

CICADA

THE POETRY OF DIOSCORUS OF APHRODITO IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The Critical Edition



Volume I, Part 1: Poem 17

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Front cover: In Greek literature and the poetry of Dioscorus, the cicada was a symbol of the poet, prophet, and philosopher. Here, cicadae by Eugene Alain Seguy (1889-1985).

This book is dedicated to my children: Aaron, Sophia, and Johanna.

O beware, my lord, of jealousy!
It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock
The meat it feeds on.

(Iago in Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.3.165-67)

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INTRODUCTION TO POEM 17

Hymn to St. Theodosius

Poem 17 is carefully wrought, original, and exceptionally musical. The poet has employed a rich variety of *assonance*, *consonance*, and other poetic devices to create a perfect blend of style and meaning in every verse. It is, without question, a poetic masterpiece. Poem 17 is also deep, with layers of meaning. It is impossible that an audience would have grasped all the allusions and innuendoes in this poem at a first reading. Yet there is no evidence that this hymn was ever published in Antiquity. None of Dioscorus's poems were collected in an ancient anthology, and none of his verses were ever quoted. It is possible that Dioscorus recited the hymn at a church after Theodosius, Patriarch of Alexandria, died on June 6, 567, or on a subsequent feastday. Its later history is unknown: except that near the end of Dioscorus's life or after his death, the poem was carefully stored in a large jar with his other poetic manuscripts and documents, then left undisturbed for over thirteen hundred years.

Poem 17 is an allegory. On the surface level of meaning, Dioscorus appears to be praising an icon of a new emperor. This was a standard rhetorical format, which the poet would have learned at school. The poet did not employ, however, the Hellenistic Greek that was the cultural language of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century. He employed an ancient dialect, called Homeric Greek because of its use in the epics by Homer. The use of this epic language and grammar was part of a poetic revolution that had been fostered by several successful poets from his area in Upper Egypt. This experiment included usurping the pagan vocabulary and style

of Homer for Christian topics, and it inspired such works as a verse rendition of the Gospel of John (Nonnus), a reworking of the Psalms (Apollinaris), and epic Christian *centos* (Eudocia).

Allegory in literary criticism and biblical exegesis was popular in Late Antiquity. Neoplatonic philosophers such as Proclus, who had studied in Alexandria, argued that Homer wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey as concealed allegories about the metaphysical world. The Fathers of the Church, especially those from Alexandria, argued that Moses prophetically wrote the first five books of the Bible as a concealed allegory about Christ and the Church.

Creative allegory in Christian poetry from this period has been difficult to substantiate. Unlike the obvious allegory in Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, written in Latin, the allegories in Greek poetry (if they truly existed) were largely concealed. The poets did not explicitly say that they were writing allegory. Anomalies on the surface level of meaning could be helpful pointers to an allegorical level of meaning. Yet the deeper level had to be deciphered by the audience from images and verbal hints inside the poem, and from the religious and cultural milieu. This secrecy was related to Neoplatonic and Christian mystical literature, which expressed a fear that advanced spiritual knowledge could be misunderstood and be harmful to neophytes. The secrecy can in fact be traced back to the parables by Christ, whose spiritual message was purposefully recondite: ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ, τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ἐν παραβολαῖς ἵνα βλέποντες μὴ βλέπωσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες μὴ συνιῶσιν. "And he said: 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables, that seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand'." (Lc. 8:10; cf. Mt. 13:34) Concealed allegories from the early Byzantine

Era might include the epic *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus and the epyllion *Hero and Leander* by Musaeus, both written in an Homeric style.

Dioscorus did not make a consistent effort to hide his allegorical meaning. Sometimes the deeper level supplants the superficial, so that the surface level becomes, at times, incomprehensible if not viewed through the lens of Byzantine spirituality. The allegorical meaning is always coherent and profound. Dioscorus was well-educated, cosmopolitan, and talented. He was Christian and surrounded by churches and important monasteries. Upper Egypt (the higher southern part of Egypt) was a center of religious and poetic innovations during Late Antiquity and the early Byzantine Era. The allegorical sense of Poem 17 is condensed, philosophical, and deeply religious. It must be extracted from subtle signs—but the clues are always there. The closest modern equivalent is the poetry by T. S. Eliot. If one were to compare Eliot's poems to Shakespeare, they would appear nonsensical. Eliot was part of a literary revolution of the early 20th century, and he used Shakespeare for his own ends. If one compares Dioscorus to Homer, the Byzantine poet's music would be, at best, a cicada song. As one needs to understand the history of Western culture to make sense of a verse from Eliot, one needs to explore the Byzantine culture to understand Dioscorus. But the effort is always worthwhile.

The closest Byzantine equivalent to the allegorical style used by Dioscorus, or at least the most accessible, can be found in the pictorial art of the period. Justinian the Great (regnal years 527–565) was a generous patron of the arts, and allegorical mosaics and icons created during his reign and shortly thereafter have survived at Ravenna in Italy (the most powerful city of the Western half of the Empire) and in the fortified monastery at Mount Sinai, which was established by Justinian himself. These mosaics and icons, as well as Coptic tapestries and frescoes depict Christ, the Virgin, angels, and the faithful in heaven as an emperor, empress, consuls, gen-

erals, and other nobility in a Byzantine imperial court. Some examples will be examined in this critical edition to show trends in sixth-century allegorical art and how they illuminate Dioscorus's poetry.

Poem 17 was discovered on papyrus in Egypt in 1905, along with other creative literary works, legal documents, and personal papers belonging to Dioscorus and his family. These are the oldest poems written by the hand of a known poet, and the manuscripts contain his changes and corrections. Since Jean Maspero's *editio princeps* of this poem in 1913, it has appeared in several modern editions, notably by Ernst Heitsch (1964), Leslie MacCoull (1984, 1989), Berry Baldwin (1985), and Jean-Luc Fournet (1999). The *Hymn to St. Theodosius* was the first poem in Heitsch's edition, which served as the standard edition for thirty-five years. It was the first poem because of its imperial significance. A more comprehensive numbering system was introduced by Fournet, which system is adopted here. These earlier editions focused on the surface level of meaning and how it contained information about the administration of Egypt and Hellenistic rhetoric. The present critical edition focuses on the allegorical, and Poem 17 is discussed first because it serves as a solid introduction to the style of Dioscorus.

The allegory exists primarily in symbolic imagery. The poet does not use a biblical vocabulary, so significant parallels to biblical words or phrases are infrequent. Besides, the poet was probably less familiar with the Greek version of the Bible than the Coptic, his native language. The symbolic imagery forms a coherent whole. Here below is a summary of the allegorical level. It follows the Greek text of the poem. The poet uses *enjambment* and sometimes the sense is spread across several verses, therefore the numbering is approximate. The hymn has four distinct parts: three on the *recto* side (the front) and one on the *verso* side (the back).

Paraphrase of the Hymn to St. Theodosius

Part I : Preamble

Verse 1: The poet announces the presence of the Divine, who brings life.

Verse 2: The poet calls the congregation to a devout attitude,

Verse 3: he recalls the remission of sins by Christ,

Verse 4: and praises the purity and perseverance of the congregation.

Part II : Christ

Verse 5: *a restoration*

Verse 6: Because Christ is gracious and is the Word,

Verse 7: sing a hymn to the Son of God in heaven.

Verse 8: God the King loves Christ,

Verse 9: yet gave his beloved Son to redeem the world.

Verse 10: In righteousness, the Son tends to the needs of the faithful.

Part III : Theodosius

Verse 11: With divine inspiration,

Verse 12: Christ nourished the spirit of Theodosius.

Verse 13: Throughout his life on earth, Theodosius honored God.

Verse 14: Having shared in Christ's suffering, he is now a saint.

Verse 15: You, Patriarch, are preeminent among the saints.
Verse 16: You were unique: receive your heavenly reward.
Verse 17: You saints, continue to contemplate the Creator,
Verse 18: who is the root of the fruit of Wisdom,
Verse 19: The Son of God, who is praised by the patriarchs.

Part IV : Christ

Verse 20: Rejoice, you saints, who share in his glory forever!
Verse 21: Let envy wander far away from your domain,
Verse 22: let the envious snake wander far from your domain.
Verse 23: The faithful will be freed from Hades:
Verse 24: I weep for our fall.
Verse 25: You raise up the faithful, who receive divinity.
Verse 26: Your glory, Lord, will never die.
Verse 27: You are the beginning and the end.
Verse 28: Your Spirit illuminates.

...

Verse 31: Lord, you are the only begotten Son:
Verse 32: God has entrusted the faithful to you.

...

ALLEGORICAL ART IN THE EARLY BYZANTINE ERA : ICONS

Few icons have survived from the early Byzantine Era, and most of these can now be found in the monastery at Mount Sinai. This fortified monastery was founded by Emperor Justinian and completed sometime between the death of Empress Theodora (548) and the death of Justinian (565)—that is, during the lifetime of Dioscorus and before the death of St. Theodosius. It was originally called the Monastery of the *Theotokos* (“Mother of God”) and the church still bears this name, but the monastery is now called St. Catherine’s. The Sinai peninsula in the 6th century was not part of the province of Egypt, but was in the province of Palaestina Tertia, also called Palaestina Salutaris, whose capital was the ancient city of Petra (in modern Jordan). Mount Sinai was a popular destination for Jewish and Christian pilgrims. There was easy access to Sinai from Antinoöpolis, Egypt, by way of the *Via Nova Hadriana*, which ran across the desert to the Red Sea and then south to the port of Berenike. When Muslim Arabs subjugated the Sinai peninsula and Egypt in the 7th century, the fortified monastery remained independent but was tied off from Constantinople and the rest of the Byzantine World. Therefore, the three icons below (Figures 1, 2, and 3), which appear to have been created by Constantinople artists, were probably donated to the monastery by Justinian at its foundation or certainly before the middle of the 7th century. All three sixth-century icons at the Sinai monastery demonstrate an allegorical style. Christ, the Mother of God, saints, and angels are presented as a Byzantine emperor, empress, consuls, generals, and courtiers.

Figure 1 (facing page). *Christ Pantocrator*. Artist: Unknown. Date: first half of the 6th century. Provenance: Constantinople. Present location: Sinai. 84 x 45.5 cm. Encaustic icon.

This is the earliest of the three Sinai icons, and the least allegorical. As in all three icons, there is not an attempt at an historical reproduction of the life of Christ. It is an image of Christ in heaven, the All-Powerful, and was created for devotional purposes. The golden *nimbus* ("halo") suggests his spiritual nature, as does the general aloofness of his facial expression. His eyes are not fixed on any particular point. He has raised two fingers, which are the standard sign of spiritual blessing. Yet the heavenly king is presented here as a very real emperor on earth. He is wearing a tunic and mantle that appear simple in design, but their color is imperial purple. He is carrying a jewel- and pearl-studded codex of the Bible, such as would be found in the imperial palace. Palace architecture is behind him. The realism of the figure is emphasized by the asymmetry of his wide-open eyes, the arched eyebrow, the flesh beneath his eyes, and the treatment of his moustache and beard. The color of his skin is especially vibrant. This icon, an accomplished masterpiece whose artist is unknown, was probably an imperial gift to the monastery.



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Figure 2 (facing page). *The Theotokos, Flanked by St. Theodore and St. George*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 6th century. Provenance: Constantinople. Present location: Sinai. 68.5 x 49.7 cm. Encaustic icon.

This is a representation of the *Theotokos* (“Mother of God”) in heaven. It was created for devotional purposes. She is flanked by Saint Theodore (bearded) and Saint George, and two archangels stand behind. The spirituality is suggested by the angels’ translucent *nimbi*, raised eyes, and pure white garments. The hand of God descends and emanates white light upon the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child. The angels are bending away in religious awe and looking not at the hand, but at the invisible God. The spirituality is also emphasized by her aloofness, which is conveyed by averted eyes. The spiritual hierarchy is clear: the *Theotokos* is at the center of the composition and raised off the ground on her throne. Although seated, she is equal in height to the two saints. But the hand of God is above her, and the Christ Child is in front of her.

In an allegorical style more comprehensive than Figure 1, the Mother of God is depicted as a Byzantine empress. She is wearing a *maphorion* of imperial purple and thick makeup. Her scarlet shoes were a prerogative of the empress. She is seated upon a pearl-studded throne. Her child is clothed in gold. The two saints, soldiers during their lifetime, are here depicted as Byzantine generals, wearing the sumptuous clothing and slippers of civil authorities. At the time of Justinian, the *strategos* (“general”) was an administrative office as well as a military rank. The two archangels are holding golden scepters. The realism of this imperial allegory is conveyed by several details. The Christ Child is presented as a real infant, with the mother holding him securely on her lap with her right hand. She is carrying his full weight on her left thigh, which she tries to relieve with her left hand. With her right foot and right knee turned sideways, she balances the child’s right foot. In contrast to the active eyes, hands, and legs of the mother, the generals are stiff as pylons: their eyes straight ahead, their shoulders squared. The older soldier is bearded and sunburnt, the younger is pale.



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Figure 3 (facing page). *Saint Peter*. Artist: Unknown. Date: second half of the 6th century. Provenance: Constantinople. Present location: Sinai. 92.8 x 53.1 cm. Encaustic icon.

This is the last of the three Sinai icons from the 6th century and is the most realized allegory. (It might even date to the early 7th century.) It is an imitation of one half of a consular *diptych* (“two-wings”). The two consuls were the highest civil and military magistrates in the Roman republic. In the empire, they were second in power only to the emperor, until the consulship was finally abolished in the 6th century. The consul here is wearing the *toga praetexta*, worn only by high ranking officials. His hair and beard are well-trimmed and groomed, and his face betrays a well-educated, care-worn appearance. In the background is palace architecture. This architecture, hinted at in Figures 1 and 2, is now elaborate.

The artist has made a few changes to the standard secular design in order to show that this is not a living consul but a saint in heaven. There is the large golden *nimbus*. In the three medallions above, one would normally find representations of the emperor, empress, and co-consul. Instead, the three medallions here might be recalling the episode of the crucifixion when John was given guardianship over the Virgin by Jesus (note the cross behind). Saint Peter, instead of holding the typical symbols of secular authority—a *mappa* and scepter—is holding the keys to heaven and a cross staff. The cross might be suggesting Peter’s own death by crucifixion. Despite its secular design, this icon was created for devotional purposes.



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Figure 4 (following pages). *Christ and the Theotokos*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 6th century. Provenance: Ravenna, Italy. Present location: Berlin. 29 x 13 cm.; 29 x 12.7 cm. Ivory diptych.

This *diptych* was created roughly at the same time as Figure 2 and probably by Constantinople artists working in Italy. It is a concealed spiritual allegory modeled on the consular *diptych*. The aged and bearded consul is sitting uneasily upon the consular *sella curulis*. His forehead is lined with care. He is wearing a Roman toga and holding a large, jewel-studded codex, a prized possession symbolizing his stature as a judge. The highly adorned palace architecture in the background contains pagan Hellenistic motifs. Two nobles stand behind, also wearing Roman togas. Their faces are haggard and wearing the same serious expressions that are seen in the Ravenna mosaic of emperor Justinian and his court (Figure 6). (This *diptych* shows similarities to the artwork in the throne created for Maximian, the Archbishop of Ravenna.) The consular design of the left wing is mirrored on the right. In fact, the consul on the left has turned his knee toward the other consul, who has turned her knee toward him, thus visually strengthening their close relationship. In the background of the right wing is again ornate palace architecture boasting pagan Hellenistic motifs. The woman is sitting on the consular *sella curulis* and holding her child firmly between her legs. Her face is unlined and her figure is soft and ample. Her attendants are young and obviously uneasy; both are wearing the *chlamys* of soldiers. While both attendants have their eyes fixed on the consul, she is staring straight ahead in a rigid expression, challenging the viewer. The child is scowling. The entire scene exudes royal wealth and power.

It is with difficulty that one detects another, hidden level of meaning. The noble on the consul's right side is staring ahead and holding up a hand, perhaps in greeting or to stop the viewer from approaching closer. If it is a warning, it is echoed by the lion heads on the consul's *sella*. The consul, however, is holding up two fingers in blessing. These two fingers are the only clear indication that this wing is not part of a secular, consular *diptych*.

In fact, the surface level, intensified by arresting details, veils a highly spiritual allegory. The seated figure in the left wing is Christ as the Ancient of Days, a

prophecy found at Daniel 7:22. In this vision, the Ancient One passes judgement and the Holy Ones gain possession of the kingdom. This identification accounts for the Mosaic Laws (the Christian term for the first five books of the Bible) on the Ancient's knee. Behind him stand Peter and Paul. In the right wing of the *diptych* sits the *Theotokos*. Behind her stand the archangels Gabriel and Michael. The Christ Child is imitating the blessing of the Ancient One. In the Child's left hand is a papyrus roll of the New Testament, which supplanted the Mosaic Laws.

The common indications of allegory—haloes, wings, aloofness, crosses, etc.—have been eradicated by the artist. But the hierarchical symmetry and religious symbolism clearly demonstrate that this was a devotional icon.





Figure 5 (facing page). *The Theotokos, Apostles, and Ascension*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 6th century. Provenance: Egypt. Present location: Cleveland. 179 x 100 cm. Hanging tapestry icon.

This allegorical icon from Egypt reflects the Coptic art of the period in its rustic renderings and bold colors. The imperial, secular level of meaning provides only a thin veil for the spiritual level of meaning. Similar to the Sinai icon (Figure 2), the archangels Michael and Gabriel stand behind the *Theotokos*: their names are inscribed in Greek above the columns of the palace architecture. The Mother of God is seated on a jeweled throne. Flowers bloom and vines swirl behind her, on the floor, and in the margins. In the zone above, Christ is enthroned. Both are wearing imperial purple.

The spiritual level is seen vividly in the Ascension: Christ is being carried aloft by two angels into a red heaven beyond the star-filled blue. As in the other icons, he is blessing the devout viewer. (In the popular belief of the Byzantine Era, these icons carried the same beneficent grace as the spiritual beings themselves.) The spirituality is also emphasized by the elevation of the Virgin's throne and footstool: the feet of the archangel Michael are visible beneath. The eyes of the attendant archangels are focused on the *Theotokos*. But emphasizing the spiritual detachment, her eyes are unfocused and the eyes of the Christ Child are averted. The twelve medallions hold busts of the apostles, whose names are written in Greek.



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POEM 17. HYMN TO ST. THEODOSIUS

Physical description: 3 fragments, not joined: A = height 4.5 x length 16.5 cm; B = height 12 x length 28 cm; C = height 3 x length 2 cm.

Recto margins: top margin (A) at least .5 cm; right margin (B) at least 6.5 cm

Verso margins: top margin (B) at least .5 cm; right margin (B) at least 6.5 cm; bottom margin (A) at least 2.5 cm.

Hand: Dioscorus, uncial, clearly written. *Plates:* 1-2.

Date: A.D. post June 6, 567 - ante circa 585. *Provenance:* Aphrodito

Style: encomium. *Vocabulary:* epic. *Meter:* dactylic hexameter.

Subject: St. Theodosius I (ob. 567), Patriarch of Alexandria (535-536).

First edition: Jean Maspero, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire : Nos 67125-67278 : papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine. Tome second* (Cairo 1913), 161-164 (67183 recto & verso). [= Maspero]. On-line at Internet Archive.

Subsequent editions: Ernst Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Vol. 1, 2nd edn. (Göttingen 1963). [= Heitsch 1]. On-line at Thesaurus Linguae Graecae.

Leslie MacCoull, "The Panegyric on Justin II by Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Byzantion* 54 (1984): 575-85, pl. I-II.

Barry Baldwin, *An Anthology of Byzantine Poetry* (Amsterdam 1985), 100-105 [only verses 1-19].

Leslie MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley 1988), 72-76. [= MacCoull, pp. 72-76]. On-line at UC Press E-Books.

Jean-Luc Fournet, *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^e siècle. La bibliothèque et l'œuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité* (Cairo 1999), 409-411, 567-578, pl. LV-LVI. [= Poem 17].

See also: Clement Kuehn, *Channels of Imperishable Fire : The Beginnings of Christian Mystical Poetry and Dioscorus of Aphrodito* (New York 1995).

Ausilia Saija, *Lessico dei carmi di Dioscoro di Aphrodito* (Messina 1995).

Poem 17 (Heitsch 1) uses the encomiastic formula for a poem or prose in praise of an emperor visiting a city. More specifically, on the surface level, Dioscorus employs traditional elements for praising the arrival of an official image of the emperor. Dioscorus, however, used this encomiastic template to write a poem in praise of a saint: Theodosius of Alexandria. (Cf. the secular *diptych* form used by artists to represent saints.) Theodosius was elected Patriarch of Alexandria in 535. Though supported by both Copts and Melchites, he was removed the following year through local intrigue. After an investigation initiated by Empress Theodora, Theodosius was rightfully returned to the Patriarchy. But only briefly: he was soon removed by Emperor Justinian for refusing to recognize the Chalcedonian Creed. After a brief incarceration, Theodosius was allowed to choose his place of exile, and he spent much of the next three decades in Upper Egypt. Following his death in 567 he was canonized a saint and posthumously declared the thirty-third pope of the Coptic Church. The most complete biography is found in the tenth-century *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church in Alexandria*. Written in Arabic in Hermopolis, it might have drawn upon Coptic sources for the life of Theodosius. Poem 17, on the allegorical level, says that because of his inspired writing, his lifelong devotion to Christ, and the persecution that he endured, Theodosius is now preeminent among the saints.

Restored Greek Transcription

recto ↑

- 1 [P]ς ἄμμιν ἴκανε φερέσβιος ἐσθλοςυνάω[ν],
[.....]ς ἄμμιν ἴκανεν. ἐλευθερίης καὶ ἀρωγῇ[c]
[δεινῶν cf] αἰμάτων λαθικηδέος ἤγαγε τέρψιν
[ἀνδράσι τε κρατ]εροῖς πολυτε[ρ]πέσιν ἡδὲ γυναιῖσι[ν].
5 [λῳόν ἐστιν ἐὼν παναοίδιμον οὖνομα μέλψαι],
[ὅττι χ]άρις καὶ χάσμα καὶ ἐ[ν]είης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[c],
[ὑμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἱά πολυεκήπτρου παλλατίου
[καὶ πολυ]κυδήεντα φιλόχριστον βασιλῆα·
[οἶον δῶρο]ν ἐπήρατον ὃν Θεὸς ὥπασε κόσμῳ!
10 [ἦλυθεν] οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀληθέα πάντα νομεύει(ν).
[κλεινότη]ατον δ' ἀτίταλλε θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν βουλαῖς
[σώφρον]ος εὐσεβίης Θεοδοσίου πάνσοφον ἄσθμα,
[ἐκ γέν]νης μεθέποντα Θεοῦ δέος ἡδέ γε θεσμούς,
[θείω]ν χριστοφόρων ὃς ἀλουργίδα οἶδε φορῆναι.
15 [σπεύδεο] νῦν, στρατιάρχε, σέθεν καλέειν ναετῆρας.
[....].ος ἔπλεο μοῦνος, ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα κομίσης.
[πάντ]η κοιρανίης σκοπιάζετε πυθμένα ῥίζης
[σώφ]ρονα, κυδαλίμης σοφίης ἐγκύμονα θεσμῶν,
[τοῖς]προτεροῖς βασιλεῦσιν αἰοίδιμον ἐς θρόνον υἱά.

verso →

- 20 [P χαίρε]τέ μοι, βασιλῆες, ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εὐκ[λ]εις.
[κοιρα]νίης ἀπάνευθε τείης φθόνος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω,

- [.....] κοιρανίης φθόνος ἔρπελος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω.
 [.....]... ὑμετέρησιν ὑπέσσεται δέσμια χερσίν.
 [ἦλθον] πεφρικότα τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν·
 25 [πίστ]ιν ἀερτάζεις θεοδέγμονα κυδιανείρην.
 [μὴ τ]ρομέεις, σκηπτοῦχε, τὸ σὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται·
 [σὺ] ρτέφος ὑψικάρηνον πάμφυλον ἔσσι κιβώτιν,
 [ἀκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι τῆς περικαλλέος ὀμφῆς.
 [..] ρτέφος ὑψικάρη[νον .].ν.. λαυράτα ... κατ..αφ..[
 30 [.....]..ς ἱμείρων φιλοπάρθενος ε[
 [οὐδαμὸς] δὲ ἄναξ πανομο[ί]ος ἔπλετο σείο.
 [οὐραν]όθεν Θεὸς ὕμμι πόρεν διαδήματα φωτός.
 [.....].....λεν.....αφθιται..ατα.ε[
 [.....]...[.....]. ἄν[αξ χθον]ός ἡδ[ὲ .].λλ.[
 35 [.....]τα ταῦτα [.....]ρο...[

1 εσθλοσυνᾶω[ν] 2 ἵκανεν 7 νεον : ο post corr. υἷα παλλατιῶν 10 νομευεῖ
 11 δ' Pap θεωρητοι[σιν] in mg. dextra 13 γε : post corr., και ante corr., lege τε
 14 χριστοφορων : post corr. 18 κῦδαλιμης εγκῦμονα 19 υἷα 21 versus inter lineas
 ερπελος ειη in mg. dextra, alt. ε post corr. 23 ὑμετρησιν Pap, iota adscriptum
 χερσίν 25-30 litterae in mg. dextra erasae aut abolitae 25 δεοδεγμονα ante corr.
 26 versus inter lineas 29 ὑψικαρη[νον]

VERSE TRANSLATION

Recto

1 [.....] has come to us, bringing life and all good things,
2 [.....] has come to us! He has brought to mighty men
3 and very pleasing women the joy of help and freedom,
4 which banishes the woe of our terrible failings.
5 [It is desirable to celebrate his name, sung by all.]
6 Because he is grace and happiness
 and the beloved flower of eloquence,
7 sing a hymn to the young Son of the palace of many scepters,
8 and to the very glorious King, who loves Christ:
9 such a lovely gift that God gave to the world!
10 Not according to the world's ways he came to shepherd all true things.
11 With divinely inspired counsels he nurtured the wise and illustrious
12 spirit of Theodosius, of clear-thinking piety,
13 who pursued since birth a fear of God and his laws,
14 who knows how to bear the purple robe of the Christ-bearing saints.
15 Hurry now, commander, and call your inhabitants;
16 You were unique: receive the illustrious gifts.
17 Contemplate always the wise foundation of the root
18 of royalty, the basis which is pregnant with the laws
19 of glorious Wisdom, and which is the Son on the throne,
 whom the earlier kings are praising in song.

