. However, he could not make a clear distinction between the intensional and extensional meanings of the substance, that is, between the substance as a "common concept" and the substance as the "sum total of all hypostases". The dilemma on the intensional and extensional understanding

185 Cf. Keating, "Habīb," 42–44; Benevich, "Christliche Trinitätslehre," 161–162.

186 On this topic, Abū Rā'īṭah wrote two works, see Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 73–87 and 88–93 (text). See also my analysis of their content in Ebeid, "Miaphysite," 237–245.

187 See Lamoreaux, *Theodore*, 84–89.

188 See Krausmüller, "Properties Participating."

of the substance was also a major topic in the controversy between Peter of Callinicum and Damian of Alexandria,¹⁸⁹ as shown in my analysis of the shorter version of the Trinitarian florilegium,¹⁹⁰ the dilemma was solved with the doctrine of the “Monarchy of the substance”, i.e., by developing a dialectical relationship between the extensional and intensional understanding of the substance.

Concerning the first point, Abū Rāʾīṭah writes as follows:

God is one substance, one glory, one power and one action and [one] in the rest of his substantial attributes. He is three hypostases, subsistent and established in their properties, the Father in his fatherhood, the Son in his sonship and the Spirit in his procession. Therefore, and without a doubt, the one is the three and the three are the one, which is a paradox, as the pure Gregory the Theologian and other Fathers have said, on which there is agreement and not disagreement.¹⁹¹

It is evident that Abū Rāʾīṭah's arguments here are similar to those presented in his *Refutation of the Melkites*. In addition, and as a proof of the correctness of his opinion, he mentions that his argument is based on the doctrine of Gregory the Theologian and other universally recognised Fathers.¹⁹² As previously seen, Abū Rāʾīṭah applied this criterion, that is referring to Fathers accepted by both Melkites and Miaphysites, to his selection of patristic quotations in the *Refutation of the Melkites*. Upon observing the relationship between our author and the Trinitarian florilegium, I examined the quotations from Gregory Nazianzen in the florilegium and came to the following conclusions.

189 Regarding this, see Zachhuber's analysis in *The Rise*, 170–183; see also my analysis in Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity,” 119–120.

190 See Ebeid, “Metaphysics of Trinity,” 121–125.

191 “الاه واحد جوهر واحد ومجد واحد وقوة واحدة وفعل واحد وغير ذلك من الصفات الجوهريات اقانيم ثلاثة بخواصها ثابتة الاب بابوته والابن بابنيته والروح بانبثاقه. فالواحد هو الثلاثة لا امترئ والثلاثة هي الواحد بلا شك قولاً معجباً كما قال ذو النطق الإلهي اغريغوريوس الطاهر وغيره من الإباء المجتمع عليها ولا المختلف عليها”

Abū Rāʾīṭah, *The Writings*, 68–69 (text). The English translation is mine.

192 Even if Keating considered the presence of patristic references in Abū Rāʾīṭah's work and tried to identify some passages, she did not make an in-depth analysis in this regard; cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 50–51.

(e.g., those from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa). The fact that he refers indirectly to the content of these passages of the Nazianzen in the *Introductory letter* proves again that his source was either chapter 31 of the florilegium or the sources from which the compilers of the florilegium had drawn their materials. In fact, here too as in the *Refutation of the Melkites*, Abū Rā'īṭah concludes that if the hypostases and the substance were not the same thing, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit should be three different things and the substance a fourth thing, which leads one to affirm four gods, i.e., a quaternity.¹⁹⁸