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Verso

- 20 Rejoice with me, kings, famous for eternity!
21 Let envy wander far away forever from your sovereignty,
22 [.....] let envy, creeping forever, wander from your sovereignty.
23 [.....] the chains will lie beneath your hands.
24 [I have come] to pour out trembling, tragic tears:
25 you raise up the Faith that receives divinity
and glorifies humanity.
26 Do not be afraid, you who hold the scepter, your glory will never fade:
27 you are the lofty crown of all the tribes, you are the poor man's coffer,
28 [the rays of your lovely voice illuminate like lightning.
29 [..] the lofty crown] portraiture
30 [.....] lover of virginity, desiring [
31 [No] lord was ever like you:
32 From heaven God has given you diadems of light.

traces

COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 RECTO

Please note: Several editions of the Dioscorian poems are available, with different numbering systems. I am using the numbering of *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV [= Poem 1, Poem 2, etc.]. When appropriate, I give the Heitsch and/or MacCoull numbers. For details about the other literary editions and biblical editions used in the citations, see *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*: <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/> Cf. *Perseus*: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/> Translations of biblical citations are modifications of the King James Bible. For useful descriptions of Classical figures of speech, see *Silva Rhetoricae*: <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>

Verses 1-4: Preamble

Verses 1-2

[P] ὃς ἄμμιν ἵκανε φερέσβιος ἐσθλοσυνάω[ν],
[.....] ὃς ἄμμιν ἵκανε. ...
[P] *has come to us, bringing life and all good things,*
[.....] *has come to us!*

Repetition, such as ἄμμιν ἵκανε ... ἄμμιν ἵκανε “he has come to us ... he has come to us,” is a common formula for ecstatically announcing a divine presence. Compare, for example, the words of the Sibyl when Apollo has taken control of her (Aeneid 6.46): *Deus ecce deus!* “The god, behold the god!” (Some familiarity with Latin was expected from those in the legal profession, like

Dioscorus, and the *Aeneid* was a standard learning text.) See also the *repetition* of the ecstatic Maenads' cry when Dionysus arrives in Thebes (Greece). Here they are not announcing his arrival, but encouraging one another to join his ritual:

στόμα τ' εὖφημον ἅπας ἐξοσιούσθω·
τὰ νομισθέντα γὰρ αἰεὶ
Διόνυσον ὕμνήσω. ...
ἴτε βάκχαι, ἴτε βάκχαι,
Βρόμιον παῖδα θεὸν θεοῦ
Διόνυσον κατάγουσαι ...
ἅμα δ' ἐπ' εὐάσμασιν ἐπιβρέμει τοιάδ'
ᾧ ἴτε βάκχαι,
ὦ ἴτε βάκχαι

"And let everyone keep his mouth pure, speaking propitious things.

For I will celebrate Dionysus with hymns

according to eternal custom. ...

Go, Bacchae, go, Bacchae,

escorting the god Bromius, child of a god!" ...

And among the Maenad cries, his voice rings deep:

"Go, Bacchae, go, Bacchae!"

(Euripides, *Bacchae* 70-72, 83-85, 152-153; translation by T. A. Buckley)

Although the corner of the Dioscorian papyrus and the beginning of verses 1 and 2 are missing, the epithet φερέβιος "life-bringing" clearly establishes the identity of the divinity: Christ. This epithet is stressed by its placement in the verse: right after the main *caesura*.

In verse 1, the poem in its present state begins with a strong *assonance* of the vowel *alpha*, ἄμμιν ἵκανε, which is appropriate for a beginning. The *assonance* is stressed by the metrical *ictus* of the third foot, which falls on the long *alpha* of ἵκανε. And the poet immediately establishes his creativity and control of the language by apparently coining the *hapax legomenon* ἐκθλοσυνάω[ν]. The penultimate syllable of verse 1 (-νά-) has both the word accent and metrical *ictus*, echoing the *alpha assonance* at the beginning of the verse. The *assonance* is continued at the beginning of verse 2 and in the fifth foot (-ηc καὶ ἄ-), where there is no elision and both *alpha* sounds are pronounced.

[✠] : a Christian symbol that Dioscorus uses to begin his poems.

[.....]c : The upper left corner of the papyrus is missing, so we cannot establish who “has come to us.” It might be that Maspero had an additional piece with νο to create]νoc. This is how he reads the papyrus, but such a piece no longer exists and he did not include a photographic plate. In explaining the surface level of meaning, various papyrologists and historians (beginning with the original editor) suggested that the word [λουcτῖνο]c filled the *lacuna*. This restoration would establish that the surface level was addressed to the Emperor Justin, and that the poem was written shortly after his inauguration in November 565. This restoration, however, is hypothetical, and a specific emperor is not necessary for the allegory to work. The subsequent description “bringing life” makes clear that Christ is the subject on the allegorical level (see the discussion below).

ἄμμιν ἵκανε ... ἄμμιν ἵκανεν : By repeating “has come to us,” the poet firmly

establishes that the Divine is now present at the liturgical service. This concept is based on the New Testament and the words of Christ: οὗ γὰρ εἰσιν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἓκον ὄνομα, ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Mt. 18:20) *Repetition* is also helpful in increasing the attention of an audience. One cannot ignore the phonetic similarity between ἄμμιν ... ἄμμιν and ἀμὴν ἀμὴν, which Jesus used to begin an especially important statement. For example: ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. “Jesus answered and said unto him: ‘Verily verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’.” (Jo. 3:3; cf. Jo. 1:51; etc.)

Without the *repetition*, Dioscorus uses the phrase οὕτως ἄμμιν ἵκανες “so you have come to us” in at least three other poems: Poem 11.46, 14.35, and 18.42; cf. 20.8 (Heitsch 3.46, 5.18, 13.11; cf. 2.8).

φερέσβιος : The compound adjective “life-bringing” is placed in a strong position in the verse: right after the main *caesura*. The main *caesura* is feminine (κᾱ νε̄ || φε̄ ρε̄σβ), which is less common among epic poets and draws attention to the adjective.

The word is not found in Homer, but the phrase φερέσβιος υἱός “life-bringing Son” is used three times by Nonnus as an epithet for Christ in his *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John* (Paraphrasis 5.105, 6.117, 8.92; cf. 6.99, 18.132). Nonnus was the most influential poet of the early Byzantine Era. In the

poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus, a popular Christian theologian of the early Byzantine Era, the name Φερέσβιος is synonymous with the Logos (Epigrammata, Book 8, epigram 79, line 7; cf. Carmina de se ipso, page 1448, line 9).

ἐσθλοσυνάω[ν] : “bringing all good things”. The word is an *hapax legomenon*: it appears nowhere else in Greek literature and was probably coined by Dioscorus. It might be a genitive plural noun created from the hypothetical ἐσθλοσύνη (Saija, s.v.). It is then dependent on the preceding adjective φερέσβιος: “nutrimento di bene” (Saija) or “celui qui apporte la vie (les ressources) que fournissent ses bienfaits” (Fournet, p. 569). MacCoull prefers using it as a participle: “bringer of good” (MacCoull, p. 73). The concept is biblical: πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθεν ἐστὶν καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights” (Jac. 1:17)

The *hapax* ἐσθλοσυνάω[ν] has at its core the adjective ἐσθλός “good”, which is found in Homer. More significantly, Gregory of Nazianzus frequently uses the adjective ἐσθλός in his poetry to describe Christ. And in the tragedy *Christus Patiens*, which traditionally is ascribed to Gregory, we find the following verse used twice as a greeting for Christ (2098, 2538): Χαῖρ’, ἐσθλὸς ἐσθλοῦ Παῖ, Βασιλεῦ παντάναξ. “Greetings, good Son of the Good, King, Lord of all!”

Verses 2-4

- 2 ... ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἁρωγῇ[ς]
3 [δεινῶν σφ]αλμάτων λαθικηδέος ἥγαγε τέρψιν
4 [ἀνδράσι τε κρατ]εροῖς πολυτε[ρ]πέσιν ἡδὲ γυναῖξι[ν].
 ... *He has brought to mighty men
and very pleasing women the joy of help and freedom,
which banishes the woe of our terrible failings.*

These three verses are joined grammatically into one sentence. Within the sentence, verses 2-3, whose subject is Christ, are interwoven by a complex genitive construction. These intertwined genitives will be recalled in verses 17-18, where Christ is described with vine imagery, alluding to his description of himself as a vine (Jo. 15:5; cf. 15:1). That is not the image created here. The tangled genitive construction in verses 2-3 recalls the entanglement of sin described in several biblical passages. See for example: Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Col. 1:14; cf. Mc. 4:7; etc.) In the following Dioscorian verse, verse 4, the genitives are replaced by straightforward datives of interest (arranged in a *chiasmic* order). In the same way, the congregation of verse 4 is freed from their failings. This is a perfect blend of sense and style.

ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἁρωγῇ[ς] / [δεινῶν σφ]αλμάτων λαθικηδέος : The restorations are by Maspero. He gives no reason for [δεινῶν σφ], but says simply that the restoration is difficult. He translates: “son secours, qui fait

oublier les malheurs.” It is interesting that, outside of Dioscorus, this noun-adjective pair appears only in the *Typica Monastica*: διὰ δὲ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πεπραγμένων μοι δεινῶν σφαλμάτων “on account of the great number of terrible sins having been committed by me” (Typicon monasterii Theotoci Petritziotissae, sub auctore Gregorio Pacuriano, Chapter 1, lines 205-206).

As pointed out above, this is an intricate genitive construction. The first two nouns should be understood as an *hendiadys*: “helpful freedom”. The genitive construction in the following verse, [δεινῶν cf] αἰμάτων, grammatically depends upon the word ἐλευθερίας and means literally “freedom from our terrible failings.” This is a standard biblical concept. Christ’s mission was to free the faithful from their sins. See for instance: ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). And: ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:5). And also: ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ. “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) In fact, Christ and the Spirit were closely associated with freedom in general: ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστίν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία. “Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (II Cor. 3:17)

Part of the genitive construction involves a *chiasmus* that bridges two verses: ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἀρωγῇ[c] / [δεινῶν cf] αἰμάτων λαθικηδέος. Here the

adjective λαθικηδέος properly modifies the noun ἄρωγῃ[ς], but it actually modifies the entire *hendiadys* ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἄρωγῃ[ς]. The *chiasmus* is created by the adjective-noun phrase [δεινῶν σφ]αλμάτων sandwiched in-between the noun-adjective phrase ἄρωγῃ[ς] ... λαθικηδέος.

σφ]αλμάτων : This is not the biblical word for sin, which is ἁμαρτία and which means literally “failure” or “fault”. The biblical phrase for “freedom from sins” or “remission of sins” is: ἡ ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτίων. The noun here, σφάλμα, means literally “trip” or “stumble”. The biblical term for this concept is πρόσκομμα, which is sometimes used to express the temptation or cause of sin (Rom. 14:13) and sometimes used for the same concept as ἁμαρτία (Rom. 9:33). Dioscorus—like Nonnus, Apollinaris, Eudocia, and other early Byzantine writers—used an epic vocabulary for Christian themes and avoided biblical terminology. Here, however, the term σφάλμα is not found in the Bible, and is also not found in Homer or Nonnus. But it is used frequently by early Christian writers—to express the concept of sin. For example, in the *Christus Patiens*, Gregory of Nazianzus writes: Γινώσκομεν σφάλματα, σὺ δὲ παρόρα. “We recognize our failings—you, our forgiveness.” (2562; cf. 821)

λαθικηδέος : This compound adjective is not uncommon, and is found in Homer, Nonnus, and other secular and Christian writers. It means literally “banishing care”. In Homer it describes the suckling breast (Il. 22.83); in Nonnus’s *Dionysiaca*, it describes wine and Dionysus the god of wine (7.339, 19.54, 21.234).

In Poem 17, it is singular and modifies the noun closest to it: ἄρωγῃ[ς]. But in fact, it describes the entire concept found in the *hendiadys* ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἄρωγῃ[ς]. The compound adjective λαθικηδέος also gives us a second possibility for the genitives [δεινῶν σφ]αλμάτων: they could be objective genitives dependent on the second element of the compound (-κηδέος), which then means “banishing the care about ...”. The poet now offers us two grammatically correct meanings: “care-banishing freedom from our terrible failings” and “freedom that banishes the care about our terrible failings”. Both concepts, in the end, mean the same. What is important is that with the adjective λαθικηδέος the poet has turned a standard biblical concept—freedom from sins—into a personal, subjective emotion, emphasizing the piety of the congregation: “release from our guilt about our terrible failings.”

ἦγαγε τέρψιν : The compilation of genitives is *epexegetic*: the genitive construction is in apposition to and describes the τέρψιν “joy”, which the subject has brought. The joy arises out of the freedom from failures, and replaces the care.

[ἀνδράσι τε κρατ]εροῖς πολυτε[ρ]πέσιν ἡδὲ γυναῖξι[ν] : The restoration of the beginning was suggested by Maspero, who did not explain. The exact phrase ἀνδράσι κρατεροῖς appears nowhere else in Dioscorus’s poetry or in Greek literature, but ἀνὴρ κρατερός is a common epic pair. See for example: ἀνδρὶ δαμείς κρατερῷ (Il. 3.429), ἀνδρὶ πάρα κρατερῷ (Il. 24.212), etc.

The congregation is described in heroic terms: literally “to strong men and very pleasing women.” This is a nicely balanced verse, using a *chiasmic*

construction. The opposite genders are placed at opposite ends of the line, with their corresponding adjectives placed within: A B B A. The adjective describing the women, πολυτε[ρ]πέειν, echoes the noun in the preceding verse, τέρψιν. In this way the poet suggests that, on the allegorical level, as the joy is a gift from Christ, so also the pleasing nature is his gift. In other words, the adjective is *proleptic*. Only after the women have received the joy of freedom from their failings (ἐλευθερίης ... σφαλμάτων ... τέρψιν), only after they have been washed free of their sins through Baptism, do they become completely pleasing to him (πολυτερπέειν).

κρατ]εροῖς : “strong”, “stout”, “mighty”. The adjective is usually used by Homer for physical strength in war: Ἀγαμέμνων, / ἀμφοτέρων βασιλεύς τ’ ἀγαθὸς κρατερός τ’ αἰχμητής “Agamemnon, / both a good king and a mighty warrior” (Il. 3.178-179; cf. 2.515, 6.97, 16.624, etc.). And that is the usage in Nonnus’s *Dionysiaca* (21.11) The adjective is not found in the Septuagint or the New Testament. The term κρατερός, however, is related to the verb κρατέω, which can mean “to overcome” or “to endure”. The Dioscorian adjective thus suggests the New Testament admonition to overcome temptation and to persevere: it is the enduring believer that is rewarded with the crown. The standard New Testament terms for this concept are ὑπομένω and προσκαρτερέω. See for example: Μακάριος ἄνθρωπος ὁς ὑπομένει πειρασμόν, ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, ὃν ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (Jac. 1:12) See also: τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες, τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες, τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες “as regards hope,

rejoicing; as regards tribulation, enduring; as regards prayer, persevering” (Rom. 12:12).

The infinitive and participle of κρατέω were used by early Byzantine writers to denote perseverance in the Faith or in a way of life. For example, Joannes Malalas, an older contemporary of Dioscorus, used the phrase κρατήσαντες τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἔθος ἕως τῆς νῦν “having persevered in the old way to the present day” (Chronographia, page 180, line 9). The infinitive was used in a similar sense by Gelasius Cyzicenus, the fifth-century Church historian: τὴν ... κρατεῖν πίστιν “to persevere in the faith” (Historia ecclesiastica, Book 1, proem., section 10, line 4). And equally important, the Dioscorian term would have echoed the superlative and ubiquitous epithet for Christ: παντοκράτωρ “almighty”.

πολυτε[ρ]πέειν : The adjective πολυτερπής is rare and thus draws attention to itself. It was not used by Homer and was used only once by Nonnus, in his *Dionysiaca*. But it was used at least five times by Proclus, the fifth-century Neoplatonic philosopher, in his commentaries to Plato. (Proclus wrote not only commentaries to Classical works but also essays, and even hymns to pagan gods.) Proclus was influential in Greek, Roman, and Islamic philosophy and had a strong impact on Christian mystical writers, especially Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite. Proclus worked in Alexandria for the early part of his career, where he taught Ammonius, who in turn taught John Philoponus. Philoponus was a Christian philosopher and possibly a teacher

of Dioscorus. In his surviving works, Proclus uses the adjective πολυτερπής three times as an epithet for Eros, a metaphysical emanation from the One.

ALLEGORICAL ART IN THE EARLY BYZANTINE ERA : CHURCHES

It would be beneficial to contrast the icons in Figures 1-5 with the symbolism in the Ravenna mosaic of Emperor Justinian and his court. Nothing similar has survived for Justin II, but the attitudes and vision represented by this artwork would have existed also at the beginning of Justin's reign. Here, Christ is not being portrayed as an emperor, but the emperor is being portrayed as Christ. The emperor Justinian was sixty-four years old when this mosaic was completed (born in 482) and had never visited Italy, thus this mosaic was not a life-like representation. It was funded by the banker Julianus Argentarius and overseen by the archbishop Maximian. It was influenced by the icons of the period, and its propaganda effect had the highest priority. The mosaic was a statement of imperial power.

As the *Theotokos* in the Coptic tapestry is surrounded by medallions of the twelve apostles (Figure 5), Justinian is surrounded by twelve men. Three of the four on his left are ecclesiastics, including Maximian, the Archbishop of Ravenna from 545 to 553. The fourth on the left and the two on his right are secular officials, including perhaps the banker Argentarius on his immediate right. They are flanked by six soldiers. The mosaic is saying that Justinian's power is supported by the Church, money, and the palace, and it is backed by military might. One soldier carries a shield with the Christian *Chi-Rho* abbreviation, which would remind the viewer of Emperor Constantine. Thus Justinian's power is also backed by history. Although Justinian was still very much alive when this mosaic was completed, his crowned head is surrounded by a *corona*.

Figure 6 and detail (facing page). *Emperor Justinian & Retinue*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 546. Provenance and present location: Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna. Mosaic.

Justinian is carrying, perhaps, an empty basket that would have held the bread during the Offertory of the Eucharistic Rite, thus inviting a comparison to Christ. The mosaic is recalling the times when Christ compared his human body to bread (Mt. 26:26; cf. Jo. 6:32-58; etc.). By showing that the basket is empty, the mosaic is contrasting Justinian with the Christ that divinely and miraculously fed bread to five thousand men (Mt. 14:15-21; Mc. 6:35-44; etc.). Unlike Christ in the sixth-century icons, Justinian is not carrying the jewel-studded Bible: an ecclesiastical authority is. And unlike Christ in the icons, Justinian is not throned, not being carried aloft, and not offering a divine blessing. He is standing firmly and grimly on the ground. The *coronae* here and on Empress Theodora in the nearby mosaic are related to the *coronae* seen in pagan art and literature: they connote extraordinary power but not necessarily heavenliness (cf. Il. 5.5 ff., 18.203 ff., etc.).

There is little hierarchy in the composition. The emperor is standing in the center of the image (note the quadrilaterals above), but all the men are standing on the green earth and their faces are level. Their feet are intertwined. The statement of the mosaic is clear: Justinian is at the center, but is not the source of this awesome power. The power is created by the clergy, the palace, and the army. The viewer is not being invited to feel repentance, make a petition, or take away grace and sing a hymn of joy: it is not a devotional icon. The viewer is told by the mosaic to be awed by the power generated by this assembly. And that is all. Justinian is wearing a heavy crown, which raises him above the rest, but his expression reveals a man accustomed to the burden of authority on earth. Unlike the icons of Christ, the eyes of Justinian are fixed. There is no serenity.



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Figures 7–11 (following pages). *San Apollinare Nuovo*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 6th century. Provenance and present location: Basilica of San Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy. Wall mosaics.

The Basilica of San Apollinare Nuovo was originally dedicated in 504 to Christ the Redeemer. The thirteen small mosaics in the top zone may date to the original church. They show scenes in the life of Christ. On the left, he is always young, unbearded, and dressed as an emperor; on the right, he is always bearded and presented as the “Man of Sorrows”, recalling a vision found at Isaiah 53:3-6: “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” In the middle zone, created c. 526, one sees saints, prophets, and the evangelists.

The bottom zone was created in 561 during the reign of Emperor Justinian, who *in absentia* rededicated the church to “Saint Martin in Golden Heaven”. The wall mosaics present an allegory similar to that seen in the icons from the 6th century, where the spiritual Christ is presented as a Byzantine emperor in his palace. At the center of the zone, Christ and the Mother of God are seated on jewelled thrones and flanked by scepter-wielding angels. At the two extreme ends one sees ornate palace architecture, representing the Palatium of Theodoric (on the right) and the Ravenna port of Classe (on the left). On Christ’s left is a procession of twenty-six martyred saints in the clothing of Roman senators (*toga praetexta*): each has received from him an individualized, ornate crown. On the Virgin Mary’s right is a procession of twenty-two virgin martyrs in elaborate clothing: each also has received a crown.

Unlike the nearby mosaic of Justinian at the Basilica of San Vitale, Christ is depicted as the source of all heavenly and earthly power. Similar to the icon of the Ancient of Days, the angels hold up their right hands. Christ holds up his right hand in blessing. In his left hand, he holds what appears to be a double scepter of power over heaven and earth.

The allegory here has taken on a new dimension. The saints, Christ, and the *Theotokos* in heaven are still depicted as kings, the emperor, and the empress, but there is a new realism and local character.





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Figures 12–13 (facing page). *Annunciation*. Artist: Unknown. Date: 6th century? Provenance and present location: Syrian Monastery at Wadi El Natrun (Scetes), Egypt. Fresco.

Wadi El Natrun was a center for monastic Christianity in Upper Egypt and attracted followers from around the Byzantine World. Its alternate name, Scetes, is derived from the Greek term for “the ascetics”. In addition to becoming the home of several important Christian writers, it served as a refuge for Coptic Patriarchs of Alexandria. Among the many monasteries that arose at Wadi El Natrun, one was founded by Syrian monks in the 6th century and consecrated to the *Theotokos*. According to tradition, the monastery was designed on the basis of Noah’s ark. Most of the monasteries at Wadi El Natrun were destroyed or looted during the Arab conquest of Egypt in the 7th century. But the fortified monasteries survived, as did the Syrian monastery.

The fresco in Figure 12 was only recently discovered during restoration work between 1991 and 1999. It could have been created as part of the original 6th century church, but scholarly opinions vary. The fresco reveals an allegory similar to that seen in the previous Figures from the 6th century. On the surface level of meaning, the Virgin Mary is enthroned and surrounded by ornate palace architecture. She is wearing makeup. She is being greeted by the archangel Gabriel, who carries a scepter. She is flanked by four prophets dressed as court nobility: Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. As in the mosaics at San Apollinare Nuovo, there is an increased realism and local character. The palace architecture behind the Virgin Mary is taking on a vivid reality. The four Hebrew prophets that foretold the Virgin Birth are unrolling papyrus scrolls to reveal the pertinent verses—written in the Coptic language.

What makes this allegory even more fascinating and complex is that the deeper level of meaning is not a scene in heaven: it is an historical event in the life of Mary of Nazareth.



Clement A. Kuehn

Figure 14. *Christ Embracing St. Menas*. Artist: Unknown. Date: late 6th century. Provenance: Bawit, Egypt. Present location: Paris. 57 x 57 cm. Paint on fig wood.

This image, which is not monumental but a portable icon, was found in Egypt during the archaeological excavations of a monastery at Bawit. Painted in the late 6th – early 7th century it is in excellent condition. St. Menas (285 – c. 309) was the abbot of the monastery there. He was originally a high-ranking officer in the Roman army, but after only three years of service, left the army and began a hermetic life in Egypt. During his stay in the desert, he saw a revelation of angels crowning martyrs with glorious diadems. He also heard a voice saying that he would receive three immortal crowns: one for his celibacy, one for his ascetic lifestyle, and one for his martyrdom.

The allegory in Figure 14 is subdued, as in Figure 1, but also shows the new realism and local character evident at Ravenna. On the deeper level, this is a scene in heaven. On the surface level of meaning, there is a mixture of history with fictional royalty. Christ has the short brown beard of a young man; Menas has the long grey beard of an old man. Christ is wearing imperial purple. St. Menas is wearing over a brown *tunica* perhaps the *toga praetexta* of a Roman senator. Christ is carrying a jewel- and pearl-studded codex, while Menas is holding a tiny scroll that may contain the rules of his monastery. The concept of religious rule is emphasized by the Coptic inscription that reads “Abbot Mena, superior.”

Emphasizing the spirituality of the scene, their eyes are not focused on any particular point and both men look remarkably serene. This serenity is enhanced by the rolling hills behind, from which their *nimbi* seem to be rising like twin suns. In a strict hierarchical order, Christ’s head is slightly higher than St. Menas’s.

What is most striking in this icon is the relaxed arm and hand that Christ has placed around the shoulder of Menas. Therefore, unlike the icon in Figure 1, Christ cannot give a salutary blessing. Instead, Menas does so with his right hand. The physical language is one of geniality and conveys the message of heavenly kinship and affection that was stressed by Christ in the Gospels (Mt. 5:45; Jo. 15:15; etc.). The seriousness of the dynastic temple paintings has been replaced by the childlike innocence and exuberance typical of Coptic art.



COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 RECTO

Verses 5-10: Christ

Verses 5-8

- 5 [λῶιόν ἐστιν ἐὸν παναοίδιμον οὔνομα μέλψαι],
6 [ὅττι χ]άρις καὶ χάρμα καὶ ε[ὕε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς],
7 [ὕμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἱά πολυσκήπτρου παλλατίου
8 [καὶ πολυ]κυδήεντα φιλόχριστον βασιλῆα.

[It is desirable to celebrate his name, sung by all.]

Because he is grace and happiness

and the beloved flower of eloquence,

sing a hymn to the young Son of the palace of many scepters,

and to the very glorious King, who loves Christ:

There is a break between papyrus fragments A and B. Because there is an infinitive in verse 7, the original editor Maspero assumed that a verse was lost in the *lacuna*, which would have contained a main verb to support the infinitive. He supplied this verse from Poem 6, verse 10 (MacCoull p. 123, verse 8). Like Homer and Nonnus, Dioscorus repeated verses. (In fact, these repeated verses enabled Maspero in 1911, while working on Dioscorian fragments in Cairo, to identify a Dioscorian poem in the Berlin Museum.) It is not necessary, however, to assume that a verse dropped out here. Dioscorus could be using the infinitive as an

imperative, which would not require a supporting finite verb. An infinitive used as an imperative is a common construction in Homer. Note, for example, the two imperative infinitives: μή ποτε καὶ σὺ γυναικί περ ἥπιος εἶναι / μηδ' οἱ μῦθον ἅπαντα πιφασκέμεν. “Never be indulgent, even you to your wife! Do not reveal to her every thought!” (Od. 11.441-442). And in the Classical Era, Aristophanes (Comicus) has: ἀκούετε λεῶ· κατὰ τὰ πάτρια τοὺς Χοᾶς / πίνειν ... “Listen, people! Drink the pitchers like our ancestors did ... !” (Acharnenses 1000-1001) Dioscorus had a predilection for comedy: Old and New Athenian Comedy manuscripts survived in his archive, and he used comedy constructions in his own poetry, such as exaggerated compound words (see Poem 40).

[ὄττι χ]άρις καὶ χάρμα καὶ ἐ[ύε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς] : the reconstructions are by Maspero. Dioscorus uses the same verse at Poem 9.6 (Heitsch 20.6; MacCoull p. 105, verse 6).

χ]άρις καὶ χάρμα καὶ: Dioscorus seems to like this phrase: it appears in at least three other poems (Poem 9.6, 11.13, and 19.7; Heitsch 3.13, 11.6, 20.6; MacCoul p. 105.6, 106.6, 137.13).

This is a musical phrase. Note the *alliteration*, *synchysis*, and *consonance* that tie it together: χάρ - χάρ and A (χάρις) B (καὶ) A (χάρμα) B (καὶ) and χ- κ- χ- κ- . The two nouns are almost synonymous, but the first tends to refer to the source while the second tends to refer to the result: the favor given and the joy that arises.

χ]άρις : The word is used by Homer to express the “grace” or “beauty” of a

person, person's image, or thing (Od. 2.12, Il. 14.183, etc.). In a concrete sense, Homer uses it to express a "favor" bestowed on someone (Il. 5.211, etc.). It is also used by Homer as a personal noun. In mythology, there were three Graces (Χάριτες Il. 14.267, etc.), but Homer and Nonnus also use the singular (Il. 18.382; Dionysiaca 2.330, 11.374, etc.).

In Christian literature, Nonnus uses the term to express the spiritual favor that is bestowed by Christ (Paraphrasis 1.54, 11.150) and the gratitude for the spiritual favor bestowed by God (Paraphrasis 6.37, 9:127). In the New Testament, among other meanings of the word, it is used for God's favor to Christ: Τὸ δὲ παιδίον ἡύξανεν καὶ ἐκραταιοῦτο πληρούμενον σοφία, καὶ χάρις θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ' αὐτό. And the child grew and waxed strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." (Lc. 2:40) And in the Gospel of John, the word is closely associated with Christ and his mission: ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος· ὅτι ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο. "And of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (Jo. 1:16-17)

On the allegorical level, Dioscorus uses the word in a *metaphorical* sense. "He is grace" means that Christ is full of grace and the source of grace. Cf. the construction at verse 27: "You are the crown." Dioscorus is not saying that Christ is one of the three Graces, but the concept of one from the Trinity is a connotation here.

χάρμα : this noun is related to the verb χαίρω, “to be glad”, whose perfect passive participle is κεχαρμένος, “having been made glad”.

Homer uses this noun in an objective sense, as “the source of joy” (Il. 17.636, 23.342), and also in a subjective sense, as “joy” or “delight” received (Od. 19.471). Nonnus in his *Paraphrase* uses the word exclusively in the latter sense, and almost exclusively for Christ’s happiness, shared with the faithful: For example at *Paraphrase* 15.42-44 we find:

ὕμῃν δ’ ἔμπεδα ταῦτα φίλα φρονέων ἀγορεύω,
ὕμείων ἵνα χάρμα πέλοι καὶ πᾶσιν ἐν ὕμῃν
χάρμα πολυσφρήγιστον ἐμὸν τετελεσμένον εἴη.
*I, thinking kindly, say these sure things to you
so that joy might be yours and my joy,
secured by all of you, might be complete.*

ἐ[ὕε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς] : “the beloved flower of eloquence” is a *metaphor* with three possible meanings, all of which could be implied by the poet simultaneously. On the surface level, it seems to mean that the subject is well-liked and speaks exceptionally well (genitive of characteristic). It also suggests that the subject’s talent is the apex to which all good speakers strive. On the allegorical level, the phrase says that Christ is the Logos, who is beloved by God.

ἐ[ὕε]πίης : the word means literally “good speech” and implies “beauty of language”, “eloquence”, and “welcome words”. It is not used by Homer, but

three times by Nonnus in his *Dionysiaca* (13.51, 25.262, 41.376) and by other epic writers of the early Byzantine Era. These include Eudocia (*De martyrio sancti Cypriani* 2.212) and two of Dioscorus's fellow poets from the Thebaid: Pamprepius (P.Vindob. 29788 A–C, Fragment 4, line 19) and Christodorus (AP 2.381, 411, 415). The word is also found in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus (*Carmina moralia*, column 912, line 10; *Carmina de se ipso*, page 1257, line 3). All of these poets exerted an influence, direct or indirect, on Dioscorus. For example, note the verbal parallels between Dioscorus here and Christodorus in an *ecphrasis* in Book 2 of the *Greek Anthology*. Christodorus describes a statue of Herodotus (the historian from Halicarnassus) and notes how he had eloquently written in a dialect similar to Homer (377-381):

Οὐδ' Ἀλικαρνησοῦ με παρέδραμε θέσπιν ἀηδών,
Ἡρόδοτος πολυίδρις, ὃς ὠγυγίων κλέα φωτῶν,
ὅσσα περ ἠπείρων δυὰς ἤγαγεν, ὅσσα περ αἰῶν
ἔδρακεν ἐρπύζων, ἐνάταις ἀνεθήκατο Μούσαις,
μίξας εὐεπίησιν Ἰωνίδος ἄνθεα φωνῆς.

*Nor did I fail to notice the divine nightingale of Halicarnassus,
wise Herodotus, who had dedicated to the nine Muses
whatever deeds of ancient men the two lands
had brought forth, whatever creeping time had seen,
he having mixed with eloquence the flower of the Ionic dialect.*

ἄνθο[c] : This figurative word, “blossom” or “flower”, is found in Homer and Nonnus. It is also found in biblical literature, in which it is frequently used to

symbolize the transient glory of life. For instance: ἄνθρωπος, ὥσπερ χόρτος αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτοῦ / ὥσπερ ἄνθος τοῦ ἀγροῦ, οὕτως ἐξανθήσει. “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.” (Ps.

102/103:15) And: Πᾶσα σὰρξ χόρτος, καὶ πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπου ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν, τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. “All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall remain for ever. (Is. 40: 6-8) In the same sense, the word ἄνθος was also a favorite among early Christian writers.

More important for our study is that it was often used by Proclus in the sense of “the apex”. Proclus, the most influential philosopher of Late Antiquity, discussed in depth the Triad of the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. The transcendent Divinity was the ἄνθος τῆς τριάδος (Theologia Platonica, vol. 4, page 106, line 3). And again using ἄνθος, Proclus spoke about the apex of being (ἄνθος τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ἀκρότης καὶ κέντρον Theologia Platonica, vol. 3, page 14, lines 13-14), the apex of the intellect (τὸ ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ In Platonis Alcibiadem i, section 248, line 3), and the apex of the soul (πάσης ἡμῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνθος· Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica, Fragment 4, line 52).

On the allegorical level, Christ is the Logos, which is the Word of God, which is the apex of all speech. For Christ as both the Word and the child of God, see the beginning of Nonnus’s *Paraphrase* (1.1-5):

Ἄχρονος ἦν, ἀκίχνητος, ἐν ἀρρήτῳ λόγος ἀρχῇ,
ἰσοφυῆς γενετῆρος ὁμήλικος υἱὸς ἀμήτωρ,

καὶ λόγος αὐτοφύτοιο θεοῦ γόνος, ἐκ φάεος φῶς·
πατρὸς ἔην ἀμέριστος, ἀτέρμονι σύνθρονος ἔδρη·
καὶ θεὸς ὑψιγένηθλος ἔην λόγος.

*In the unspeakable beginning was the Word,
outside of time, beyond reach,
Son without a mother, like his Father,
and the Word was the child of the self-born God,
light from light;
He was indivisible from his Father, enthroned on a throne
without bounds;
And the Word was God, of high birth.*

For the eloquence of God, see ὥς γλυκέα τῷ λάρυγγί μου τὰ λόγιά σου, / ὑπὲρ μέλι
καὶ κηρίον τῷ στόματί μου. “How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea
sweeter than honey and honeycomb to my mouth.” (Ps. 118/119:103)

Verse 7

[ὕμνε] ὕσαι νέον υἱὰ πολυσκήπτρου παλλατίου
sing a hymn to the young Son of the palace of many scepters,

In its musicality, skillfulness, and seeming simplicity, verse 7 is one of the most accomplished in the poem. The *alliteration* is noteworthy. In the entire verse, there is a preponderance of *nu* and *upsilon* sounds, which *onomatopoeically* suggest the sound of hymning. And beginning after the main *caesura*, in contrast to

the mellow chanting sound, there is *alliteration* of *pi* and *tau* sounds, which *onomatopoeically* suggest the scepters pounding on the palace floor. The two phrases νέον υἱά and πολυκλήπτρου παλλατίου are contrasted further by word length: two syllables, two syllables || four syllables, four syllables. The short and spry words νέον υἱά highlight the youth, while the ponderous πολυκλήπτρου παλλατίου speak of authority. Dioscorus was an expert at *euphony*.

[ὕμνε]ῦσαι : Although previous editors supplied a verse (verse 5) to give the infinitive a supporting verb, such a restoration is not necessary from a papyrus or grammatical point of view. The imperative infinitive attracts attention because it is less common and is in a strong initial position, thereby the command is made more emphatic. This is a second person singular imperative, highlighting the collective nature of the singing congregation.

νέον υἱά : This phrase could mean either “new son” or “young son”, and both meanings could be implied by the poet. The standard phrase in epic poetry is φίλος υἱός (Il. 19.327, Od. 6.64, etc.), but Dioscorus had already used this adjective in the previous phrase: φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς], / [ὕμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἱά “beloved flower, / hymn the young son.” From what I could find in Greek literature, the precise phrase νέος υἱός is not common. In epic poetry, it is found among the *Fragments* of Hesiod (10a.55) and nine times in Nonnus (Dionysiaca 5.207, 8.355, etc.), where it means “young son”. In biblical literature, it does not appear in the New Testament, but a variation is found in the Septuagint translation of Exodus, where it refers to a “young son”, not a “new son”: ὁ δὲ θεράπων Ἰησοῦς υἱὸς Ναυη νέος οὐκ ἐξεπορεύετο ἐκ τῆς σκηνῆς. “But his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not

out of the tabernacle.” (33:11). The phrase was also used by Justin Martyr: καὶ οὐ μὴ γένηται ἔτι ἐκεῖ ἄωρος ἡμέραις καὶ πρεσβύτης ὃς οὐκ ἐμπλήσει τὸν χρόνον αὐτοῦ· ἔσται γὰρ ὁ νέος υἱὸς ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν. “And there will no longer be one tottering in age, or an old man that will not fill out his time: for his young son will be one hundred years old.” (Dialogus cum Tryphone, chapter 81, section 1, line 10) A variation of the phrase is found in Epiphanius: νέος τοῦ εἶναι υἱός “a son young in existence” (Acoratus, chapter 71, section 5 bis; Panarion, vol. 3, page 324, line 28; page 325, line 1). And there are other similar variations.

A different meaning is found in *Christus Patiens*, attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus. Christ is speaking to his mother from the cross, and tells her that John will be her “new son” (727-729):

Ἰδ', ὃ γυναικῶν ἐξ ἀπασῶν βελτίων,
ὁ παρθένος πάρεστιν υἱός σοι νέος.
Look, O you better than all women,
A virgin is present, a new son for you.

On the allegorical level, both meanings “young” and “new” are appropriate. Traditionally, Christ was not old, perhaps thirty years old or less, when he died. Historically, the date of birth might have been A.D. 6, when the Census of Quirinius was taken, and the date of death had to be after A.D. 26, when Pontius Pilate was appointed governor of Judaea, but before A.D. 36, when Pontius Pilate was removed. Roughly between 20 and 30 years old.

Christ was also a “new” man when he returned to his Father in heaven: he had been changed by the Incarnation. According to Anastasius of Sinai, who wrote an allegorical exegesis of Genesis at the end of the 7th century, the angels pointed out his change in appearance. Anastasius, obviously, could not have influenced Dioscorus. Nevertheless, Anastasius relied heavily on early Christian authors from Alexandria to write his *Hexaemeron*. In Book 4 he writes:

... τοὺς δὲ ἀστέρας ἄνωθεν ἐκ τοῦ στερεώματος, λέγω δὴ τοὺς ἁγίους ἀγγέλους, ἀτενίζοντας καὶ ὁρῶντας αὐτὸν ἄνω πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀνατρέχοντα καὶ θάπτον ἅπαντας προσυπαντῶντας καὶ προσκυνοῦντας καὶ χορεύοντας καὶ λέγοντας τοῖς ὑπερτάτοις αὐτῶν ἄρχουσιν· Ἄρατε πύλας οἱ ἄρχοντες ἡμῶν, ... νῦν ἐπὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατὰ ἀνατολὰς ἡλίου Ἐπετάσθη διπτέρυξ, Θεὸς ὁμοῦ καὶ ἄνθρωπος, ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀνέμων, πνευμάτων ἀσωμάτων ἐξαπτερύγων.

... and the stars of the firmament above—I am speaking about the holy angels—strained and watched Christ, as he hurried up toward them. As soon as they had all received him, they prostrated themselves and danced and sang and said to their highest leaders: “You, our leaders raise the gates! ... Now like the rising sun [he enters] the heaven of heaven. ... With two wings—both God and man—he has flown on the wings of the winds, the incorporeal spirits with six wings.” (Book 4, chapter 5, section 8)

πολυσκήπτρου παλλατίου : Literally “of the many-sceptered Palatium”. The

rare adjective πολύσκηπτος appears only in poetry and not before the Byzantine Era. Outside of Poem 17, I have found only three occurrences of the word. The phrase πολυσκήπτρου βασιλῆος was used by Dioscorus's contemporaries Paul the Silentiary and Agathias to refer to Justinian and Justin II respectively, where it may have suggested their rule over the Eastern and Western halves of the empire (Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae 281; Anthologia Graeca, Book 4, epigram 3, line 63). The phrase πολυσκήπτρων γενετήρων was used once by Juliana Anicia to refer to her father Valentinian III and her grandfather Theodosius II (Anthologia Graeca, Book 1, epigram 10, line 11). The related word μονόσκηπτος was used only twice: once by Aeschylus and once by Nonnus (to refer to Tiberius during the trial of Jesus).

It is significant that Dioscorus does not apply the adjective to the person of the emperor, as in the examples above, but transfers it to the place of rule: the palace. On the allegorical level, this suggests heaven, where the scepters could pertain to the angels (see Figures 2, 5, 12, and 13) or to the Trinity. St. Paul describes the Son, a divine speaker, arriving in heaven and inheriting God's kingship:

ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων, δι' οὗ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας· ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς, ... πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν· Ὁ θρόνος σου, ὁ θεός, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος, καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου.

In these last days he hath spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. The Son, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high But unto the Son he saith: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. And the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. (Hebr. 1:2-8)

Yet Dioscorus's πολυσκήπτρου παλλατίου most likely refers to the saints. In both Christian literature and art, the saints were represented as kings or royalty in a palace. A biblical image that relates to this phrase and might have influenced Dioscorus's imagery is a vision of the kings that surround God in heaven:

εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι· καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς.

And immediately I was in the spirit. And behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ... And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and on their heads crowns of gold. (Apoc. 4:2-4)

The twenty-four elders are the patriarchs of the twelve Hebrew tribes and the twelve apostles. The twenty-four golden crowns give a sense that the heavenly palace has many kings. As to the scepters of the saints and the power they inherit, the *Apocalypse* again presents an impressive image:

καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν, καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ, ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron—as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken—even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. (2:26-28)

John uses the term ῥάβδος; Dioscorus uses the term σκῆπτρον. The poet avoids using the vocabulary of the New Testament, but the imagery is parallel.

παλλατίου : In contrast to the adjective πολυκλήπτρου, which appears only in poetry, this term appeared only in prose before Dioscorus. For this and several more reasons, the word παλλατίου does not fit well in the verse here. It does not fit metrically. The real rhythm is πᾶλ λᾶ | τί οὐ. Even if Dioscorus had used one *lambda*, which is the more common spelling, the first *alpha* is still long. But Dioscorus is trying to make the word fit a ~ ~ | — — pattern. Another reason why the word does not fit into the verse is that παλλάτιον is a Latin word, Palatium or Pallatium, which is one of the

seven hills of Rome. Augustus had his residence on this hill, and after Augustus, the word could be applied to any palace. Dioscorus's spelling of the word with two *lambdas* is found elsewhere, but is unusual in Greek. It may have been taken directly from the lexicon of rhetorical terms created by Eudemus in the second century A.D.: Παλλάτιον: ὁ Ῥωμαίων βασιλικὸς οἶκος ἀπὸ τοῦ Πάλλαντος. "Pallatium: the royal house of the Romans, from the word Pallas [the son of Evander]." (Περὶ λέξεων ῥητορικῶν, Folio 171, line 10). The two *lambdas* are also found in a papyrus from the Hermopolite nome in Egypt, written in the seventh century:]ἐποίκ(ιον) Παλλατ[ί]ου (SPP 10 45, line 4). The double *lambdas* can also be found in Coptic papyri (see H. Hyvernat, *Les Actes des martyrs de l'Égypte*, 1, 4, 8, etc.). The spelling with one *lambda* is common in Greek prose and in the papyri.

It seems that by choosing a word and a spelling that are clearly out-of-place, Dioscorus is emphasizing the allegorical level, where the palace of many scepters is not in Constantinople, Rome, or Ravenna—but in heaven.

Verse 8

[καὶ πολυ]κυδῆεντα φιλόχριστον βασιλῆα·
and to the very glorious King, who loves Christ:

Whereas in verse 7 Dioscorus focused on the Son, his inheritance of the kingship, and his sharing of the kingship with the saints, verse 8 briefly turns its attention to the Father and King. As pointed out in the discussion above, the usual

phrase in epic literature was φίλος υἱός “beloved son” (Il. 19.327, Od. 6.64, etc.). Dioscorus wrote νέον υἱά “young son” in verse 7 because φίλος had been used in verse 6: φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς] “beloved flower”. In verse 8 we find out who the “beloved flower” is: φιλόχριστον “who loves Christ”. And who is doing the cherishing: the βασιλῆα, “the King”, his Father, God. With a small conjunction followed by a phrase of three massive words, Dioscorus has filled out an entire hexameter verse, thus giving considerable weight to the image of God as King.

[καὶ πολυ]κυδῆεντα : Maspero’s restoration of the beginning of the verse was [τον πολυ]κυδῆεντα, which makes the son the one that loves the king, who loves Christ. This works on the surface level, where the poem is addressed to a Christian emperor, but it is awkward on the allegorical level. So I have restored [καὶ πολυ]κυδῆεντα, which makes the King, who is the Father, the one that loves Christ. This restoration is harmonious with the rest of the poem on the allegorical level, and works on the surface level too, where the young son of the palace with many scepters is now the new emperor.