In addition, by affirming that the three hypostases are the same substance, that is, the extensional understanding of the substance, one might avoid any idea of division in God. According to Keating, this affirmation is an answer to the Islamic accusation of Tritheism against Christians. In her argumentation, she also affirms that Abū Rā'īṭah's aim is to confirm the oneness of the divine substance and that the hypostases are not to be regarded as individual gods, but as eternal properties.¹⁹⁹ However, if we read Abū Rā'īṭah within the context of his tradition, we will reach a different conclusion. Firstly, one should note that Abū Rā'īṭah bases his argumentation on the concept of "māhiyyat al-ḡawhar",²⁰⁰ which literally means "the whatness of the substance".²⁰¹ I think that, with this expression, he is referring to the "common of the substance", in other words, the "constituent element of the substance/being", that is, the intensional understanding of the substance. With this argument, our author adopts the dialectical relationship between the two ways of understanding the substance proposed by the Trinitarian florilegium for the (re-) formulation of the Miaphysite metaphysical system.²⁰²

Moreover, Abū Rā'īṭah refers to Basil the Great to better support his position and affirms that the three hypostases are one as to light but three as to the persons.²⁰³ Then, he goes on to say the following:

Light and light and light without division or separation in light, and the light itself is three persons. That each one of them is subsistent does not

198 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 69 (text).

199 Cf. Keating, "Habīb," 50–51.

200 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 69–70 (text).

201 Note that Sidney Griffith, following Georg Graf, translated this technical term as "whatness" (cf. Griffith, "Ḥabīb," 180), whereas Keating translated it as "quiddity" (cf. Keating, "Rationality," 165). See also Benevich's comment on this term, in Benevich, "Christliche Trinitätslehre," 162–163, who considers it, correctly, as the abstract reality and translates it with "essence".

202 See Ebeid, "Metaphysics of Trinity," 121–125.

203 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 70 (text).

Therefore, thanks to the double understanding of the concept of substance, Abū Rā'īṭah could answer the main Christological issue that Chalcedonians usually highlighted in their polemics against the Miaphysites, which, as I mentioned, had led Severus of Antioch to start reflecting on the meaning of the concept of substance. However, if one affirms that the substance is the three hypostases and professes that God became man and that Christ is perfect God and perfect man, he consequently affirms that either the three divine hypostases were incarnate, which is a blasphemy that contradicts the Holy Scriptures, or asserts that one third of the Trinity was incarnate, and therefore, the divinity in Christ was not perfect, which is one of the accusations made against the Miaphysites by Abū Qurrah.²¹⁰

According to Keating, Abū Rā'īṭah considered the Melkite dualistic Christology as risky, since it could confirm the Islamic view of Christ as a simple man and prophet.²¹¹ However, I think that it is impossible for a theologian like Abū Rā'īṭah, who knew very well the Chalcedonian doctrine, to see such implication in Melkite Christology. His *Introductory letter* rather focuses on answering the traditional Chalcedonian accusation just mentioned. To realise his goal, Abū Rā'īṭah first deemed it necessary to present Miaphysite Christology clearly and plainly: 1) One of the three hypostases, the Son, became incarnate; 2) He became man without change and remained one; 3) He is one composite substance from divinity and humanity, that is, the Logos and a rational body; 4) one person, one hypostasis, one Christ.²¹² Then, as a proof of the correctness of this type of union, which destroys every kind of duality in Christ, Abū Rā'īṭah refers to the analogy of the union between body and soul²¹³ and explicitly says that this analogy and this Christological doctrine are based on the teaching of Cyril of Alexandria,²¹⁴ whose authority was acknowledged by the Melkites and who was also quoted by Abū Qurrah in his *Epistle to the Armenians*.²¹⁵ Moreover, it must be noted that one of the most quoted Church Fathers in Syriac Christological florilegia is indeed Cyril of Alexandria. It is also worth mentioning that the analogy of the union of soul and body is present in Syriac Christological florilegia.²¹⁶ This may be another indication that Abū Rā'īṭah probably had a

210 See, for example, Lamoreaux, *Theodore*, 84–89.

211 Cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 44–45.

212 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 70 (text).

213 On this analogy and its use, see, for example, Ebeid, *Tunica*, 367–370, 493–494, 621–623.

214 Cf. Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 70–71 (text).

215 Although Keating was aware of Abū Qurrah's use of Cyril of Alexandria, cf. Keating, “Habīb,” 44, she preferred to read Abū Rā'īṭah's thought in an anti-Islamic perspective.