The rare adjective πολυκυδῆεις is found in two other poems by Dioscorus (Poems 18.26, 20.28; Heitsch 2.28, 5.2; MacCoull p. 135, verse 28; p. 91, verse 2). It is found nowhere else in Greek literature—except in the epic paraphrase of the Psalms. (In the *Anthologia Graeca*, the word is found three times, but in other forms: πολυκυδῆς, πολύκυδος, and πολυκύδιστος.) This paraphrase is now referred to as the *Homeric Psalter* (Joseph Golega, *Der homerische Psalter*, Ettal 1960) or *Metaphrasis Psalmorum* (Arthur Ludwich, Leipzig 1912). It is ascribed to Apollinaris Laodicensis (ob. c. 390), but it was probably composed by someone else, who has not been identified. The adjective

πολυκυδήεις appears at Psalter 10.7, 63.20, 88.4, and 97.4. The correspondences between the *Homeric Psalter* and Dioscorus's Poem 17, also written in an Homeric style, cannot be ignored. Here, by using an exceptionally rare adjective, Dioscorus points emphatically to this source. It would therefore be worthwhile to look at two instances of the adjective:

Psalter 10.7-8: νηῶ παμβασιλεὺς πολυκυδήεντι ἀνάσσων,
 οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα λαχὼν ὑψαύχενα θῶκον.
 The King of all, who is the Master, is in his glorious temple,
 possessing sparkling heaven, which is his high throne.
 (cf. Ps. 10/11:4)

Psalter 63.20-22 καὶ πολυκυδήεντα θεοῦ διαπέφραδεν ἔργα
 τέχνας ἀθανάτης παλάμης πραπίδεσσι δοκεύων.
 τερπέσθω βασιλῆος ἐπ' ἐλπωρῇσι δίκαιος.
 And he told plainly the glorious works of God,
 Pondering in his mind the craftsmanship
 of the immortal hand.
 Let the just man delight, awaiting the King.
 (cf. Ps. 63/64:9-10)

These and the other passages in the *Homeric Psalter* that use the rare adjective πολυκυδήεις emphasize God as King, and support Dioscorus's own focus on God as King in verse 8. The correspondences are not coincidental.

φιλόχριστον βασιλῆα : Stylistically, Dioscorus underlines the word φιλόχριστον in three ways. First, it is prepared by φ[ι]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς] in verse 6. Second, it comes after the main *caesura* of the verse, which is again feminine: ἐν τᾷ || φῖ λοῦχ ριτ τῶν. And third, the three spondees of the whole phrase make it metrically heavy.

This is a common phrase among Christian writers, who use it to describe the emperor; see: Gerontius, *Vita S. Melaniae Junioris*, Chapter 2, section 50, line 7 (τῷ φιλοχρίστῳ ἡμῶν βασιλεῖ Οὐαλεντινιανῷ); Gelasius Cyzicenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Book 3, chapter 10, section 20, line 1 (ὁ εὐσεβὴς καὶ φιλόχριστος βασιλεὺς Κωνσταντῖνος); Anatolius, *Epistula ad Leonem papam*, part 2, 4, page xxxv, line 45 (ὁ εὐσεβέστατος καὶ φιλόχριστος ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς Θεοδόσιος); Cyrillus Alexandrinus, *Contra Julianum*, Prologue, section 1, line 18 (ὦ φιλόχριστε βασιλεῦ Θεοδόσιε); Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Contra Julianum imperatorem* 1 (*orat.* 4), vol. 35, page 560, line 44 (ὦ θεϊότατε βασιλέων καὶ φιλοχριστότατε); etc. Dioscorus uses the phrase also in his legal documents. In the draft of a petition written to the Duke of the Thebaid between 567-570, he begins: Χ ἡ θεία πρόνοια καὶ ὁ φιλόχριστος ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς (P.Cair.Masp. I 67009.1; cf. the restoration at P.Lond. V 1674.1) In fact, φιλόχριστος became synonymous with “Christian” and was used to describe people, cities, and ideals. (See Lampe, s.v.) Thus the phrase sits comfortably on the surface level of meaning in Poem 17.

On the allegorical level, the phrase “the King that loves Christ” suggests the relationship between God and Christ, and recalls the scene of Christ’s baptism:

βαπτισθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εὐθὺς ἀνέβη ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ ἰδοὺ ἤνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδεν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὥσει περιστερὰν ἐρχόμενον ἐπ’ αὐτόν· καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν λέγουσα οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were opened unto him. And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice from heaven, saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mt. 3:16-17; cf. Mc. 1:10-11)

The same kind of scene is presented later in the same Gospel, at the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. This time it includes a statement calling attention to Christ’s spoken word (cf. ἐ[ὕε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς]):

ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος ἰδοὺ νεφέλη φωτεινὴ ἐπεσκίασεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἰδοὺ φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης λέγουσα· οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ.

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” (Mt. 17:5; cf. Mc. 9:7; Lc. 9:34-35)

Dioscorus has found a phrase that supports the encomiastic surface level, and at the same time advances the allegorical level of meaning. The Son is no longer a beloved flower, but is specifically Christ, and the one who loves him is God.

Verse 9

[οἶον δῶρο]ν ἐπήρατον ὃν Θεὸς ὥπασε κόσμῳ!
such a lovely gift that God gave to the world!

Dioscorus placed ὃν Θεὸς at the very center of his verse because it is the culmination of verses 7-9 and also the apex of verse 9 on the allegorical level of meaning. Verse 7 was devoted to the Son, verse 8 was devoted to the Father, and verse 9 brings the two together literally. The relative pronoun ὃν refers back to the νέον υἱά in verse 7. God had sent his beloved Son far away from heaven, and so the antecedent νέον υἱά is far away. Relaying the same separation, the two terms δῶρο]ν and κόσμῳ are at the far extremities of verse 9: the gift was sent far away to earth. But now they are joined again at the center: ὃν Θεὸς. The motion in this verse is brought out by the brevity of the seven short words, in contrast to the three long words in verse 8. And the dense *assonance* of *omicrons* and *omegas* joins the whole verse together into an exclamatory “Oh!” Dioscorus was a master of *euphony* and word placement.

[οἶον δῶρο]ν : Maspero proposed the restoration [οιον δωρο]ν, which finds support in Nonnus, who often uses the pair δῶρον ... ὀπάζω (Dionysiaca 5.129, 7.62, 19.93, 47.103, etc.) Maspero might have meant οἶον rather than οἶον; the former is found in the transcriptions by Heitsch and MacCoull. Fournet leaves the area blank: [... δῶρο]ν. If the former restoration is accepted, then the translation would be: “God gave to the world only this lovely gift.” On the allegorical level, the parallel would be: οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν

κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” (Jo. 3:16).

ἐπήρατον : This epic adjective is related to the verb ἔραμαι and means literally “causing love” or “creating delight”. It was used by Homer as an adjective only for things and places: modifying “feast” (δαιτὸς ἐπήρατου Il. 9.28), a “grotto” of the nymphs (ἄντρον ἐπήρατον Od. 13.103), etc. Nonnus used it to describe the lips of a nymph (χεῖλος ἐπήρατον Dionysiaca 48.647), the tears of a girl (ἐπήρατα δάκρυα Dionysiaca 48.235), etc. Here on the allegorical level, the gift of his Son gave delight both to God and to the world.

ᾤπαε : Dioscorus chose the right verb to express the giving of this gift. He did not say that God “gave a gift to the world,” but literally that he “gave the gift as a companion to the world” or “gave the gift to lead the world”. Compare the similar nuance found in these Homeric uses: ἐπεὶ ῥά οἱ ᾤπασα πομπόν (Il. 13.416); σοὶ γάρ με πατὴρ ἅμα πομπὸν ᾤπασσεν (Il. 24.461; cf. Od. 9.90); ἅμ’ ἡγεμόν’ ἐσθλὸν ᾤπασσον (Od. 15.310); ἀρχὸν δὲ μετ’ ἀμφοτέροισιν ᾤπασσα (Od. 10.204); and πολὺν δέ μοι ᾤπασε λαόν, i.e. “made me leader over many” (Il. 9.483). The restored exclamatory adjective οἶον with ᾤπαε can be compared to ὦ Ζεῦ, γυναικῶν οἶον ᾤπασας γένος! “O Zeus, what a race of women you have given!” (Aeschylus, Septem contra Thebas 256).

More significant for this study is the use of the verb ὀπάζω by Nonnus. Nonnus used the exact same clause that Dioscorus repeats here. Such an unmistakable borrowing builds a bridge to the entire passage in Nonnus:

οὐ γὰρ ἐὼν λόγον υἱὰ πατὴρ θεὸς ὥπασε κόσμῳ,
κόσμον ἵνα κρίνειε προώριον, ἀλλὰ πεσοῦσαν
ἀνδρομένην ἵνα πᾶσαν ἀναστήσειε γενέθλην·

*For God the Father gave his Son the Word to the world
not so that he might condemn the world to death,
but so that he might raise up the entire falling race of man.
(Paraphrasis 3.87-89)*

Nonnus used the exact same clause later in the *Paraphrase*, but this time to refer to Scripture, which God gave to guide the world (γράμμασιν ... τᾶπερ θεὸς ὥπασε κόσμῳ 5.180).

A similar clause appears in the *Vision of Dorotheus*. This papyrus (P.Bodm. XXIX) was discovered in the library of one of the original Christian monasteries, that at Pbow, south of Panopolis. The *Vision* was probably written before the *Paraphrase* by Nonnus and is considered the earliest Christian hexameter poem. Its opening two verses read: ... ἀπ' οὐρανóθ[εν θε]ὸς ἄγνός / Χρηστόν, ἄγαλμα ἐοῖο, δῖον φάος ὥπ[ασε κόσ]μῳ “... Holy God from heaven / gave Christ, his delight, a divine light, to the world.”

Thus in verse 9, Dioscorus uses a carefully chosen epic vocabulary to give just the right nuance to his surface level: God gave the emperor as a gift to the people to lead them. At the same time, Dioscorus ties together the allegorical meaning of the last three verses by a strong reference to a popular author, Nonnus, and perhaps to a visionary poem familiar to his monastic audience.

Verse 10

[ἤλυθεν] οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀληθέα πάντα νομεύει(ν).

Not according to the world's ways he came to shepherd all true things.

[ἤλυθεν] : the restoration of the *lacuna* is by Maspero, based on Poem 20.23

(Heitsch 2.23; MacCoull p. 135.23): ἄστεα κουρίζων διελήλυθες οὐ κατὰ κόσμον. Maspero also suggests [ασπετον] used adverbially as a possibility, based on Poem 32.30 (Heitsch 21.26; MacCoull p. 89.26): ἄσπετον οὐ κατὰ κό[σμ]ον ἐπὶ π[].

οὐ κατὰ κόσμον : Dioscorus uses this phrase in three other surviving poems—Poem 20.23, 26.8, and 32.30—and it is restored at 30.2. Maspero suggests, however, that it be accented as a relative pronoun οὗ κατὰ κόσμον, and he translates the phrase: “according to the order established by him (by God).” Heitsch, MacCoull, and Fournet accent the initial word as a negative particle: οὐ.

This phrase is perplexing and thus would arrest the audience’s attention. Homer uses the phrase often, with the meaning “in a disorderly fashion”. For example, Homer writes: μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλεῦσιν “rashly, improperly, to struggle against kings” (Il. 2.214). And: ὅσσάτιόν τε καὶ οἶον ἀπόλεσε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν / μάψ ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἐμοὶ δ’ ἄχος “and he has destroyed so great a people as the Achaeans, recklessly and not in a

seemly way, but to my anguish” (Il. 5.758-759). And in a contrast Homer writes: Ἡνιόχῳ μὲν ἔπειτα ἑὸν ἐπέτελλεν ἕκαστος / ἵππους εὖ κατὰ κόσμον ἐρυκέμεν αὐθ’ ἐπὶ τάφρῳ. “Then each gave a command to his own charioteer to restrain the horses in an orderly fashion at the trench.” (Il. 12.84-85) In Classical literature, the phrase meant “not according to custom” (Plato, *Leges* 804b; Thucydides 5.63); “not duly” (Isocrates 2.6); or “unreasonably” or “absurdly” (Plato *Cratylus* 421d). And in the 5th or 6th century, Hesychius of Alexandria, in his lexicon of unusual Greek words and phrases, included οὐ κατὰ κόσμον and defined it as οὐ κατὰ τρόπον. But these meanings are nonsensical in an encomiastic environment, where abundant praise is expected.

In Christian literature, however, the phrase had an entirely different meaning: “not according to the world” meant “according to the Spirit.” Phrased differently, κατὰ κόσμον meant “according to the ways of the world,” which implied “not according to the ways of heaven.” For example, Clement of Alexandria wrote in the *Paedagogus*:

πίστις δὲ οὐ σοφῶν τῶν κατὰ κόσμον, ἀλλὰ τῶν κατὰ θεόν ἐστὶν τὸ κτῆμα· ἥ δὲ καὶ ἄνευ γραμμάτων ἐκπαιδεύεται, καὶ τὸ σύγγραμμα αὐτῆς τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν ἅμα καὶ θεῖον ἀγάπη κέκληται, σύνταγμα πνευματικόν.

Faith is the possession not of those that are wise according to the world, but of those [who are wise] according to God. And it is taught without books. Indeed its handbook, both unrefined and divine, is called love—a spiritual composition. (Book 3, chapter 11, section 78)

In biblical literature, the κόσμος was the temporal, visible world, in contrast to the eternal, spiritual world of heaven: Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῇ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἀγαπήσας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς. “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” (Jo. 13:1) The κόσμος was the kingdom of evil: νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω· καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν. “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (Jo. 12:31-32)

The biblical and Christian meanings above do not create any more harmony on the surface level than the Homeric or Classical meaning. Dioscorus cannot say that the new emperor will govern according to spiritual laws, and not the laws of the earth. In biblical literature, the κόσμος included the laws of nature and the laws of religion, from whose bondage Christ freed his believers (cf. Gal. 4:1-7). Some assistance, however, is offered by Athanasius of Alexandria, who offers a specific nuance to the word κόσμος:

ὁ οὖν θάνατός ἐστιν ὁ κόσμος, ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐστὶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη. μακρὰν οὖν ὁ κόσμος ἀπὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης, καθ’ ὅσον ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ τῆς ζωῆς· ἐὰν οὖν πορεύῃ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ πορεύῃ καὶ ἐκτὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ γίνῃ κατὰ τὴν θείαν γραφήν. ἐὰν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ πορεύῃ, ἐν

τῇ ζωῇ πεπόρευσαι, καὶ οὐ μὴ ᾗσῃταί σου θάνατος· οὐκ ἔστι γὰρ
παρὰ τοῖς δικαίοις θάνατος, ἀλλὰ μετάθεσις· μετατίθεται γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ
κόσμου τούτου εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον ἀνάπαυσιν·

*The world is death; righteousness is life. As far away as death is from
life, so the world is from righteousness. If therefore you live in the
world, you live in death and are apart from God (according to divine
Scripture). If you live in righteousness, you have crossed over into
life, and death will not touch you. For death is not present to the
righteous, but a change: for he is changed from this world to the eter-
nal rest. (De virginitate [Sp.], section 18, line 21)*

Athanasius does not use the phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, but he does appear to
equate righteousness with οὐ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. Thus on the surface level, if we
look ahead to the infinitive νομεύει(ν) at the end of the verse, rather than the
main verb [ἦλυθεν] at the beginning, Dioscorus might be encouraging the
emperor “to govern in righteousness.” But now perhaps we are getting too
far from the actual phrase that Dioscorus chose: οὐ κατὰ κόσμον.

Up to this point Dioscorus has been using an epic vocabulary to support the surface
level, which is to praise the visiting image of the new emperor. Here, he re-
jects the Homeric meaning of the phrase and adopts an exclusively Christian
meaning. Is this evidence of a mishmash of Hellenistic and Christian sensi-
bilities? Hardly. More likely, it is a clear shift to the deeper level of
meaning. Dioscorus crafted the beginning of this poem to reach a climax at
verse 10. While Dioscorus had painstakingly concealed the allegorical level
in the earlier verses, beginning already at verse 8 he started to reveal the

deeper level of meaning. As the word φιλόχριστον, so the phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον has no place in the Homeric language of the poem and no place in the secular rhetorical design of the encomium. At this point, Dioscorus allows the allegorical level not only to be revealed but also to gain ascendancy. Yes, the emperor in the 6th century was Christian, but Dioscorus chose in Poem 17 not to use a biblical or Christian vocabulary to praise him. When the poet breaks his own rules, it is for a reason.

And it is at the allegorical level of meaning that Dioscorus begins the next nine verses (11-19), which focus on St. Theodosius: “With divinely inspired counsels [God] nurtured the wise and illustrious spirit of Theodosius.” No longer the deeper level of meaning, the spiritual becomes the primary level of meaning, supported by the Homeric and rhetorical elements.

νομεύειν : It is interesting that Dioscorus abbreviates the infinitive: he put a stroke above the final syllable νομευεῖ. Without the stroke, the infinitive could have served as the main verb, and the missing first word of the verse could have been an adverb, as Maspero had suggested.

The verb νομεύω is Homeric and means literally “to put to graze” or “to drive afield”. It is used for a shepherd tending his flock. For example: καλλίτριχα μῆλα νομεύων (Od. 9.336); and ἐνόμει νομὸν κάτα πίονα μῆλα (Od. 9.217). Nonnus uses this verb in the same way: βόας καὶ μῆλα νομεύων (Dionysiaca 38.70); and figuratively: Ὑμνου μηλονόμοιο βόας Κυθήρεια νομεύει “Cytherea tends the oxen of the herding hymn” (Dionysiaca 15.286). The related noun is νομεύς, which is a herdsman: κύνες τ’ ἄνδρες τε

νομῆες (Il. 17.65). The related adjective means “pastoral”: νομευτικὴν ἐπιστήμην and τῶν νομευτικῶν ἡμῖν πολλῶν φανεισῶν ἄρτι τεχνῶν (Plato, Politicus 267b, 267d). These examples indicate that Dioscorus is not talking about an emperor. The word’s connotations are about a shepherd. If Dioscorus had wanted to use the verb figuratively to mean “direct” or “manage”, he would have chosen the variation νομάω, as Nonnus had done (Dionysiaca 7.110). Thus, from the beginning to the end of verse 10, Dioscorus remains at the spiritual level of meaning.

Christ’s ministry was often compared to the work of a shepherd, and his disciples to sheep. Prophetically in the Old Testament: Κύριος ποιμαίνει με, καὶ οὐδέν με ὑστερήσει. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Ps. 22/23:1) And: ὥς ποιμὴν ποιμανεῖ τὸ ποῖμνιον αὐτοῦ· καὶ τῷ βραχίονι αὐτοῦ συνάξει ἄρνας καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἐχούσας παρακαλέσει. “He shall tend his flock like a shepherd. And he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” (Is. 40:11) Then in the Gospels: Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλὸς καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ καὶ γινώσκουσιν με τὰ ἐμὰ. “I am the good shepherd and know my sheep and am known of mine.” (Jo. 10:14) And also in the Epistles: καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομειῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον. “And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (I Pet. 5:4)

*[ἦλθεν] : If the restoration is correct, Dioscorus creates a ring structure that connects the final verse of this section with the first two verses of the poem: ἵκανε ... ἵκανε ... ἦλθεν “he has come ... he has come ... he came.”



Figures 15-16. *Antinoöpolis*. It is possible that Dioscorus wrote Poem 17 while living in Antinoöpolis and doing legal work there.



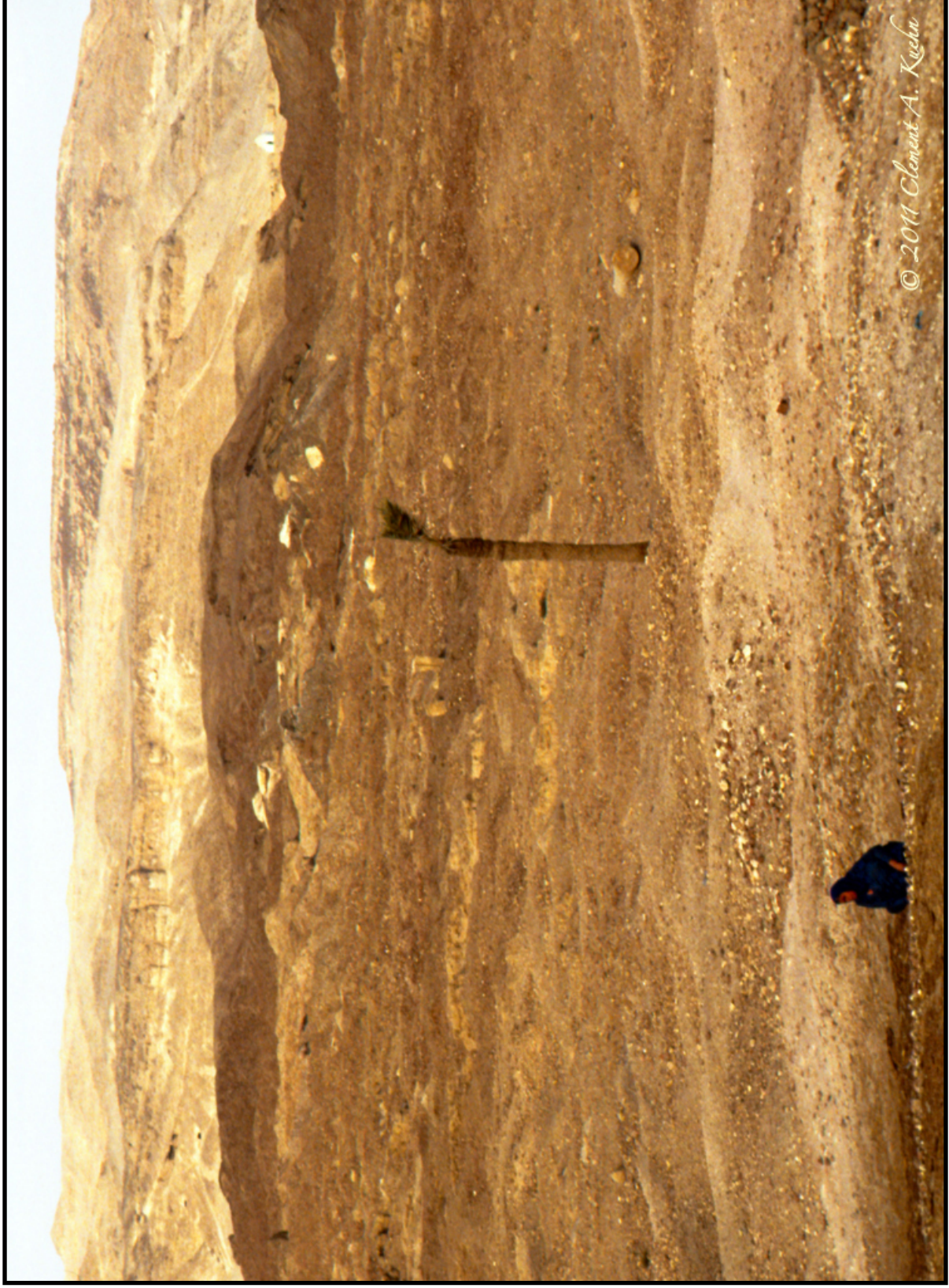


Figures 17-18. *Antinoöpolis*. About 135 km. northeast of Aphrodito, it was the capital city of the Thebaid in Upper Egypt and the residence of the Duke.





Figures 19-20 (following page). *Antinoöpolis*. The ancient site lies beneath the modern village of Sheikh Abada and continues into the desert of Wadi Abada. Monks lived in the caves of the cliffs; several monasteries were built nearby.



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COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 RECTO

Verses 11-19: Theodosius

Verses 11-12

[κλεινότ]ατον δ' ἀτίταλλε θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν βουλαῖς
[σώφρον]ος εὐσεβίης Θεοδοσίου πάνσοφον ἄσθμα,
*With divinely inspired counsels he nurtured the wise and illustrious
spirit of Theodosius, of clear-thinking piety,*

The third part of Poem 17 recto focuses on Theodosius. It starts dramatically with a spondaic line, which is rare in the poetry of Dioscorus. The final two feet of verse 11 are $\bar{\epsilon}\sigma \sigma\bar{\iota}\nu \mid \beta\bar{o}\nu \lambda\alpha\bar{\iota}\varsigma$ instead of the required $\text{—} \text{~} \text{~} \mid \text{—} \text{—}$. This change in the rhythm of the poem stresses the beginning of a triad of adjectives involving the mind. The first adjective θεοφραδής means in an active sense “speaking from God” or “prophetic” (Orpheus, Fragmenta 271), and in a passive sense “indicated by God” (Proclus, Hymni 6.8). It is related to the poetic noun φραδή, which means “understanding” or “knowledge” (τῶν δὲ μελλόντων τετύφλωνται φραδαί Pindarus, Olympia 12.9). The compound adjective θεοφραδής suggests an understanding of God. The second adjective in the triad, σώφρων, is a restoration by Maspero and means “of sound mind”. And the third adjective, πάνσοφος, means “very clever”. It is difficult to assess how these adjectives apply to St. Theodosius. Only a few fragments of his literary output have survived. Yet

his entry in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* begins in this fashion:

وبامر الله اجتمع الاساقفة والشعب الارثوذكسى بعد نياحة طيماتاوس وبتدبير السيد
المسيح قسموا² الاب القديس تاودوسيوس بطركاً وكان بتولاً عارفاً بالكتابة³ البيعة وبعد

بكتابة البيعة G بالكتب E. 3. — اوسموا F. 2.

By the command of God, the bishops and orthodox people assembled after the death of Timothy, and, by the dispensation of the Lord Christ, they ordained the holy Father Theodosius patriarch. He was a virgin, and a master of the literary style used in ecclesiastical writings. (PO 4 [=1.4], pp. 455-456; translation by B. Evetts)

Although written in Arabic, it seems that from the 6th century onwards the *History* was derived from eyewitness Coptic accounts.

It is clear that Theodosius is the honoree of this part of the poem and of the entire hymn. The name Theodosius in verse 12 is in a strong position. It comes after the main *caesura* of the verse (which is masculine) and is emphasized by the *paronomasia* (word play) in the following verse: Θεοδοκίου ... Θεοῦ δέος. Θεοδόσιος is an adjectival substantive that means “given by God”; Θεοῦ δέος means a “fear of God”. Most importantly, the name Theodosius is at the apex of a *tricolon crescens* (ascending) and *tricolon diminuens* (descending) of syllable length: three four five (= Θεοδόσιος) three two. The discussion of his spirit (see πάνσοφον ἄσθμα below) is highlighted by the *onomatopoeic assonance* of *omicrons* and *omega*. It is also noteworthy that there is no verb, participle, or

infinitive in verse 14. Theodosius, his piety, and his spirit, held tightly together in one large clause, are thus presented as an unchanging unity.

The name Theodosius is the first proper name (besides Θεός) that appears in the poem as it has survived. The name Justin (suggested by some editors for verses one and two) is a reconstruction based upon circumstantial evidence.

[κλεινότη]ατον : is a reconstruction by the original editor Maspero. If the restoration is correct, the adjective modifies the direct object at the end of the following verse: ἄσθμα. This *hyperbaton* ties verses 11 and 12 together as a couplet, as does the triad of *mind* adjectives.

The superlative adjective κλεινότατος (“very famous”) does not appear elsewhere in the poetry of Dioscorus, Homer, or Nonnus. It does appear in Classical poetry, especially the comedies of Aristophanes. In the comedy *Peace*, Aristophanes has the chorus sing: εἰ δ’ οὖν εἰκός τινα τιμῆσαι, θύγατερ Διός, ὅστις ἄριστος / κωμωδοδιδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων καὶ κλεινότατος γεγένηται, / ἄξιος εἶναί φησ’ εὐλογίας μεγάλης ὁ διδάσκαλος ἡμῶν. “If ever it were proper, daughter of Zeus, to honor some man who has become the best / and the most famous teacher of choruses, / then our teacher is worthy of this great blessing.” (Pax 736-738) And calling upon the inhabitants of the heavenly city of the *Birds*, Aristophanes writes: ὦ κλεινοτάτην αἰθέριον οἰκίσας πόλιν “O you dwelling in the most famous ethereal city” (Aves 1277). Suda, who wrote a Greek lexicon in the tenth century, also notes Aristophanes’ use of of this word (Lexicon, *kappa*, entry 573, line 3). Dioscorus, judging from his surviving library and his imitations, had a predilection for Athenian Comedy, both Old and New. The superlative adjective κλεινότατος is also

frequent in Proclus (*Theologia Platonica*, vol. 4, page 21, line 13; page 28, line 8; etc.).

ἀτίταλλε : is the reduplicated form of ἀτάλλω, which means literally “to rear” or “to tend”. Maspero notes that this is the imperfect tense and that the subject is the πάνσοφον ἄσθμα of verse 12. If so, then it must be understood as intransitive. This is not the usual way that this verb is used. Dioscorus uses it in a transitive sense (with a direct object) in the only other clear instance in his poetic corpus: ἀκτεάνος ἀτίταλλε τὸ ρὸν μένος. “Your power nourished the poor.” (Poem 14.37; Heitsch 13.13; MacCoull p. 96.13; cf. Poem 28.7) Homer uses the verb exclusively with direct objects, to describe the care given to horses, hogs, etc. (Il. 5.271; Od. 14.41; etc.). It is also used by Homer for rearing up children (Il. 24.60, etc.). Nonnus uses it exclusively as a transitive verb (Dionysiaca 3.379, 16.103, 39.33). I would hesitate therefore to understand it here intransitively. It makes more sense when Christ, the subject of the previous verse, continues as the subject here: Christ nourished the spirit of Theodosius.

θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν : The restoration is by Maspero. As mentioned above, the word creates a spondaic verse, which is striking. Dioscorus wrote an alternative in the right hand margin: θεορρήτοι[σιν], which would also form a spondaic verse. He was intent, one way or another, on emphasizing this word. The marginal alternate emphasizes speaking: θεορρήτω[ν] ... [ε]ὐεπιόων “with words ... spoken from the god [the Muse]” (Poem 11.27; Heitsch 3.27; MacCoull p. 137.27). The original word in the papyrus θεοφραδής emphasizes the mind—which Neoplatonic and Christian philosophers would designate

with the noun νοῦς. There are other differences between the two word choices. θεόρρητος is more passive: inspired, in the sense of “uttered by God.” θεοφραδής is more active: inspired, and thus “speaking from God.”

Both words are used by Nonnus, but both are uncommon. The alternate θεόρρητος is rare: I find only fifteen occurrences in Greek literature to the end of the Byzantine Era, and only Methodius, Nonnus, and the *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta* used it before Dioscorus. The original θεοφραδής, which Dioscorus never marked and thus never rejected, was used by Philo, Proclus, Nonnus, and Christodorus before Dioscorus. Hesychius, writing during the reign of Justinian, defined the noun form as “with the opinions, words, thoughts of God” θεοφραδίαις· θεοῦ γνώμαις, λόγοις, φράσεσι (Lexicon, *theta*, entry 323; line 1; cf. entry 322). Nonnus uses θεοφραδής only in his *Paraphrase*, and the five occurrences there are informative. He employs the word when describing Christ as a teacher (3.9), when describing his teachings (3.38, 8.154, 12.177), and when describing his disciples after his death (20.113).

Here one might suggest, based on the connotations of the word and the usage and influence of Nonnus, that the original θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν βουλαῖς “divinely inspired counsels” are Theodosius’s own writings to the faithful. Theodosius’s spirit (see the discussion of ἄσθμα below) was nourished by writings that were speaking from God. This is an important, if overly-semantic interpretation. Although Dioscorus might be suggesting that Scriptures, as spoken from God, were a source of spiritual nourishment, Dioscorus is actually saying that Theodosius’s spirit was nourished by his own inspired writing.

πάνκοφον ἄσθμα : means literally “the all-knowing breath” or “the very wise breath”. In Homer, the word ἄσθμα means “hard breathing” or “panting” (Il. 15.10, 241, etc.). In early Byzantine literature, including Nonnus, it is used simply for “breathing” or “breath” (Agathias, AP 9.677; Colluthus 179; Dionysiaca 1.2).

The term ἄσθμα is used only once in biblical literature, in the Hellenistic apocryphal book The Wisdom of Solomon (11:18). The biblical term for ἄσθμα is πνεῦμα. In biblical and Christian literature, πνεῦμα has a variety of meanings. It is used for “breath”: ἀλλ’ ἐφ’ ἡμῶν μὲν τὸ πνεῦμα ἢ τοῦ ἀέρος ἐστὶν ὀλκή, ἀλλοτρίου πράγματος πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος σύστασιν ἀναγκαίως εἰσελκομένου τε καὶ προχεομένου. “But for us, the πνεῦμα is the drawing of air, which is a foreign thing to the constitution of the body, necessarily drawn in and poured forth.” (Gregorius Nyssenus, Oratio catechetica magna, section 2, lines 5-7). And πνεῦμα is used for the breath of life (Gen. 6:17, 7:15), the Holy Spirit (Mc. 3:29, etc.), and the individual’s spirit (I Thess. 5:23, cf. Rom. 8:2; I Cor. 5:3).

Adhering to his word strategy, Dioscorus here employs the Homeric ἄσθμα in place of the Christian πνεῦμα in the sense of the individual’s “spirit” or “soul”. This interpretation is supported by the modifying adjective πάνκοφον, literally “all-wise spirit” or “very wise spirit”. This adjective might be *proleptic*: Theodosius’s spirit does not become wise until after Christ has nourished it with inspiration. For a parallel biblical passage, see: ἀλλὰ πνευμά ἐστιν ἐν βροτοῖς, πνοὴ δὲ παντοκράτορός ἐστιν ἢ διδάσκουσα.

“But there is a spirit in men: and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8).

Verses 13-14

[ἐκ γέν]νης μεθέποντα Θεοῦ δέος ἡδέ γε θεσμούς,
[θείω]ν χριστοφόρων ὃς ἀλουργίδα οἶδε φορῆναι.
*who pursued since birth a fear of God and his laws,
who knows how to bear the purple robe of the Christ-bearing saints.*

Having explained Theodosius’s source of inspiration, Dioscorus now describes his lifestyle and ultimate reward. In verse 14, [θείω]ν χριστοφόρων occupies the first half before the *caesura*, and ὃς ἀλουργίδα οἶδε φορῆναι occupies the second half. This creates a balance between the saints on one hand, and Theodosius on the other, who now joins them in this verse. The *polyptoton*, -φόρων ... φορῆναι, emphatically ties the two halves together. The verse is further unified by the notable *assonance*. In contrast to verse 13 with its many *epsilons* (and accented *epsilons*), Verse 14’s *omicron* and *omega* sounds support its motif of persecution and suffering.

If the restoration [θείω]ν is correct, it recalls Θεοῦ of verse 13, Θεοδοκίου of verse 12, and θ[εοφ]ραδέεσσιν of verse 11, tying these four verses together into a quatrain. The general movement of the four verses is simple: (a) Theodosius was divinely inspired; (b) Theodosius, his piety, and his spirit were as one; (c) his activities were devoted to God; and finally (d) he joined the saints in heaven.

[ἐκ γέν]νης : The restoration is by Maspero and is based on Poem 6.6 (MacCoull, p. 123, verse 4). If correct, it is recalling a standard biblical concept:

ἐπὶ σὲ ἐπεστηρίχθην ἀπὸ γαστροῦ,
ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου σύ μου εἶ σκεπαστής·
ἐν σοὶ ἡ ὕμνησίς μου διὰ παντός.
*By thee have I been holden up from the womb:
thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
my hymn shall be continually of thee. (Ps. 70/71:6)*

ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐκσπάσας με ἐκ γαστροῦ,
ἡ ἐλπίς μου ἀπὸ μαστῶν τῆς μητρός μου·
ἐπὶ σὲ ἐπερρίφην ἐκ μήτρας,
ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου θεός μου εἶ σύ.
*But thou art he that took me out of the womb:
thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
I was cast upon thee from the womb:
thou art my God from my mother's belly. (Ps. 21:10-11 / 22:9-10)*

μεθέποντα Θεοῦ δέος ἡδέ γε θεσμούς : There is a grammatical problem with this participle, which gives it extra emphasis. The participle should be neuter in gender, to agree with ἄσθμα, but it is masculine. It is as if the spirit of Theodosius (Θεοδοσίου ... ἄσθμα) were Theodosius himself. The Patriarch's actions, Dioscorus implies, were controlled by his spirit.

There is also a typo by Dioscorus, which is inconsequential. He changed, in the line, the original ἡδὲ καὶ to an ἡδέ γε to solve a metrical problem: — ◡ — in the sixth foot. What he meant was ἡδέ τε, which was the standard conjunction and which he used in his other poems. He was perhaps thinking momentarily of the similar Homeric article ἦδε γε as in ἦδε γε βουλή (Od. 2.372).

The word μεθέπω is used frequently by Dioscorus in his poetry: see Poems 32.2, 17; 34.7; 35.4 (Heitsch 21.2, 14; 23.7; and 24.4). It was used by Homer and often by Nonnus. It means “to follow after”, “carry”, or “cherish”. Here, a *zeugma* is created. The participle must mean “carrying” when applied to a fear of God (cf. Pindar, *Nemea* 6.13). But it must mean “following after” in the sense of “keeping” when applied to the laws of God.

I can find no good witness in Greek literature where μεθέπω is used to express “keep the law.” Thus the solution above is not entirely satisfactory. Psalm 18 (LXX), however, uses a *metaphor* that might help. In this Psalm, David speaks about the fear of God and compares God’s laws to gold that is much desired.

ὁ νόμος τοῦ κυρίου ἄμωμος, ἐπιστρέφων ψυχάς·
ἡ μαρτυρία κυρίου πιστή, σοφίζουσα νήπια·
τὰ δικαιώματα κυρίου εὐθεῖα, εὐφραίνοντα καρδίαν·
ἡ ἐντολὴ κυρίου τηλαυγής, φωτίζουσα ὀφθαλμούς·
ὁ φόβος κυρίου ἀγνός, διαμένων εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος·
τὰ κρίματα κυρίου ἀληθινά, δεδικαιωμένα ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό,

ἐπιθυμητὰ ὑπὲρ χρυσίον καὶ λίθον τίμιον πολὺν

καὶ γλυκύτερα ὑπὲρ μέλι καὶ κηρίον.

καὶ γὰρ ὁ δοῦλός σου φυλάσσει αὐτά·

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;

the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever;

the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether,

more to be desired are they than gold and a very precious jewel,

sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

And thy servant keeps them. (Ps. 18:8-12 / 19:7-11)

The parallels between this Psalm and Dioscorus's verse 13 are unmistakable. There is the fear of the Lord (ὁ φόβος κυρίου) and the laws (ὁ νόμος τοῦ κυρίου, τὰ δικαιώματα κυρίου, ἡ ἐντολὴ κυρίου, τὰ κρίματα κυρίου). There is a desire for the laws (ἐπιθυμητὰ), and the devout keeps them (ὁ δοῦλός σου φυλάσσει αὐτά). There are no verbal correspondences between the poem by Dioscorus and the Psalm by David, but Dioscorus normally avoids biblical vocabulary. We can safely assume, however, that his devout audience would have been familiar with the concepts and the imagery in this Psalm. If Dioscorus was drawing from Psalm 18's metaphor of treasure, there is still a *zeugma* in his use of μεθέπω: Theodosius was "carrying" a fear of God, but was "cherishing" his Laws like treasure. Yet now both meanings of μεθέπω are supported by other authors. To strengthen the parallel, the second half of verse 12 of Psalm 18 says that there is a reward for keeping the Laws of

God: ἐν τῷ φυλάσσειν αὐτὰ ἀνταπόδοσις πολλή. “In the keeping of them there is great reward.” Verse 14 of the Dioscorian hymn describes the reward that Theodosius receives: the purple robe of sainthood.

[θείω]ν χριστοφόρων : The restoration is by Maspero. Perhaps Dioscorus also corrected himself: it seems that he had originally written χριστοφορον.

The singular χριστοφόρος and the plural χριστοφόροι are quite common, though never in biblical literature. Χριστοφόρος means literally “Christ-bearing” and could be used for any Christian in general and even as a courtesy title (P.Lond. 1926.1). The term is used especially for one that is filled with or inspired by Christ: such as martyrs (Gregorius Nyssenus, Encomium in sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem ii, vol. 46, page 721, line 17; page 724, line 51; etc.), virgins (Athanasius, Vita Antonii, chapter 61, line 4), and the apostles (Athanasius, Contra gentes, section 5, line 23). The last is how the term is used in a document by Dioscorus: ὅρος τῶν χριστοφόρων ἀποστόλων “the Monastery of the Christ-Bearing Apostles” (P.Cair.Masp. I 67003.5). The term is also used in Christian literature for the emperor Constantine (Vita Pachomii Σ 76, p. 251, line 22).

The phrase θεῖος χριστοφόρος or θεῖοι χριστοφόροι does not appear elsewhere in the surviving poetry of Dioscorus, nor in Greek literature prior to Dioscorus. After Dioscorus, in the 10th century, we find θεῖος Χριστοφόρος “Saint Christophor”, but that is something else (Orestes, Vita et conversatio Christophori et Macarii, section 13, line 49; section 17, line 12). θεῖος, however, is a common word, from Homer on. The adjective means “divine”

and is usually applied to gods, heroes, and emperors. In Christian literature, it is applied to God and to anyone or anything that shares in his divinity, including saints. The term is even applied to the emperor Constantine (Agathangelus, *Historia Armeniae* [versio Graeca], chapter 166, line 1).

Dioscorus in his poetry uses the term θεῖος in ways similar to the above. He uses it as a substantive to refer to God, as when he repeats Christ's preeminent law: [φιλ]εῖς τὸ θεῖον κ[αὶ] φιλ[εῖς] τοὺς πλησίους "You love God and you love your neighbors" (Heitsch 10.14; 17.13; cf. 17.11). And he uses it apparently to refer to the Son of God (though other editors differ), where the biblical vocabulary is replaced by Homeric:

ὦ θεῖον ὄντως κ[αὶ] ἀκριβῶς χρ[υ]σοῦν γένος, (40)

γουνάζο[μα]ί σε, [προσ]τάτη[ν τ]ῶν προστατῶν,

γουν[ά]ζομ[αί] σ[ε] ...παν.... βασιλέω[ν.]

O truly divine and purely gold descendent,

I genuflect before you, Lord of Lords,

I genuflect before you, ... of Kings.

(Poem 18.1-3; Heitsch 5.40-43; MacCoull, p. 92.40-42;

cf. Poem 11.1-3; Heitsch 3.1-3; MacCoull, p. 137.1-3)

Compare to Dioscorus here the common biblical phraseology for Christ:

βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords"

(Apoc. 19:16; etc.). If Maspero's restoration of verse 14 is correct, then

[θείω]ν χριστοφόρων is emphasizing the saints, who are the "divine

Christians". Perhaps, even more specifically, the apostles. The Patriarch of

Alexandria was considered a direct descendent of the apostle Mark.

ὁς ἀλουργίδα οἶδε φορῆναι : “who knows how to bear the purple robe.” If Theodosius, now in heaven, knows how to wear the regal robe of sainthood, then Dioscorus is implying that he had some practice: he was living like a saint while still on earth. This usually involves not only an ascetic lifestyle, but also suffering.

The ἀλουργίς is a “purple robe”. It does not appear in Homer or Nonnus, but it is common in Greek literature, especially for the garment worn by the wealthy and the emperors. In Christian literature, it is used metaphorically for St. Paul’s blindness, which is called the ἀλουργίς Θεοῦ (Isidorus Pelusiota, Epistulae I 346). The word is also used metaphorically for the humanity of Christ, which he had to bear to complete his mission: τὴν ἀλουργίδα τοῦ σώματος (Joannes Damascenus, Orationes de imaginibus tres, section 1,4, lines 63-64). With these comparisons in mind, one needs to recall that Christ once wore a purple robe: during his Passion, when it was used to mock him. The biblical vocabulary, which Dioscorus usually avoids, is τὸ πορφυροῦν ἱμάτιον. See:

καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται πλέξαντες στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῦ τῇ κεφαλῇ, καὶ ἱμάτιον πορφυροῦν περιέβαλον αὐτόν, καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτόν καὶ ἔλεγον, Χαῖρε, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων· καὶ ἐδίδοσαν αὐτῷ ῥαπίσματα. Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν ἔξω ὁ Πιλάτος καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἴδε ἄγω ὑμῖν αὐτόν ἔξω, ἵνα γνῶτε ὅτι οὐδεμίαν αἰτίαν εὕρισκω ἐν αὐτῷ. ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔξω, φορῶν τὸν ἀκάνθινον στέφανον καὶ

τὸ πορφυροῦν ἱμάτιον. καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἴδου ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said: "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they smote him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them: "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him." Then came Jesus forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them: "Behold the man!" (Jo. 19:2-5)

One might note the verbal correspondence here: like Theodosius that bears the purple robe (φορῆναι), Christ is bearing (φορῶν) the purple robe. But φορέω is common in the context of clothing.

Verses 15-16

[σπεύδεό] νυν, στρατιάρχε, céθεν καλέειν ναετῆρας.

[....].ος ἔπλεο μοῦνος, ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα κομίσῃς.

Hurry now, commander, and call your inhabitants.

You were unique: receive the illustrious gifts.

The restoration [σπεύδεο] is by Maspero. He notes that the poet is now addressing the Duke of the Thebaid, the στρατιάρχος, and wants him to assemble the citizens of the province to assist in the festival. Maspero's interpretation works well for the surface level of meaning.

Note in verse 15 the strong *alliteration of sigmas*, and the way in which

Dioscorus mirrors their use in the *consonance* of verse 16. A *sigma* begins verse 15, begins the vocative, and begins the second half of the verse (after the main *caesura*). Then a *sigma* ends verse 15, ends the first word of verse 16, ends the first half of verse 16 (after the main *caesura*), and two *sigmas* end verse 16. The strategy effectively binds the two verses together.

[Cπεύδεο] νῦν, Cτρατίαρχε, Cέθεν καλέειν ναετῆραC.

[...]οC ἔπλεο μοῦνοC, ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα κομίCηC.

νυν : becomes an enclitic after imperatives.

στρατίαρχε : As a vocative title for the honoree, this is obviously an important word. The word στρατιάρχος and its equivalent στρατιάρχης are not found in Homer or Nonnus, and are not found in biblical literature. Yet these words are used frequently in the poetry of Dioscorus: Poems 10.36, 44; 18.26, 31, 42; 20.6, 13, and 28 (Heitsch 2.6, 13, 28; 4a.7, 15; 5.2, 7, and 18). A parallel passage in Dioscorus begins to elucidate the allegorical meaning here: τέρπεό νυν, στρατίαρχε, τεὸς χρόνος οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται. “Rejoice, commander, your time will never end.” (Poem 10.36; Heitsch 4a.7; MacCoull p. 113.7) Yet to fully understand the meaning, στρατίαρχε requires some exploration.

στρατιάρχος and στρατιάρχης are variant spellings of the words στρατάρχος and στρατάρχης. In Classical literature, the latter two were equivalent to στρατηγός and designated the “general of an army”; see Herodotus, *Historiae*, Book 3, section 157, line 20; Book 8, section 44, line 14; etc. In

the 6th century, according to the lexicographer Hesychius, the term *στράταρχος* was still equivalent to *στρατηγός* (Lexicon, *sigma*, entry 1962, line 1). Yet *στρατηγός* was used in the Byzantine papyrus of Egypt to designate a commander that had both military AND administrative authority. See Preisigke III Ab. 8 and 10, s.v. *στρατηγός*; cf. *στρατηλάτης*. The terms *στρατιάρχος*, *στρατιάρχης*, *στράταρχος*, and *στρατάρχης* are not found in papyrus documents.

Στρατηγός was also used metaphorically by Christian writers to designate a commander in the army of Christ the King: *ὁ δὲ τοῦ Δεσπότης Χριστοῦ στρατηγός* (Theodoretus, *Interpretatio in xiv epistulas sancti Pauli*, vol. 82, page 552, line 43; etc.). In the 6th century, the hymnwriter Romanus used it even to designate St. Peter as the leader of the Church: *Πέτρος δέ, ... ὁ στρατηγός τῆς φαμίλιας σου, ἰδὼν σε ἐξωσμένον, ἔλεγεν ἀδημονῶν· Σὺ μου τοὺς πόδας νίπτεις*; “But Peter, the commander of your family, seeing you girded, said in anguish: ‘You are washing my feet?’” (Romanus Melodus, *Cantica*, Hymn 33, section 9, lines 4-6).