216 See, for example, the quotation from Cyril's second letter to Succensus, in the patristic Christological group number 68 (ص ٦٨), cf. *MS London, British Library Add. 15432, fol. 14^{ra}*.

direct relationship with the compilation movement, or, to put it better, with the activity of copying patristic florilegia among the Syrian Miaphysites.²¹⁷

It is interesting to understand how Abū Rā'īṭah applied the double understanding of the concept of substance, as developed in the Trinitarian florilegium, to his Miaphysite Christology against the Melkites. In order to affirm that Christ is perfect God (and perfect man), and that perfection in this case does not necessary imply the extensional meaning of the substance (i.e. the sum total of its hypostases), Abū Rā'īṭah underlines that there are two kinds of perfection on metaphysical level: 1) the perfection of the *māhiyyah* (common of the substance) and the *wuḡūd* (existence), which is seen either in each one of the hypostases alone or in all the hypostases of the same substance together; 2) the perfection of *'iddah* (number), that is, the sum total of the hypostases together.²¹⁸ In Christ, the perfection of God (and man) indicates the perfection of the *māhiyyah* (common of the substance) and not that of

217 For the relationship of Abū Rā'īṭah and the Christological florilegia diffused among the Miaphysites, see Ebeid, "Miaphysite".

218 In other writings, Abū Rā'īṭah affirms that God is perfect according to his substance since nothing is like him, and that he is perfect according to his hypostases since the number three of the hypostases is the perfection of number, which includes both species of number, i.e., even and odd:

”يقال لكم قد نصفه واحد كاملاً في الجوهر لا في العدد لانه في العدد اى في الاقانيم ثلثة. فقد كملت صفته في الوجهين جميعا. اما وصفنا اياه واحداً في الجوهر فلاعتلائه عن جميع خلقه ... وفي العدد فلانه عام لجميع أنواع العدد. لان العدد لا يعدوا ان تكون انواعه نوعين زوجاً وفرداً فقد دخل هذان النوعان في هذه الاقانيم. فباى انحاء وصفناه لم يعدل بصفته الكمال شيئاً“

Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 7 (text). See also Abū Rā'īṭah, *The Writings*, 18–19 (text):

”فاما النصرارى نفتت عنه كل تشبيه ومثل لوصفهم اياه اقانيم ثلثة جوهر واحد. ولو ان جوهر الله سبحانه كان عدداً فرداً كان احط من جوهر الخلق الذى هو من اثنين الهيولى اى الاله والنوع اى الصورة. ولو انه كان اثنين لكان به شبيه وله نظير. فاذا وجد انه ثلثة اقانيم جوهر واحد فقد اعتلت صفته عن كل تشبيه ومثل لانه لا سبيل الى ان يوجد في الخلق جوهر واحد اقانيم ثلثة هو بعينه في جميع ذواته. وهذه صفة الله الحقيقية بلا زيادة ولا نقصان فقد كملت صفته في كل الوجهين. اما في العدد فلاتفاقها في كل انحاء موصوفة به ذواتها واما في الثلثة فلانفراد قوام ذات كل واحد منها ولكمال أنواع العدد. لان أنواع العدد نوعان زوجاً واحداً وفرداً واحداً. وهما موجودان في هذه الثلاثة. فاكثر من الثلثة تكرار في العدد واقل منها نقصان منه ما لا يقبله ذو الرأى في صفة الله.“

number.²¹⁹ We found yet another instance of this argument in the Trinitarian florilegium, where the patristic quotations, although focusing on the Trinity, also contain a reference to the fact that the divinity in Christ, even if perfect, is not considered as the (sum total of the) three divine hypostases:

Chapter's title in Florilegium	Quoted Fathers and works	Main topics of the quotations
<p>Chapter 32 (ⲗⲁ ⲙⲉⲗⲉⲓⲁ)</p> <p>MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 14^v</p> <p>ⲛⲓⲗⲁ ⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲗⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ</p>	<p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²¹</p> <p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²²</p> <p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²³</p>	<p>Each hypostasis participates perfectly in the common of the substance but it is not the whole substance.</p>
<p>On the fact that one hypostasis is not the whole substance and Godhead.²²⁰</p>		<p>Christ is one of the three divine hypostases, comprehended in the substance of the Godhead. He is not the whole Godhead and substance which comprehends the three hypostases. He is perfect God and perfect man.</p>
<p>Chapter 33 (ⲗⲁ ⲙⲉⲗⲉⲓⲁ)</p> <p>MS BL Add. 12155, fol. 14^v</p> <p>ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲁⲗ</p>	<p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²⁵</p> <p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²⁶</p> <p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²⁷</p>	<p>Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the one Godhead.</p>
<p>The whole substance of the Godhead is the Holy Trinity.²²⁴</p>	<p>Severus of Antioch, <i>Against the Grammarian</i>²²⁸.</p> <p>Gregory of Nazianzus, <i>Oration on Baptism (Or. 40)</i>²²⁹</p>	<p>The whole substance of the Godhead, which is the Holy Trinity, is not incarnate.</p>

219 Cf. Abū Rā'iṭah, *The Writings*, 71 (text).

220 The English translation is mine.

221 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:163 (text).

222 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:162 (text).

223 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:167 (text).

224 The English translation is mine.

225 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:172 (text).

226 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:174 (text).

227 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 3:212 (text).

228 Severus of Antioch, *Against the Grammarian*, 1:8 (text).

229 PG 36: 424, 3–7.

stance and hypostases/person, within the general context of the Miaphysite tradition of controversy from the sixth to the eighth century, when Miaphysite theologians progressively realised that making a wrong use of these concepts could entail risky consequences on the Trinitarian level. In this polemical literature, the reference to the Church Fathers as a proof of orthodoxy was an important controversial tool. This was one of the reasons why different Christian confessions created their own collections of patristic florilegia.

In fact, in two of his polemical writings against the Melkites, the *Refutation of the Melkites* and the *Introductory letter to Ašot*, Abū Rāʾiṭah deals with metaphysical topics and their impact on the Trinitarian doctrine. In both works, the patristic tradition is crucial to prove the correctness of the Miaphysite position. Next, I compared the direct patristic quotations brought forth by Abū Rāʾiṭah in his *Refutation of the Melkites* with the Trinitarian patristic florilegium produced by the West Syrian Church and copied in MS BL Add. 12155, which allowed me to outline a close relationship between Abū Rāʾiṭah, this florilegium, and the sources the compilers of the florilegium had in their hands. The analysis of Abū Rāʾiṭah's thought, the syllogisms he uses, and the content of his explanations, shows that he shares the doctrine of the Trinitarian florilegium and its patristic content.

Moreover, through another comparative analysis, I showed that this same patristic background was used by our author in his *Introductory letter*, where he dealt with the same metaphysical issues and their relationship to the Trinitarian doctrine in order to answer some Christological questions. In fact, the florilegium and Abū Rāʾiṭah had linked the same metaphysical problem, i.e., the relationship between the substance and its hypostases, with Christology, and more precisely, the question of how Christ is perfect God and perfect man, and how this does not mean that the whole Trinity was incarnate.

Consequently, since the main patristic material to which Abū Rāʾiṭah refers in these two writings, both directly and indirectly, basically comes from chapters 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34 of the Trinitarian florilegium copied in MS BL Add. 12155, it is more than likely (considering that this as well as other florilegia were compiled in the seventh century and copied in the following centuries) that Abū Rāʾiṭah al-Takrītī was one of the copyists or, at least, had a direct relationship with them and their work.

Finally, this chapter highlighted the importance of the thought of Abū Rāʾiṭah and its close connection to his tradition, to which he remained faithful despite the new challenges set by Islam. Therefore, in order to better understand his teaching, one must read him within the context of his tradition and its sources, for him to take his adequate place among Miaphysite theologians and the development they offered to Christian theology and philosophy.

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