Dioscorus used the term *στρατιάρχος* as an equivalent of *στρατηγός* to designate Patriarch Theodosius metaphorically as a “commander” of the heavenly saints, both in the military sense and because of his ecclesiastic leadership. That a believer was expected to be a strong soldier of Christ and endure persecution was a common biblical image; see *συγκακοπαθησον ὡς καλὸς στρατιώτης Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ*. “Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) See also: *Ταύτην τὴν παραγγελίαν παρατίθειμαι σοι, τέκνον Τιμόθεε, κατὰ τὰς προαγούσας ἐπὶ σὲ προφητείας*,

ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν. “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.” (I Tim. 1:18). And: τὰ γὰρ ὅπλα τῆς στρατείας ἡμῶν οὐ σαρκικὰ ἀλλὰ δυνατὰ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς καθαίρεσιν ὀχυρωμάτων. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” (II Cor. 10:4; etc.)

Dioscorus could have used the word στρατηγός metrically, because the *alpha* is long. I surmise that he did not want to use a biblical word (στρατηγός appears frequently in Scripture) but wanted a word that sounded similar and carried the same connotations. Moreover, there is a distinct *rhyme* between Thodosious’s title πατριάρχης and Dioscorus’s word choice στρατιάρχης.

Dioscorus had to use the variant spelling στρατιάρχος with a vocative στρατιάρχε because the form στρατιάρχης has a vocative στρατιάρχα with a long *alpha*, which would not work metrically in dactylic hexameter.

κέθεν καλέειν ναετῆρας : The word ναετήρ (“inhabitant”) was not used by Homer, but was frequently used by Nonnus—more so than by any other writer of Greek literature (43 occurrences in two epics). It is especially common in the *Dionysiaca* in the phrase ναετῆρας Ὀλύμπου or ναετῆρες Ὀλύμπου (16 occurrences), where it means “the inhabitants of Olympus” or simply “divinities”. Nonnus also used it in the *Paraphrase*. At least once it refers to the young Christ, an inhabitant of Nazareth, the Son of God: Ἰησοῦν ὁσίῳ βοώμενον υἱὸν Ἰωσήφ, / Ναζαρεθ ναετῆρα, θεοῦ γόνον

(Paraphrasis 1.183). Nonnus also used it in the *Paraphrase* to refer to the immortal inhabitants of heaven: ἀθάνατοι ναετῆρες (*Paraphrasis* 14.13).

Who then were the Dioscorian ναετῆρες? And in what way were they *his*? With the term στρατιάρχος Dioscorus recognized that Theodosius held a position of authority in heaven. The hierarchical order was a firmly held concept in Byzantine religious thought; see Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De caelesti hierarchia* and *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*. Over whom did Theodosius have command in heaven? One can imagine that since Theodosius had been Patriarch of Alexandria and had suffered because of his Monophysite views, *his* inhabitants were, in the broad sense, the faithful that had inhabited Egypt, and in a narrower sense, other Monophysite believers.

[...].οc : Maspero suggested the restoration [ἄφθι]τος “imperishable” or “immortal”, which would work well on the deeper level of meaning. The word is Homeric, and was used for imperishable items (I. 2.46, 5.724, etc.) and even a throne: δῶρα δέ τοι δώσω καλὸν θρόνον ἄφθιτον αἰεὶ χρύσεον (Il. 14.238). The verbal parallels between Homer’s verse here and Dioscorus’s poem include not only ἄφθιτον, but also δῶρα (verse 16) and θρόνον (verse 19). The adjective ἄφθιτος was used by other writers to designate a divinity (Hymni Homerici, In Mercurium 326; Hesiodus, Theogonia 389, 397; etc.) Yet since Maspero tagged his restoration with a “?” and there are many possibilities, we leave the *lacuna* empty.

ἔπλεο μοῦνος : literally “you were alone.” The verb is striking because of its grammatical complexity. It is the 2nd singular, imperfect or second aorist,

indicative, middle/passive, uncontracted form of πέλω. If contracted, one would see ἔπλεν. The verb πέλεται had a broad spectrum of meanings in Homer and later. It originally meant “to be hurled”, “to be in motion” or “to be busy about” (see Autenrieth, s.v. πέλει). By derivation it came to mean “to become”, “to be”, and even “to rise”. All of these meanings can be found in Homer. The form ἔπλεο can be imperfect or a second aorist, but Homer did not augment the imperfect. The aorist has present significance: “became” or “is”. Despite its apparent complexity, this verb form is found twice in Homer (Il. 1.418; 22.281), six times in Nonnus, and six times in Dioscorus (Heitsch 2.4, 6.17, 7.17, 21.13, and 24.7).

The adjective μούνος could express preeminence, rather than “alone” or “solitary”; see Plato, *Symposium* 215c, 222a; Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 299; etc. With respect to Theodosius’s biography, one needs to keep in mind the full spectrum of meanings. “You were preeminent”—in as much as he was Patriarch. “You were unique”—in as much as he was the last Patriarch to be embraced both by the Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians of Alexandria. “You were alone”—in as much as he was temporarily imprisoned and became a fugitive. And even more literally, Theodosius was clearly designated a virgin in the *History of the Patriarchs*. In Christian art and literature the virgins were a preferred group, which received regal honors with the martyrs in heaven (see Figures 7-8 and the discussion of ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα below).

Yet a word is missing, and [...].ος ἔπλεο μούνος could mean “you alone were ...” or “you alone are” The phrase ἔπλεο μούνος also appears at Poem

20.4 (Heitsch 2.4), but it is in poor condition: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος
ἐπλεο μοῦνος Possibly: “In the land of the king of all, you alone are ...
.” (Cf. Poem 10.31: πανυπέρτατος ἐπλετο μοῦνος.) The phrase ἐπλεο
μοῦνος was used once by Nonnus: ὄλβιος ἐπλεο μοῦνος (Dionysiaca 16.337;
cf. 47.372). It was also used three times in the *Homeric Psalter* by
Apollinaris in reference to God (15.2, 83.25, and 92.5). But these precedents
do not provide a solid suggestion for the *lacuna* in Dioscorus’s verse.

ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα κομίσης : Dioscorus had several epic precedents to help him
write this clause. In Homer one finds: ὑμῖν δ’ ἐν πάντεσσι περικλυτὰ δῶρ’
ὀνομήνω / ἔπτ’ ἀπύρους τρίποδας ... “In the midst of you all, let me name
the glorious gifts: seven tripods that the fire has not touched ...” (Il.
9.121-122). And: ... τὸν δὲ λίσσοντο γέροντες / Ἀργείων, καὶ πολλὰ
περικλυτὰ δῶρ’ ὀνόμαζον “And to him the elders of the Argives made
prayer, and named many glorious gifts” (Il. 18.448-449). And even: ἡ δ’ ὅτε
δὴ οὐ πατρὸς ἀγακλυτὰ δώμαθ’ ἵκανε “But when she had come to the
glorious palace of her father” (Od. 7.3; cf. 7.46). In Nonnus, we often find
the clause δῶρα κομίσης ending a verse, in a variety of persons and tenses
(Dionysiaca 4.260, 11.128, 16.106, etc.)

But Dioscorus’s rendition is unique. What then are Theodosius’s ἀγακλυτὰ
δῶρα? Our best clues come from the Iliad citations above—and one more.
In Book 1, in a crucial scene, the virgin goddess Athena appears to Achilles
and tells him to put aside his anger, and he will receive glorious gifts:

ἀλλ' ἄγε λῆγ' ἔριδος, μηδὲ ξίφος ἔλκεο χειρί·
ἀλλ' ἦτοι ἔπεσιν μὲν ὀνειδίσον ὥς ἔσεται περ·
ὦδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται·
καί ποτέ τοι τρὶς τόσσα παρέσσεται ἀγλαὰ δῶρα.

But come, cease from strife, and do not grasp the sword with your hand. With words indeed taunt him, telling him how it shall be. For thus will I speak, and this thing shall truly be brought to pass. Hereafter three times as many glorious gifts shall be yours.
(Il. 1.210-213; trans. A. T. Murray)

The similarity between Homer's ἀγλαὰ δῶρα and Dioscorus's ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα is unmistakable. The gifts that Achilles eventually receives, for enduring a forced separation from the woman Briseis, are bestowed by King Agamemnon. These gifts are described in the Homeric citations above as περικλυτὰ δῶρ'.

Therefore, looking at the entire verse 16, the Homeric correspondences, and sixth-century church art, the ἀγακλυτὰ δῶρα on the allegorical level could be the reward that the virgin receives in heaven. That is: having called together the Egyptian saints in heaven as witnesses (ναετῆρας), over whom he had authority as their former Πατριάρχης (στρατάρχε), Theodosius receives from Christ a glorious crown.

Verses 17-19

- 17 [πάντ]η κοιρανίης σκοπιάζετε πυθμένα ρίζης
18 [cώφ]ρονα, κυδαλίμης σοφίης ἐγκύμονα θεσμῶν,
19 [τοῖς]προτεροῖς βασιλεῦσιν αἰοίδιμον ἐς θρόνον υῖα.
*Contemplate always the wise foundation of the root
of royalty, the basis which is pregnant with the laws
of glorious Wisdom, and which is the Son on the throne,
whom the earlier kings are praising in song.*

The Theodosius section of Poem 17 recto began with a *quatrain* (verses 11-14) and ends here with a *rhyming triplet* (verses 17-19). The *triplet* is joined together grammatically: the direct object πυθμένα in verse 17 has two modifying adjectives in verse 18, cώφρονα and ἐγκύμονα, and a noun in apposition in verse 19, υῖα. Verses 17 and 18 are especially close-knit, tied together by a *rhyme* sequence (see below) and by *enjambment*: cώφρονα. The emphasis placed on cώφρονα (because of the *enjambment*) and the emphasis placed on σοφίης (at the end of the *rhyme* sequence, and after the main *caesura*) underline the twin motifs of understanding and wisdom. These echo the motifs of understanding and wisdom near the beginning of the Theodosius section, and thus create a *ring structure*:

- 12 [cώφρον]ος εὐσεβίης Θεοδοσίου πάνσοφον ἄσθμα,

...

- 18 [cώφ]ρονα, κυδαλίμης σοφίης ἐγκύμονα θεσμῶν,

In addition, the adjective ἐγκύμονα “pregnant” echoes the “life-bringing” adjective of verse 1, φερέβιος, and creates a *ring structure* for the entire recto portion of the poem.

The last word in verse 16, κομίτης, initiates a *rhyme* sequence in the following verses, 17 and 18. (Compare the *alliteration* strategy in verses 15 and 16, where the last word of verse 15 ναετῆρας initiates the shift to final *sigmas* in verse 16.) The *rhyme* is placed at crucial junctures in the verse: at the end of verse 16, the end of the first half of verse 17, the end of the second half of verse 17, the end of the first half of verse 18, and the beginning of the second half of verse 18:

16			...	κομίτης.
17	...	κοιρανίης	...	ρίζης
18	...	κυδαλίμης	σοφίης	...

This remarkable *rhyme* sequence puts especially strong emphasis on the word σοφίης “wisdom”, which is out of rhythm (the rhyming word is at the *beginning* of the half verse and not the end) and concludes the whole rhyme sequence.

There is also a *chiasmic* structure that ties the three verses together: the noun-adjective pair of verses 17 and 18 (πυθμένα ... ἐγκύμονα) has in apposition the adjective-noun pair of verse 19: αοίδιμον υἱά.

Note also the *tricolon crescens* (ascending) and *tricolon diminuens* (descending) of syllable length in verse 17: two-four-five-three-two. The verb σκοπιάζετε is at the apex, and therefore in a high position to “watch”. There is a *paronomasia* (word play) between the verb σκοπιάζω (“to spy from a high place” or “to watch”) and the noun ἐπίσκοπος (“overseer”), which denotes anyone that has a supervisory position in the Church. Theodosius, the thirty-third Patriarch of

Alexandria, was at the apex of the *tricolon crescens/diminuens* in verse 12. Here, however, the plural imperative σκοπιάζετε shows that the Egyptian saints have responded to Theodosius's call in verse 15 and have joined him. They are being addressed by the poet.

The complexity of the word order and grammar of verses 17-19 creates a subtle image (invisible, so to speak) of an intertwined root or vine. Dioscorus was a master of *euphony*, word placement, and subtlety.

κοιρανίης : The same word is used at Heitsch 2.1, and an adjectival variation κοιρανικ[οῦ] is used at Heitsch 3.36. The noun appears three times in this poem (verses 17, 21 a reconstruction, and 22), and is therefore significant. Its importance is further emphasized by the *hyperbaton*: κοιρανίης ... ῥίζης “of the root of royalty”.

The noun κοιρανία “sovereignty” is not used by Homer, but it is epic and used by Nonnus, Colluthus, and contemporaries of Dioscorus, including Paul the Silentiary (*Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae*, line 982) and Agathias (*Anthologia Graeca*, Book 16, epigram 41, line 4). It might be noteworthy that in the *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John*, Nonnus uses the word to describe the purple robe that was put on Jesus to mock him (cf. the discussion of ἀλουργίδα at verse 14 above). Nonnus writes that the soldiers put on the robe, σύμβολα κοιρανίης καὶ ἐν ἄλγεσιν “the symbol of royalty and with grief” (*Paraphrasis* 19:11). When Theodosius was deceptively robbed of his Patriarchy, he suffered terribly. According to the *History of the Patriarchs*, Severus, the Patriarch of Antioch (512-519), who himself was a fugitive from the Emperor Justinian, comforted Theodosius at Sakha in Egypt. This

was because “Father Theodosius suffered continual trouble and persecution from the heretics [i.e. Chalcedonians]” (p. 457). But that the word *κοιρανία* would make a connection within the audience between the painful shame of Christ, as described by Nonnus, and the persecution of Theodosius—that is too much to suggest.

σκοπιάζετε : There is a grammatical problem with the verb number. *σκοπιάζετε* is plural, but the verbs in the previous verse (*ἔπλεο ... κομίτης*) are singular. There are two possible reasons for the change. The first is that the “inhabitants” have heard the saint’s call, and there is now a group. This interpretation moves the action of the hymn forward, and sits well with the rest of the sentence. The second solution is that the poet is addressing Theodosius with the royal plural. Whatever the reason, the verb stands in strong contrast with the beginning of verse 16, where the solitude of Saint Theodosius is stressed: *ἔπλεο μοῦνος*. Dioscorus often makes use of contrast (from complex grammar to simple grammar, from large words to small words, etc.) to move the poem forward.

κοιρανίης ... πυθμένα ῥίζης : The grammatical relationship between these three words is complex. First, is *κοιρανίης* a descriptive genitive of *ῥίζης*? In other words: is the noun acting like the adjective *κοιρανικός* and is the meaning “the royal root”? Perhaps not, since Dioscorus is familiar with the adjectival form, which he uses in another poem: *ἐγγύθι κοιρανικοῦ σέθεν οὔνομα λάμπεν [Ολ]ύμπου{ς}* “your name shines up to sovereign Olympus” (Poem 11.36; Heitsch 3.36).

The external parallels support another interpretation. On the one hand, the core meaning of ῥίζα is “root” as the base of a plant or vine (Il. 11.846; Od. 10.304; 23.196; etc.), and it then comes to mean the base or foundation or source of anything. We find it used to designate the root of the hair (Plato, Phaedrus 251b), the foundations of the earth (Hesiodus, Opera et Dies 19), the stock of a family (Pindarus, Olympian 2.46), etc. On the other hand, one of the most common motifs in the New Testament is that Christ is the base or source of holiness and eternal life. A frequent image is that he is the vine and his disciples are the branches. The term used in the New Testament is ἄμπελος:

Ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστιν. πᾶν κλῆμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μὴ φέρον καρπὸν αἶρει αὐτὸ, καὶ πᾶν τὸ καρπὸν φέρον καθαίρει αὐτὸ ἵνα καρπὸν πλείονα φέρῃ. ἤδη ὑμεῖς καθαροί ἐστε διὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν λελάληκα ὑμῖν· μέννατε ἐν ἐμοὶ καγὼ ἐν ὑμῖν. καθὼς τὸ κλῆμα οὐ δύναται καρπὸν φέρειν ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ ἐὰν μὴ μένῃ ἐν τῇ ἀμπέλῳ, οὕτως οὐδὲ ὑμεῖς ἐὰν μὴ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένητε. ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος, ὑμεῖς τὰ κλήματα.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. (Jo. 15:1-5)

Although the Bible does not use the word ῥίζα for this image (and neither does Nonnus at Paraphrasis 15.1-14), it does use the Dioscorian word in a similar image. In the parable of the seeds, if the shoot does not have a root, ῥίζαν, it withers at the time of persecution: διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ῥίζαν ἐξηράνθη (Mt. 13:6, 21; cf. Mc. 4:6, 17; Lc. 8:13). And in the Epistles of St. Paul, the root ῥίζα takes on a broader range of meanings—all relating to Christ as the foundation and the source. For examples: καὶ εἰ ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι (Rom. 11:16); καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ῥίζης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου (Rom. 11:17); and finally: οὐ σὺ τὴν ῥίζαν βαστάζεις ἀλλὰ ἡ ῥίζα σέ. “Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” (Rom. 11:18)

Dioscorus here is using the term ῥίζα in the biblical sense: as a *metaphor* for Christ the foundation and source. Theodosius and the saints are encouraged to “continue contemplating always the root.” (The imperative is in the present tense, and the adverb is probably πάντη.) With the phrase πυθμένα ῥίζης, Dioscorus is perhaps building on the parable of the seeds, and Christ is the foundation of the roots. More likely, Dioscorus is employing *pleonasm*: the foundation of the foundation, the base of the base, the root of the root. This poetic *pleonasm* emphasizes the concept that Christ is indeed the source of all sovereignty: “the root of royalty”. He is the donor of the crowns of sainthood and the source of eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

The following verse, verse 18, is one of the most complex in the poem. Three valid interpretations are possible. Each fits into the context of the poem, and all three are interrelated and can co-exist together. In a verse that emphasizes understanding and wisdom, perhaps Dioscorus is testing the wits of his audience.

κυδαλίμης : This adjective is derived from the noun κῶδος (see Philoxenus, Fragment 255*, line 3; cf. Orion, Etymologicum, *epsilon*, page 62, line 16). The adjective was used frequently by Homer as an epithet for heroes such as Achilles, Odysseus, and Menelaus. It was also used to describe the noble heart (κῆρ) of Agamemnon and Achilles (Il. 10.16, 18.33). In the 6th century κυδάλιμος meant “with glory” or “with honor” (Hesychius, Lexicon, *kappa*, entry 4404, line 1). The adjective was not used by Nonnus, but it was used in three other surviving poems by Dioscorus, and always in the phrase: κυδαλίμων πατέρων ἀπὸ ρίζης ὀλβιστήρων (Heitsch 4a.4, 6.2, 13.4). The phrase κυδάλιμη σοφία appears nowhere else in Greek literature, until the thirteenth century and Theodorus Metochites (τῶνδε σοφίης κυδαλίμοιο Carmen ad Nicephorum Callistum Xanthopulum, line 276).

[κῶφ]ρονα ... ἐγκύμονα : Developing the *metaphor* of the root above, Dioscorus now *personifies* it. He says that the root (more precisely, “the base of the root”) has understanding and is pregnant.

σοφίης ἐγκύμονα θεσμῶν : Dioscorus purposefully presents us with a grammatical choice. The adjective ἐγκύμονα takes a genitive, and Dioscorus sandwiches it between two genitives. The adjective appears often in Nonnus, but he does not solve the problem: sometimes the genitive follows the adjective (Dionysiaca 17.303, 21.302, 37.147, etc.), and sometimes it comes before (Dionysiaca 42.197, 43.66, 47.42, etc.). Three different meanings are possible, depending on the choice.

Meaning #1: Christ (the root and vine) produces wise people (the branches) that write laws (their fruit). In this interpretation, the adjective ἐγκύμονα takes the genitive σοφίης. This interpretation is supported by Dioscorus's other use of the phrase in Poem 5.10 (Heitsch 6.10): τῆς πολυκαλλίστης σοφίης ἐγκύμονι πάσης. Here there is no other genitive noun, so σοφίης must be dependent on ἐγκύμονι. In Meaning #1, the word "wisdom" (σοφίης) is a *metonymy* for "wise people". And the noun θεσμῶν is an objective genitive, meaning that wise people create laws.

Meaning #2: Christ (the root and vine) is filled with the Holy Spirit (Sophia), which inspired the Old Testament, New Testament, and Apostolic Law. This interpretation is supported by biblical imagery and Christian literature. Sophia was sometimes equated in Christian literature with the third person of the Trinity (see Lampe, s.v. σοφία C 2). And Christ was very clear that his Spirit was the Holy Spirit, which he would distribute to his disciples only after he had ascended into heaven. In a biblical passage that shows parallels to the imagery of verses 17-18, Christ tells his apostles a parable about vines, branches, and bearing fruit (Jo. 15:1-26; cf. Act. 1:1-2 and 2:33). He then encourages them to keep his commandments, which he had spoken through the Spirit, and promises that he will send the Spirit from heaven to help them. According to Christian doctrine, it was this same Spirit that had spoken through the prophets, including Moses; see οὗτος οὖν, ὢν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου, κατήρχετο εἰς τοὺς προφήτας καὶ δι' αὐτῶν ἐλάλει τὰ περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀπάντων (Theophilus, Ad Autolycum, Book 2, section 10, line 12). According to biblical tradition, the prophet Moses wrote the first five books of the

Bible, the Pentateuch. See: Αὐταὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ καὶ τὰ δικαιώματα καὶ τὰ κρίματα, ἃ ἐνετείλατο κύριος ἐν χειρὶ Μωυσῆ ἐπὶ δυσμῶν Μωαβ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ιορδάνου κατὰ Ιεριχὼ. “These are the commandments and the judgments and the decrees that the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan near Jericho.” (Num. 36:13) These books were called the Law of Moses. The Christian terms were ὁ νόμος Μωϋσέως and ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως. Christ himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave a new law: Ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους. “A new commandment I give unto you: That ye love one another, as I have loved you that ye also love one another” (Jo. 13:34). And Christ’s apostles and their descendents continued to write laws for the Church, as seen in the *Acta apostolorum* 15:1-33, the *Didaché*, the *Traditio apostolica*, etc. Thus the adjective ἐγκύμονα takes Κοφίης as its genitive, and Κοφίης is a genitive of source for θεσμῶν: Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit, which inspires religious Laws.

Meaning #3: Christ (the root and vine) produces laws that are gloriously wise. In this interpretation, the adjective ἐγκύμονα takes the genitive θεσμῶν and the phrase κυδαλίμης κοφίης is a descriptive genitive of those laws. In this interpretation, Dioscorus applies a technique of poetic *brevitas*. Specifically he uses *praegnans constructio*, by which two clauses are condensed into one. It involves the omission of some logical steps, which can be understood from the context. In agriculture, the root produces a vine that produces branches, and the branches must remain on the vine in order to flourish and bear fruit. In the biblical use of this imagery, which is frequent, Christ is the root and the vine, his disciples are the branches, and their good works are the good

fruit. In Dioscorus's *praeagnans constructio*, in a collapsing sequence, the root is pregnant with the good fruit, which are "the laws of glorious wisdom".

[τοῖς προτερ]οῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀοίδιμον ἐς θρόνον υῖα : Verse 18 above was complex in its rhyme and meaning. Verse 19, in contrast, is simple in meaning and purpose. It serves to conclude Part Three of the recto side of Poem 17, and tie it together.

[τοῖς προτερ]οῖς βασιλεῦσιν : the restoration is by Maspero. It appears too long for the *lacuna*, but the meaning fits well. The throne or the Son is being praised by the twelve Old Testament patriarchs and twelve apostles, who had arrived in heaven before Theodosius. This is an Apocalyptic image.

πεσοῦνται οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες πρεσβύτεροι ἐνώπιον τοῦ
καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ ζῶντι εἰς
τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων; καὶ βαλοῦσιν τοὺς στεφάνους αὐτῶν
ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου λέγοντες, Ἄξιός εἰ, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς
ἡμῶν λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ
ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημα σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.
*The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the
throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever. And they cast
their crowns before the throne, saying: "Thou art worthy, our Lord
and God, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast creat-
ed all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*
(Apoc. 4:10-11; cf. Apoc. 14:3; etc.)

ἀοίδιμον : literally “the subject of song”. This adjective could apply to either θρόνον or υἱά. The meaning remains the same, but in the former case, it is a *transferred epithet*. The adjective appears once in Homer, but in a negative context (Il. 6.358). It is never used by Nonnus. It is used only once in biblical literature (Macch. IV 10:1), but frequently in Christian literature. The word ἀοίδιμος and related compounds, such as παναοίδιμος, are frequently used by Dioscorus (Heitsch 4a.9, 4b.8, cf. verse 5 above and Heitsch 20.5, 23.15, 24.6, and 24.23). Dioscorus uses the word most often to modify the word “name”: ἀοίδιμον οὖνομ’ (see verse 5 above and Heitsch 4a.9, 4b.8, 20.5; cf. Heitsch 24.6). Nowhere else does Dioscorus or anyone use it to modify θρόνος. The word is used to modify υἱόν by the Syballine Oracle (2 B.C. - A.D. 4): Ἀθανάτου μέγαν υἱὸν ἀοίδιμον ἐκ φρενὸς αὐδῶ, ᾧ θρόνον ὕψιστος γενέτης παρέδωκε λαβέσθαι οὐπω γεννηθέντι. (Oracula Sibyllina, section 6, line 1)

υἱά : This word, the last of Poem 17 recto, is in apposition to πυθμένα ῥίζης, the “root of the root”, the “foundation of the foundation”, the “source of the source”. Here it confirms that the root is the Son, who is filled with Sophia, or with the laws of Sophia. It ties the three verses 17-19 together grammatically. It also echoes the υἱά of verse 7, who is also the Son of God and the subject of song: [ὑμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἱά. Even in the Theodosius section, the poet returns ultimately to Christ.



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Figures 21-22. *Antinoöpolis*. The emperor Hadrian built the city, in a magnificent Hellenistic style, to honor his friend Antinous, who had drowned there in AD 130.



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Figures 23-24. *Antinoöpolis*. Some of the ancient buildings were still visible when Napoleon Bonaparte visited the site c. 1800. They were dismantled in the 20th century to build factories. Copyright © 2011 by Clement A. Kuehn.





Figure 25. *Antinoöpolis*. Foreign visitors were barred from the region in 1995, when these photos were taken. Foreign excavations were allowed to resume in 2000. Hellenistic architecture, seen here, and a large number of Greek literary papyri were among the discoveries.

Figure 26 (following page). *Romeo and Juliet* in Egypt. © 2011 Clement A. Kuehn



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COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 VERSO

Verses 20-35: Christ

Verse 20

[Ϝ χαίρε]τέ μοι, βασιλῆες, ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εὖκ[λ]εῖς.
Rejoice with me, kings, famous for eternity!

Dioscorus flipped the piece of papyrus topsy-turvy and continued writing on the *verso* side (the back). Thus the letters on the *verso* are upside-down in relation to the letters on the *recto* side (the front). Dioscorus is now writing with the direction of the papyrus fibers, which tends to make the writing flow (*ductus*) smoother.

Poem 17 *verso* is probably a continuation of Poem 17 *recto*. The style, vocabulary, and motifs are similar. The plural vocative βασιλῆες of verse 20 picks up the plural βασιλεῦσιν of verse 19, with a slight change in meaning. And the plural imperative verb of the first sentence of the *verso* [χαίρε]τέ echoes the plural imperative of the last sentence of the *recto* σκοπιάζετε. On the surface level, Dioscorus is still addressing the official image of the new emperor, which has arrived at Antinoöpolis. On the surface level, the plural vocative and imperative are poetic, magnifying the sovereignty. On the allegorical level, the earlier kings of verse 19 were the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles: the twenty-four kings of the Apocalypse of John. Now in verse 20 Dioscorus is addressing the recent saints, who are present spiritually at the feastday rite and present in the church images and icons.

[Ἡ χαίρε]τέ μοι, βασιλῆες : The restoration is by Maspero. χαίρω is Homeric and means “be glad”, “be joyful”, or “rejoice”. The verb in the imperative was commonly used as a salutation in all periods of Antiquity. Dioscorus uses the imperative verb in the singular at Poem 9.1 (Heitsch 20.1, a restoration) and in the plural at Poem 41.4 (Heitsch 27.2). The phrase χαίρετέ μοι is found in Classical poetry, including Aristophanes (*Lysistrata* 1074), in biblical literature (in the phrase χαίρετε καὶ συγχαίρετέ μοι Phil. 2:18), and often in Christian literature. Its appearance in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus is especially informative:

Χαίρετε, ὦ βασιλῆες, ἐμῶν παθέων ἐπαρωγοί·
Χαῖρέ μοι, ἀντολίη καὶ δύσι μαρνάμεναι·
Χαίρετέ μοι, ἱεῖρες, ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντες·
Χαῖρε, πρόεδρε τύφε· χαῖρε, πόλις μεγάλη.
Αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ χθονίων μὲν ὑπέρτερός εἰμι θοώκων,
Ἵμείρω δὲ μόνου κύδεος ἀθανάτου.

Rejoice, O kings, helpers in my suffering;

Rejoice with me, you who do battle in the morning and evening;

Rejoice with me, priests, going to one another;

Rejoice, presiding nonsense; rejoice, great city.

Truly I am higher than the earthly seats,

I seek eternal glory alone.

(*Carmina de se ipso*, page 1261, lines 3-8)

Without becoming sidetracked by a discussion of these verses, one should observe that Gregory is making fun of earthly honors while glorifying the heavenly. The poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus was popular among educated Egyptians, and it would not be far-fetched to suggest that Dioscorus was alluding to this passage. Perhaps Dioscorus and Gregory were also influenced by the conclusion of the Apocalypse. There, at the destruction of Babylon and the beast of earthly sovereignty (Apoc. 18:1-24), the old and new kings of heaven sing a song of praise, while contemplating the source of all kingship and judgement. The martyrs are given thrones and reign with Christ for a thousand years before all other saints.

Μετὰ ταῦτα ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν μεγάλην ὄχλου πολλοῦ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λεγόντων, Ἀλληλουϊά· ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, ὅτι ἀληθινὰ καὶ δίκαια αἱ κρίσεις αὐτοῦ· ... καὶ δεύτερον εἶρηκαν, Ἀλληλουϊά· καὶ ὁ καπνὸς αὐτῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. καὶ ἔπεσαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι οἱ εἴκοσι τέσσαρες καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα, καὶ προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, λέγοντες, Ἀμήν, Ἀλληλουϊά. ... Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους, καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ' αὐτούς, καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν· καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη.

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying: "Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God! For true and righteous are his judgments" And

again they said: “Alleluia! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever.” And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying: “Amen! Alleluia!” ... And I saw thrones and they who sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or on their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Apoc. 19:1-20:4)

One can assume that, in an environment as vibrantly Christian as Upper Egypt, Dioscorus was familiar with the Bible. Although a Bible text was not found in his archive, most of the people named in his documents were monks, priests, or other religious, and he alludes to biblical imagery in his legal petitions. Yet we are not looking for verbal parallels between the *Hymn to St. Theodosius* and biblical literature. That was not the style of this hymn. Dioscorus was suggesting and sometimes openly presenting Christian themes in an Homeric vocabulary, as had been done by Nonnus, Apollonaris, Eudocia, and other poets before him.

ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον : This phrase is found in two other poems by Dioscorus, Poem 8.7 (Heitsch 19.7) and Poem 4.35 (Heitsch 12b.17). The adjective ἄσπετος (literally “unspeakable” or “inexpressible”) is used by Homer and Nonnus. The phrase means “for an inexpressibly long time” or “eternally.”

εὖκ[λ]εῖς : The restoration is by me and replaces an awkward earlier reading. In the two other uses of the preceding phrase by Dioscorus we find: ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εἶναι and ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον ἔλθοι, neither of which verbs fit the surviving marks on the papyrus here. Maspero suggested the verb εὐδεῖς (for εὐδης), but the restoration is clumsy grammatically: a singular verb at the end of a verse that used a plural verb and vocative at the beginning. Yet εὐδης was accepted by Heitsch, MacCoull, and Fournet. The restoration also makes little sense. The verb εὐδω means “to sleep” and that is how Dioscorus uses it in another poem (Poem 39.10, Heitsch 28.10). It can also refer to the sleep of death (Il.14.482; Sophocles, Oedipus Coloneus 621). Some editors have argued that here the verb means “to be inactive” (Sophocles, Oedipus Coloneus 307; Plato, Phaedrus 267a) in the sense “to be tranquil” or even “to be happy”. These meanings are not attested elsewhere. The adjective εὖκ[λ]εῖς is from εὐκλής (“glorious” or “renowned”) and is the contracted form of the vocative and nominative epic plural masculine. It matches the papyrus evidence and makes sense in the context. The adjective was used by Homer and Nonnus, and is employed by Dioscorus in his other poems (Heitsch 7.7 εὐκλείης βασιλεὺς and 12b.18).

Verses 21-22

[κοιρα]νίης ἀπάνευθε τεῆς φθόνος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω,

[.....] κοιρανίης φθόνος ἔρπελος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω.

Let envy wander far away forever from your sovereignty,

[.....] let envy, creeping forever, wander from your sovereignty.

Note the effective *alliteration* and *word placement*. The preposition/adverb, adverb, and verb (ἀπᾶνευθε ... αἰὲν ἀλάσθω) are tied together by the *alliteration* and *assonance* of *alpha* sounds, but the preposition/adverb ἀπᾶνευθε is in fact “far away” from the rest of the verbal group. The preposition/adverb also separates the word “envy” from the word “sovereignty”: [κοιρα]νίης ἀπᾶνευθε || ... φθόνος. The style enhances the meaning of the verse: “Let envy wander far away ... from your sovereignty.” The separation is further emphasized by the main *caesura* (feminine), which comes right after the word ἀπᾶνευθε.

The poet made several changes to these verses. Originally he had written:

[Φ χαίρε] τέ μοι, βασιλῆες, ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εὐκ[λ]εις.

[.....] κοιρανίης φθόνος ἔρπελος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω

Then he squeezed [κοιρα]νίης ἀπᾶνευθε τεῆς φθόνος αἰὲν ἀλάσθω between the verses. He wrote ἔρπελος εἶη in the right hand margin after the new verse, but there is no indication that he decided to replace αἰὲν ἀλάσθω with ἔρπελος εἶη.

There is obviously a repetitive quality in these two verses. They recall the *repetition* at the beginning of Poem 17 recto, and evoke the religious context of Dioscorus’s hymn. This kind of *repetition* recalls religious litanies, such as those found before the Scripture readings in the Coptic liturgies. One can compare the *Hymn of the Intercessions* and even more specifically, the *Great Litany for the Church Fathers* in the Liturgy of St. Basil, which incorporates an effective use of *repetition* and variation. “Accept their prayers on our behalf and for Your people, as well as our prayers for them. Receive and accept these prayers, as a sweet aroma, on your holy, eloquent and heavenly altar.” The *repetition* puts a strong

emphasis on the changed element: the *metaphor* of incense and the heavenly altar. Scriptural *repetition* in a Homeric vocabulary can be seen in Psalm 150 of the *Homeric Psalter* by Apollinaris, which is labeled a “Song of Praise” (μέλος ἀλληλούια) or a *doxology*: Μέλψατέ μοι βασιλῆα, χοροὶ δ’ ἅμ’ ἔποιντο δικαίων, / μέλψατέ μιν σταθερῇ κράτεος περιθάρσυνον ἀλκῇ, etc. “Sing with me of the King, and let the choruses of the righteous follow, / sing of Him, confident in the firm strength of his sovereignty” (verses 1-2).

In Dioscorus, the tiny verbal changes highlight the change in sense of the second verse. In the second verse, the preposition/adverb ἀπ᾽άνευθε has been removed and envy has crept closer to the sovereignty: that is [κοιρα]νίης ἀπ᾽άνευθε τεῆς φθόνος is replaced by κοιρανίης φθόνος. This *periscopic* movement is underlined by the new word in the second verse: ἔρπελος “creeping”. The adjective ἔρπελος also stresses the foreign nature of envy, which does not belong among the devout: the word is a *hapax legomenon*. This is the only appearance of the adjective in Greek literature. Dioscorus apparently created the word from the verb ἔρπω (which is related to the Latin word *serpo*, from which our English word *serpent* is derived). The verb ἔρπω means “creep” or “crawl”. Thus Dioscorus *personifies* the emotion Envy by giving it a snake-like attribute. In Christian exegesis, the snake in the garden of Paradise was Satan, who plotted the destruction of the new humans because of envy. See, for instance, John Chrysostom’s homily to Psalm 75: φθόνῳ δὲ τοῦ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. “Death entered into the world through the envy of the devil.” (In Psalmum 75 [Sp.], vol. 55, page 597, line 46; cf. Gen. 3:1-5, 13-15; Job 1:1-12; etc.) Anastasius of Sinai, in the 7th century, made the point even clearer in a fictional warning from God to Adam in Paradise:

Καὶ ἔστι νῦν πονηρὸς ὁμοῦ καὶ φθονερός, καὶ μέλλει φθονῆσαί σου τῇ δόξῃ, ὧ Ἀδάμ, καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ σου καὶ τῷ κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ κάλλει σου. Μέλλει ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Μέλλει προσβαλεῖν ὑμῖν, εἴτα ἀπατήσαι, ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ, ἧς ἐκεῖνος ἔπεσε, πλανήσῃ καὶ ἀποστερήσῃ τῆς δόξης καὶ τῆς τιμῆς καὶ τῆς ἐξουσίας, ἧς ἐχαρισάμην ὑμῖν, ὅπως μὴ ἔλθητε εἰς τὸν τόπον, ἐξ οὗ ἐκεῖνος ἐξέπεσε.

“Now he is both evil and envious. And he is about to become envious of your glory, O Adam, and your authority, and your beauty in the image of God. He is about to come to you. He is about to attack you, and so deceive you, so that you might wander along the path by which he fell. So that you might be deprived of the glory and honor and power with which I graced you. So that you might not arrive at that place from which he fell.” (Hexaemeron 9.224-229)

Anastasius could not have influenced Dioscorus, but Anastasius relied heavily on the early allegorical exegetes of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus.

For his malicious envy, Satan was cursed and punished by God to crawl on his belly and eat dirt: καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῷ ὄφει· Ὅτι ἐποίησας τοῦτο, ἐπικατάρατος σὺ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς· ἐπὶ τῷ στήθει σου καὶ τῇ κοιλίᾳ πορεύσῃ καὶ γῆν φάγῃ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου. “And the Lord God said unto the serpent: ‘Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life’.” (Gen. 3:14) But the serpent was not removed. And in the book of Job, Satan is in heaven in front of the throne of God, still enviously malicious, and still wreaking havoc on earth:

Ἀπεκρίθη δὲ ὁ διάβολος καὶ εἶπεν ἐναντίον τοῦ κυρίου· Μὴ δωρεὰν σέβεται Ἰωβ τὸν θεόν; οὐ σὺ περιέφραξας τὰ ἔξω αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔσω τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ ἔξω πάντων τῶν ὄντων αὐτῷ κύκλῳ; τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησας καὶ τὰ κτήνη αὐτοῦ πολλὰ ἐποίησας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ἀλλὰ ἀπόστειλον τὴν χειρὰ σου καὶ ἅψαι πάντων, ὧν ἔχει· εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογήσει. τότε εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ διαβόλῳ· Ἴδου πάντα, ὅσα ἔστιν αὐτῷ, δίδωμι ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου, ἀλλὰ αὐτοῦ μὴ ἅψῃ.

Then Satan answered and said to the Lord: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him and about his house and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." And the Lord said unto Satan: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power: only upon himself put not forth thine hand." (Job 1:9-12)

In one masterful couplet, Dioscorus condensed the biography of Satan to its essence, and expressed his own fear of the serpent's envy.

[κοιρα]νίης : In this couplet we find the third appearance of this noun within six verses. As pointed out in the commentary to Poem 17 recto, the same word is used at Poem 20.1 (Heitsch 2.1) and an adjectival variation κοιρανικ[οῦ] is used at Poem 11.36 (Heitsch 3.36). The noun κοιρανία "sovereignty" is not used by Homer, but it is epic and used by Nonnus, Colluthus, and contemporaries of Dioscorus, including Paul the Silentiary and Agathias.

In a type of *antanaclasis*, the word κοιρανία changes meaning each time Dioscorus uses it. In verse 17, it is synonymous with κράτος as used at Il. 2.118: τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἐστὶ μέγιστον “for his authority is the greatest” (cf. Od. 1.359). God is the source of all authority. See Christ’s response to Pilate: ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦς· οὐκ εἶχες ἐξουσίαν κατ’ ἐμοῦ οὐδεμίαν εἰ μὴ ἦν δεδομένον σοι ἄνωθεν· διὰ τοῦτο ὁ παραδούς μέ σοι μείζονα ἁμαρτίαν ἔχει. “Jesus answered: ‘Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above, therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin’.” (Jo. 19:11). In verse 21 (a restoration), it is synonymous with the King himself, as the word κράτος at Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 109: Ἀχαιῶν δίθρονον κράτος “the twin-throned command of the Achaeans” (cf. 619 and *Septem contra Thebas* 127). It was a standard Classical motif that the divinities grew jealous of human power and success. In the third instance, the word κοιρανία is synonymous with the dominion under rule, as the word κράτος at Herodotus, *Historiae* 3.69: οὔτοι μιν σοί τε συγκοιμώμενον καὶ τὸ Περσέων κράτος ἔχοντα δεῖ χαίροντα ἀπαλλάσσειν ἀλλὰ δοῦναι δίκην. “He must not get away with sleeping with you and sitting on the throne of Persia, but be punished.” (cf. Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazusae* 871; and Thucydides, *Historiae* 4.98) Envy has no place among the Christian faithful, which is the dominion of Christ. In an analogy with the word κράτος, I have now shown the three meanings of the word κοιρανία as used in Poem 17. (Compare the various meanings of κοιρανίη implied by Nonnus at *Paraphrase* 18.170; 19.11; *Dionysiaca* 41.391; etc.) Further lexical research on κοιρανία is needed to determine the accuracy of such an analogy.

ἀπ'ἀνευθε : “far away” is an indeclinable adverb that can also be used as a preposition (with the genitive case). It is used by Homer and Nonnus, and in another poem by Dioscorus (Poem 34.13; Heitsch 23.13). It is a strengthened form of the adverb ἄνευθε. Dioscorus chose the long form to emphasize the distance between the sovereignty [κοιρα]γῆς and envy φθόνος in verse 21, and to make even more striking their *juxtaposition* when the adverb is removed in verse 22.

τεῖς : The second person singular of the personal adjective suggests that the poet is no longer speaking to the kings of verse 20. On the surface level, the plurals forms of verse 20 could have been *poetic plurals*, magnifying the stature of a single king. The allegorical level did not require such an interpretation. The “kings” of verse 20 were the recent saints in heaven, as the “earlier kings” of verse 19 were the elders in heaven. To whom, on the allegorical level, is the poet now referring in verse 21? I suggest that it is again Christ. In the monumental art of the 6th century and in biblical literature, the saints are processing toward, surrounding, or contemplating Christ, God, or the Mother of God. So it would be a natural progression for Dioscorus to proceed from Saint Theodosius (verses 11-16), to all the saints in general (verses 17-20), to Christ. And Christ is again implied by the same personal adjective in verse 28. In fact, as we will see, Christ is the honoree of the entire *verso*.

φθόνος : The noun becomes emphatic in verse 22, not only because of the *repetition* and its movement closer to “sovereignty” (which is the target of the “envy”), but also because φθόνος is placed squarely after a masculine main

caesura. The noun is not found in Homer, but the corresponding verb φθονέω is. The noun and corresponding verb and adjective φθονερός are found in Nonnus, who even personifies it Φθόνοϋς (Dionysiaca 8.34, 105; etc.) It is a common word in Classical literature, where it implies envy or jealousy over someone's good fortune. It is felt by mortals and especially by gods. The noun is also used to specify a refusal because of feelings of jealousy and ill-will. See LSJ, s.v.

Unlike much of Classical literature, a different sentiment was expressed by Plato in his *Phaedrus*: φθόνοϋς γὰρ ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἴσταται. “For envy stands outside the chorus of god.” (Stephanus page 247, section a, line 7) Here the *chorus* not only denotes the group of singers and dancers at a performance of tragedy or comedy, but also implies the original ritual to the god Dionysus (cf. Euripides, *Bacchae* 220; Heroditus, *Historiae* 2.48; Isocrates, *Evagoras*, section 1) and the place where the ritual occurs (cf. *Il.* 18.590; *Od.* 8.260, 264). The same Platonic line is repeated by Clement of Alexandria and applied to God and his Church (*Stromata*, Book 5, chapter 5, section 30, subsection 5, line 1). It is repeated by Didymus the Blind, but with a variation that is close to Dioscorus: Φθόνοϋς ἔξω θείου χοροῦ ἀπελήλασται. “Envy has been expelled from the chorus of God.” (In *Genesim*, codex page 110, line 24) It is the Platonic and Christian sentiment that is expressed here by Dioscorus.

Theodosius was removed from his Patriarchy of Alexandria through intrigues that were fueled by envy. Dioscorus too had experienced the destructive side of φθόνοϋς. As explained and documented in the biography, Dioscorus was one

of the headmen of the village of Aphrodito. Aphrodito had received from the emperor the privilege of *autopragia*, which meant that the village was given the right to collect its own imperial taxes and deliver them directly to the provincial treasury. Thus Aphrodito was outside the jurisdiction of the Pagarch of Antaeopolis, who had the authority to manage all public tax collections in his or her nome. Although for several generations (Dioscorus insists) Aphrodito had faithfully met its public tax requirements, Dioscorus's legal documents are filled with accounts of violence by the Pagarch and his assistants: including theft of the collected tax money, collecting the tax money twice, imprisoning and torturing Aphroditan traders outside the village, and finally attacking the village itself. Dioscorus's official petitions to the imperial house and the Duke describe blockades of the irrigation, destruction of the fields, arson of the mansions, attacks on the monasteries, and rapes of the female religious. It was the increasing violence by the Pagarch that was one of the motivations behind Dioscorus's move to Antinoöpolis, the capital of the Thebaid. All this unlawful and ruthless violence was driven, it seems, by the Pagarch's greed and envy of Aphrodito's special tax status.

Of all the sins and evils that Dioscorus could have wished excluded from the Lord's dominion, it is not surprising that he picked envy.

ἀλάσθω : This verb comes from the deponent ἀλάομαι, which usually appears contracted in Homer, as it does here. Although its core meaning is “to wander” or “to roam”, it carries the connotation “to be outcast” or “to be expelled”. For this reason, the verb is similar in meaning to ἀπελήλασται as used by Didymus the Blind, mentioned above: Φθόνος ἔξω θείου χοροῦ

ἀπελήλασται. “Envy has been expelled from the chorus of God.” (In Genesim, codex page 110, line 24) Didymus, a fourth century Coptic theologian from Alexandria, helped develop Christian allegory through his typological exegeses of the Bible. And likewise in Job, when God asks Satan where he has been, Satan replies: Περιελθὼν τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσας τὴν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν πάρειμι. “From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down in the world below heaven, I am here.” (Job 1:7) The vocabulary is different, but the imagery of roaming as an outcast is similar. Dioscorus’s choice of verbs, ἀλάττω, strengthens his allegorical meaning that envy is the devil, who has no place in Christ’s dominion.

ἔρπελος : As mentioned above, this adjective is a *hapax legomenon*, which draws attention to it. The imagery of creeping envy, however, was a commonplace in Greek literature, and the imagery in Nonnus relates directly Dioscorus:

Καϊάφα γὰρ ἔην ἐκυρὸς θρασύς, ὃς πέλε κείνου
ἀρχιερεὺς λυκάβαντος, ὃς Ἑβραίῳ ποτὲ λαῶ
ζῆλον ἔχων Χριστοῖο θεημάχον ἴαχε φωνήν·
καλὸν ὑπὲρ λαοῖο θανεῖν ἓνα, μὴ φθόνος ἔρπων
Ἑβραίων ὅλον ἔθνος ἐνὸς χάριν ἀνδρὸς ὀλέσσει.

For he was the bold father-in-law of Caiaphus, who was the high priest for that year, and who in jealousy of Christ once said hubristically to the Hebrew people that it was good that one person die for the people, lest creeping envy destroy the whole race of Hebrews on account of one man. (Paraphrasis 18.64-68; cf. Jo. 11:49-50)

Caiaphus feared that the Jewish people would be destroyed by the Roman emperor because of his envy of a popular Jewish leader, Jesus. The envy concept is an addition by Nonnus, in whose works envy is a constant presence. What Dioscorus feared was that creeping envy would harm the faithful and the Church.

Verses 23-25

- 23 [.....]... ὑμετέρησιν ὑπέσσεται δέσμια χερσίν
24 [ἦλθον] πεφρικότα τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν.
25 [πίστ]ιν ἀερτάζεις θεοδέγμονα κυδιανείρην.
*[.....] the chains will lie beneath your hands.
[I have come] to pour out trembling, tragic tears:
you raise up the Faith that receives divinity
and glorifies humanity.*

Verse 23 (as it has survived) is chained together by a *hyperbaton* and echoes the concept of ἐλευθερίας of verse 2. The *descending climax* is a coup de grâce: five syllables, four, three, two—the entire verse becomes lighter and quicker as the chains slide off. The verse is also arresting because the poet changes from the second person singular in verse 21 τεῆς to a second person plural ὑμετέρησιν, which change is emphasized by the sheer size of the latter word.

Verse 24 shows a crescendo and decrescendo of syllable length, emphasizing τραγικώτερα: 2-4-5-3-2. The climax of the *tricolon crescens* is made more

emphatic by the *internal rhyme* of the second and third words in the series: -ικότ- and -ικώτ-. There is also an abundance of liquid *rho* sounds, which may be *onomatopoeic*, imitating the sound of weeping.

When the audience heard the end of verse 25, it could not fail to notice the slight *rhyme* of the triplet, with the third element slightly skewed: ... δέσμια χερσίν / ... δάκρυα λείβειν / ... κυδία-νείρην. It is an *off-rhyme*; but the last two feet (the final five syllables) of each verse, especially verses 24 and 25, were harmonious. They might have sounded even more harmonious when pronounced. Perhaps the *iota*, the *epsilon-iota*, and the *eta* would have carried a long ē sound. More research on the pronunciation of Byzantine Greek in Upper Egypt is necessary to make a more definitive statement, but this and all the rhetorical elements discussed above increase the musicality of the *Hymn to St. Theodosius* when recited.

ὕμετέρησιν ... χερσίν : The pronominal adjective ὕμετερος appears in both Homer and Nonnus, and is used in two other poems by Dioscorus: Poem 11.71 (ὕμετέρων Heitsch 3.71) and 34.19 (ὕμετέρων Heitsch 23.19). What is unusual here is the *iota* after the *eta*, which is clearly written on the papyrus. The ι below the α, η, and ω ceased to be written with regularity around 100 B.C. The common consensus is that this *iota* probably was not pronounced in the Byzantine Era. Contemporary editors add it to Greek texts, as a subscript or adscript, because it is grammatically necessary. Dioscorus normally did not add this *iota*, but did so here, presumably to increase the size of the word. Does that indicate that the *iota* could be pronounced, or that he planned to publish the hymn?

How are we to understand the plural pronoun here, if the addressee is no longer the saints of verse 20 but Christ? A poetic plural is certainly possible: this usage was common in the poetry of the period. It may, however, have deeper significance—as is often the case with Dioscorus. A common motif in Christian literature was that Christ was the head of the Church and all the faithful were the body. This image goes back at least to Saint Paul: οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body.” (Eph. 5:29-30; cf. Col. 2:19). And:

Καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ μέλη πολλὰ ἔχει πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος πολλὰ ὄντα ἓν ἐστὶν σῶμα, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός· καὶ γὰρ ἓν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν. καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἐστὶν ἓν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλὰ. ... καὶ εἴτε πάσχει ἓν μέλος, συμπάσχει πάντα τὰ μέλη· εἴτε δοξάζεται μέλος, συγχαίρει πάντα τὰ μέλη. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. ... And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one

member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Therefore, in Christian thought, Christ's body is composed of the many faithful. And that could be why we see ὑμετέρησιν and not τεαῖς.

ὑπέσσεται δέσμια : The verb ὑπέσσεται is the future tense of ὑπείμι, which is used by Homer. Literally: "The chains will be under" These chains cannot be binding Christ in heaven or the saints, many of whom had been imprisoned, because Dioscorus sees their freedom in the future. So it needs to refer to the Body of Christ that is not in heaven: the faithful that are still imprisoned. Metaphorically, Christians are chained to sin; see: βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντα με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν μου. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." (Rom. 7:23; cf. 6:19; etc.) Such an interpretation here at verse 23 would not be unwarranted. It was predicted by verses 2-3 (ἐλευθερίας καὶ ἀρωγῆς[c] / [δαινῶν cf] ἀλμάτων λαθικηδέος) and would prepare for verse 24.

There is a possibility, however, that Dioscorus is referring to the Byzantine tradition of *Anastasis* (also called the "Harrowing of Hell"). In Christian thought, after Christ died, he descended to the land of the dead before he himself rose. In Hades he freed Adam and Eve from the bonds of death, as a sign that all the prophets and righteous people of the Old Testament era would be freed from the bonds of sin and death at his Second Coming. This thought

goes back at least to the 2nd century (Melito, De pascha = P.Beatty 8 + P.Bodmer 13 + P.Oxy. 13.1600) and was developed by Hippolytus (De antichristo), Origen (Contra Celsum 2:43), and John Chrysostom (Sermo catecheticus in pascha). These writers were relying on various biblical references to the *Anastasis* (Mt. 12:40; 1 Peter 3:19; 4:6; etc.). The *Anastasis* was often depicted in monumental art and icons, especially during the Byzantine Era. Most commonly, the image shows Christ breaking down the doors of Hades and leading Adam and Eve out by their wrists (since liberation from original sin was entirely through the action of the Saviour). Broken locks and chains lie below and the Old Testament prophets and righteous look on (often in crowns). I have not seen an example that survives from the sixth century, but the *Anastasis* is depicted in the Carolingian fresco (c. 825) at the Monastery of St. John in Müstair, and more clearly in the narthex of Hosios Loukas at Delphi (11th century) and the apse of St. Saviour of the Chora in Constantinople (1315-1320).

Following this interpretation, verse 23 with its suggestion of Adam and Eve shows a natural movement from the serpent imagery of verse 22. The Adam and Eve motif is further developed by the imagery of falling from grace in 24.

[ἤλθον] : The restoration is by me. Homer uses both forms of the aorist: ἤλθον and ἤλυθον, but the former is more frequent. Dioscorus also uses both forms of the aorist (see verse 10 above), but the former is more frequent (see Heitsch 2.15, 5.5, and 21.25). Dioscorus uses ἤλυθον with an infinitive of purpose above, and the same grammatical construction is used by Romanus the Melodist, a famous hymnwriter that worked in Constantinople and older

contemporary of Dioscorus (Hymn 19, section 18, line 7; Hymn 27, section 7, line 6).

πεφρικότα : The word φρίσσω is used by Homer and Nonnus, but only here by Dioscorus. While the core meaning of the verb is “to bristle”, it can mean “to shudder in fear” (Il. 11.383; Hymni homerici 27.8; Sophocles, Electra 1408; Aristophanes, Nubes 1133). It can also mean “to tremble in religious awe” (Plutarchus 2.26b; Julianus Imperator, Orationes 7.212b; etc.).

τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν : The word τραγικώτερα is at the apex of the *tricolon crescens* and *tricolon diminuens*, created by the number of word syllables (2-4-5-3-2). It is therefore important. Its “tragic” meaning is enhanced by the image in the following two words, δάκρυα λείβειν “to pour out tears”. The phrase δάκρυα λείβειν is common in Greek literature. In Nonnus, for example, we find: ἐχέφρονα δάκρυα λείβω (Dionysiaca 5.351); ποταμῖα δάκρυα λείβων (6.224); ἀλλότρια δάκρυα λείβειν (14.282); ἀήθεα δάκρυα λείβειν (30.113); etc. Yet Dioscorus’s rendition, τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν, is found only here.

Dioscorus’s tears are “more tragic” or “very tragic” (taking the comparative as a superlative). In what way “tragic”? The adjective τραγικός is not used by Homer and only once by Nonnus: τραγικοῖο χοροῦ (Dionysiaca 22.60). In Classical literature, it was commonly used to refer to the genre of tragedy. Thus we find τραγικοῖσι χοροῖσι (Herodotus, Historiae 5.67.28), τῆς τραγικῆς σκευῆς (Plato, Respublica 577b.1), τραγικῆς σκηνῆς (Xenophon, Cyropaedia, Book 6, chapter 1, section 54), ἀνὴρ τραγικός (= τραγωδός Pla-

to, Phaedo 115a.5 [Steph.]), etc. And Euripides was called τραγικώτατος γε τῶν ποιητῶν (Aristoteles, Poetica 1453a.29).

What distinguishes the genre of tragedy from comedy, elegy, history, etc., is a great man's or woman's fall from grace through a mistake, which often involves a neglect of the divine will. Summarizing the discussion by Aristotle in his *Poetics*: the fall is the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty. Such a change is likely to generate pity and fear in the audience, because pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a person like ourselves. In an ideal tragedy, the protagonist mistakenly brings about his or her own downfall not because he or she is sinful or morally weak, but because he or she does not know enough.

Adam's fall from grace, which led to his expulsion from Paradise and to corruption and death for all humanity, would fall under the category of "very tragic". And the poet's reaction is Aristotelian. The word τραγικός, however, is never used in biblical literature. Thus verse 24, avoiding biblical terminology, concludes the motif of Adam and Eve, which was foreshadowed in verse 22 (the envious serpent) and developed in verse 23 (the *Anastasis*).

[πίστ]ιν ἀερτάζεις : The restoration [πίστ]ιν is by Maspero and based on Poem 5.8 (Heitsch 6.8): πί[σ]τιν ἀ[ε]ρτάζων Τρι[α]δ[ος] μονο[ειδέος] ὀρθήν. "Raising the orthodox faith in the Trinity, which is one God." The Chalcedonians and Monophysites both called themselves the Orthodox Faith, ἡ πίστις ὀρθή, which means literally "the straight faith". The verb

ἀεργάζω “to lift up” is the lengthened epic form of ἀείρω. It is not used by Homer, but often by Nonnus. It is not found in biblical literature.

The motif of “raising” is frequent and dynamic in Salvation History. Christ’s mission on earth was to redeem mankind from the ancestral sin of Adam and Eve. In so doing, Christ raised the nature of man to a higher level: to share in his divinity (Jo. 6:48-59). Christ is the resurrection and the life (Jo. 5:21-29), which he demonstrated when he raised Lazarus from the dead (Jo. 11:1-44). Christ redeemed mankind from sin and death when he was raised on a cross (Jo. 8:28-29; 12:32-33). This was prophesied by Moses when he raised the serpent from the desert sand: Καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὕψωσεν τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” (Jo. 3:14) Christ’s sacrifice was validated when God raised him from the dead: ὃν ὁ θεὸς ἀνέστησεν λύσας τὰς ὥδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν κρατεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ. “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” (Acts 2:24; cf. 32-33; I Cor. 6:14) Christ then rose into heaven to rejoin his Father (Jo. 17:1-26) as the forerunner of all the faithful (Hebr. 6:20). This entire Salvation History is summed up by Dioscorus in two words: [πίστ]ιν ἀεργάζεις “you raise up the Faith”. Through *metonymy* the abstract “faith” is used for the concrete person “the faithful”.

θεοδέγμονα : Dioscorus strengthens his allusion to the Salvation History above with the adjective θεοδέγμων, literally “receiving God”. He also continues his *paronomasia* (word play) on the name Θεοδοκίου (verse 12), which be-

gan with Θεοῦ δέος in verse 13. The term θεοδέγμων is not used by Homer or elsewhere by Dioscorus, but is often used by Nonnus. The adjective here is emphatic, coming right after the main *caesura* (masculine).

The word θεοδέγμων is synonymous with θεηδόχος (cf. Anthologia Graeca 7.363) and θεοδόχος (cf. Nonnus, Dionysiaca 13.96). θεοδόχος is used in Christian literature to refer to Christ's humanity, and thereby to the human nature of all believers who are receptive of divinity: ὁ θεοδόχος ἄνθρωπος (Gregorius Nyssenus, Oratio catechetica magna, section 32, line 28; cf. In Canticum canticorum, vol. 6, page 391, lines 2-3). Compare another instance of θεοδόχος in Gregory of Nyssa: ὥς γὰρ οὐκ ἔγνω ἡ παρθένος ὅπως ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτῆς τὸ θεοδόχον συνέστη σῶμα (In Canticum canticorum, vol. 6, page 388, lines 21-22). Therefore θεοδέγμων is the perfect word choice to describe the faithful person ([πίστ]iv, the abstract for the concrete), whom Christ raises to share in his divinity. And in a similar way θεοδέγμων was used by Dioscorus's contemporary, Paul the Silentiary, in his description of an image of St. Paul, who was "full of every God-receiving wisdom": Παῦλος, ὅλης σοφίης θεοδέγμονος ἔμπλεος ἀνὴρ (Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae 787).

κυδιανείρην : The adjective κυδιάνειρα means literally "man-ennobling" or "bringing men glory". It was used by Homer to modify μάχη: σπεύδοντα μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν "hurrying to man-ennobling battle" (Il. 4.225; cf. 6.124; etc.); and once for ἀγορά: εἰς ἀγορὴν πωλέσκετο κυδιάνειραν "to the man-ennobling assembly" (Il. 1.490). In the *Orphic Hymns*, it was used as an epithet for Φύσις (Orphici hymni 10.5). Thus it appears that Dioscorus is

employing *sylllepsis*: while [πίστ]ιν is best understood in most of the verse as an abstract for the concrete, “the faithful”, at the close of the verse, when modified by κυδιανείρην, it must be understood as the abstract “faith”.

Verses 26-28

26 [μὴ τ]ρομέεις, σκηπτοῦχε, τὸ σὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται·

27 [συ] ρτέφος ὑψικάρηνον· πάμφυλον ἔσσι κιβώτιν,

28 [ἀκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι· τεῖς περικαλλέος ὀμφῆς.

*Do not be afraid, you who hold the scepter, your glory will never fade:
you are the lofty crown of all the tribes, you are the poor man’s coffer,
[the r]ays of your lovely voice illuminate like lightning.*

Verse 26 was written after verse 27 (like verse 21). That is, it was squeezed interlinear between verses 25 and 27. There is no indication that it was replacing anything. Its purpose perhaps was to clarify the “you” of the two verbs ἀερτάζεις and ἔσσι: the vocative σκηπτοῦχε suggests that the addressee on the allegorical level is Christ (but see the discussion of πολυκκήπτρου at verse 27). It does not seem a very powerful verse. There is *assonance* of the repeated short *omicrons*, and there is an abundance of short, quick words, but the thought is standard. It is no more than a transition to the creative *metaphors* of verse 27.

While the entire poem is highly original, verse 27 is exceptionally bold in its *metaphors* and exceptionally effective. Note the seemingly *chiasmic* construction—noun, adjective, adjective, noun. The adjectives increase the distance between the nouns and emphasize the polarity of the two *metaphors*:

crown and poor-box. The *chiasmus*, however, is only in appearance. It seems that the adjective πάμφυλον should go with the noun κιβώτιν, which would give a nice rhetorical balance to the verse and would be grammatically correct. This arrangement, however, does not make sense. Instead, the adjective πάμφυλον goes with ζτέφος, heaping up that verbal image into an even more massive crown while making the poor box smaller. The poor-box is diminished even further by the poet's unusual contraction of the already diminutive noun. The original noun is κιβωτός "box"; the diminutive form is κιβώτιον "a little box". And Dioscorus contracted the final two vowels to create an even smaller word: κιβώτιν. With these two images, the very large crown and the small poor box, the poet is saying in a fresh new way that Christ is the first and the last, the *alpha* and the *omega*.

The *consonance* of verse 28 is striking: each word ends with a *sigma*, except ἀστράπτουσι, which has *sigmas* in the second and second-to-last positions. The *consonance* is *onomatopoeic*, reproducing the sizzle of lightning.

As mentioned earlier, the *assonance* and *consonance* add to the musicality of this hymn when recited.

[μὴ τ]ρομέεις : The verb τρομέω means literally "to tremble", and often connotes fear. It is used by Homer, Nonnus, and often by Dioscorus (Heitsch 2.14, 3.35, 4a.6, 5.14, 21.24, 24.16). The phrase μὴ τρομέεις is used in two other Dioscorian poems, which is the reason for the restoration by Maspero (Poem 11.35, 35.16; Heitsch 3.35, 24.16). In these three uses of the negative phrase, Dioscorus employs the indicative in place of the optative (τρομέοις). It is possible, but unlikely (see below), that Dioscorus misspelled the word through the influence of *iotacism*. It is also possible, and quite likely, that Dioscorus wanted an imperative mood. This conjecture was made by

Maspero and is based on an analogy with the verb θάλλε, which Dioscorus appears to interchange with θάλλειϛ (Heitsch 4a.12, 5.3) and θάλλοιϛ (Heitsch 2.29, 12b.9) with no change in meaning.

The Dioscorian phrase μὴ τρομέειϛ is found nowhere else in Greek literature. The phrase μὴ τρομέοις is found often in Nonnus at the beginning of a verse; see *Dionysiaca* 4.117, 11.79, 18.236, 29.56, etc. Therefore Dioscorus and his literary audience knew how the right form should look. By using the indicative, Dioscorus emphasizes the reality of the action (unlike the optative): literally “do not continue being afraid”. The only time that Jesus expressed fear was when he approached his sacrifice to redeem humanity from sin. When Jesus and his disciples were at Gethsemane in the Garden of Olives: παραλαβὼν τὸν Πέτρον καὶ τοὺς δύο υἱοὺς Ζεβεδαίου ἤρξατο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν. τότε λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπος ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου· μείνατε ὧδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε μετ’ ἐμοῦ. καὶ προελθὼν μικρὸν ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ προσευχόμενος καὶ λέγων· πάτερ μου, εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν, παρελθάτω ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο. “He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them: ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.’ And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying: ‘O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’.” (Mt. 26:37-39; cf. Jo. 12:27-28)

It may be significant that Nonnus uses the word τρομέει in the *Paraphrase* when he recounts Christ’s parable about the pregnant woman (16.74-77): she “trembles” in fear as her hour approaches. With [μὴ τ]ρομέειϛ, Dioscorus

continues the Salvation History allusions, which began with the envious snake.

σκηπτοῦχε : The word is used by Homer and in at least one other poem by Dioscorus. Dioscorus uses the vocative in Poem 35 (Heitsch 24) to address Christ: φρουρὲ βίου, ᾧτερ μ[εγά]ρων, σκηπτοῦ[χε....:] (verse 17). Although Dioscorus was usually original in selecting just the right epic vocabulary for his hymn, he did have precedences here. Nonnus had used the word σκηπτοῦχος already several times to describe God and Christ in his *Paraphrase*. Here Nonnus describes God:

οὕτω γὰρ πολύμορφον ἐφίλατο κόσμον ἀλήτην
ὑψιμέδων σκηπτοῦχος, ὅτι χραισμήτορα φωτῶν
μουνογενῇ λόγον υἱὰ πόρεν τετράζυγι κόσμῳ,
ὄφρα μιν ὃς δέξοιτο μετάτροπον ἦθος ἀμείψας.

For the scepter-holder, ruling on high, loved the world, manifold and roving, so much that He sent his only-begotten Son, the Word, as a helper of mankind, to the four-yoked world, in order that it, having altered its changeable ways, might receive Him. (Paraphrasis 3.80-83)

And here Jesus uses the word σκηπτοῦχος before Pilate to describe himself:

... τοῦτο πιφάύσκεις
αὐτόματος σκηπτοῦχον Ἰουδαίων με καλέσσας,
ἥέ σοι ἄλλος ἔειπε; καὶ ἴαχεν ὄρχαμος ἀνήρ·
μὴ γὰρ Ἰουδαῖος καὶ ἐγὼ πέλον; ...

... *“Did you utter this on your own, when you called me the scepter-holder of the Jews, or did someone else tell you?” And the chief man said: “I am not a Jew, am I? ... ”*(Paraphrasis 18.161-164)

And here a complaint is made to Pilate to change the inscription above the cross. Note the word κοίρανος here in Nonnus, used to describe Jesus, and the word κοιρανίης in verses 17 and 21. Nonnus was the most influential poet of the early Byzantine Era, and his vocabulary would have been recognized by Dioscorus’s educated audience.

μὴ γράφε, μὴ γράφε τοῦτον Ἰουδαίων βασιλῆα,
ἀλλ’ ὅτι κεῖνος ἔλεξεν ἐν ψευδήμονι φωνῇ·
κοίρανος Ἑβραίων τελέθω σκηπτοῦχος Ἰησοῦς.
καὶ Πιλάτος φάτο μῦθον ἀπηνέας ἄνδρας ἐλέγχων·
ἔγραφον ἀσφαλέως, τόπερ ἔγραφον. ...

“Do not write, do not write that he is King of the Jews, but that he said in his own lying voice: ‘I am Jesus, the sovereign scepter-holder of the Hebrews.’ And Pilate gave this response, dishonoring the harsh men: “Steadfast have I written exactly what I have written.”
(Paraphrasis 19.111-115)

κλέος οὔποτ’ ὀλεῖται : This is a standard phrase in Greek poetry. τεὸν κλέος οὔποτ’ ὀλεῖται is used in two other poems by Dioscorus: at Poem 6.4 and 9.1 (MacCoull p. 123.2; Heitsch 20.1). The phrase was used by Homer, but not by Nonnus. Significantly, it was used several times by the epic poet Eudocia Augusta (c. 401-460), the wife of Emperor Theodosius II; see

Homerocentones, Hypothesis-apologia-cento 10, lines 280-284; section 2, line 282; section 2, line 1945; and section 3, line 91. Eudocia wrote poetry on biblical themes in an Homeric style. She composed much of it in Jerusalem, after she had been banished from Constantinople by her husband the emperor.

[cύ] ζτέφος ὑψικάρηνον πάμφυλον : Maspero suggests [ὥς] “as”. The restoration here is by Fournet, who argues that Dioscorus was employing *metonymy* and not creating a *simile*. The adjectives ὑψικάρηνον and πάμφυλον could modify either ζτέφος or κιβώτιν and be grammatically correct, since both nouns are neuter. But neither adjective makes sense when describing a small box. Both adjectives, therefore, modify ζτέφος, which arrangement Dioscorus stresses by interpolating the verb ἔcci.

ζτέφος : is the poetic word for στέφανος; see Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1512, etc. Dioscorus appears to repeat the word in verse 29 below, but does not use the term στέφος or στέφανος in other poems, except in compounds and a plural: χρυσοστεφάνοιο (Heitsch 3.30), χρυσ[οστ]εφάνου (Heitsch 21.4), ἐυστέφανοις (Heitsch 5.27), and στεφέεσσι (Heitsch 23.11; cf. 21.11). Homer does not use the word, but Nonnus does. In the *Paraphrase*, the only use of στέφος is for the crown of thorns worn by Jesus (19.22).

In Clement of Alexandria, we find that Christ is called the crown of the Church:

«Στέφανος δὲ γερόντων τέκνα τέκνων, δόξα δὲ παισὶν οἱ πατέρες»,
φησὶν· ἡμῖν δὲ <δόξα> ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ὅλων, καὶ τῆς συμπάσης

ἐκκλησίας στέφανος ὁ Χριστός.

He says: "The crown of old men are the children of children, but the glory of children are their fathers." But for us, the glory is the Father of all, and the crown of all the Church is Christ.

(Paedagogus, Book 2, chapter 8, subchapter 71, section 2, lines 1-3)

The same author repeats the concept as a metaphor several times:

Βασιλεῖς δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαίων χρυσῷ καὶ λίθοις τιμίαις συνθέντῳ καὶ ποικίλῳ χρώμενοι στεφάνῳ, οἱ χριστοί, τὸν Χριστὸν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς συμβολικῶς ἐπιφερόμενοι λελήθεσαν κεφαλὴν κοσμούμενοι κυρίῳ.
The kings of the Jewish people make use of a crown intricately woven with gold and precious stones. The Christians escaped notice by symbolically wearing Christ on their head, by adorning their head with the Lord.

(Paedagogus, Book 2, chapter 8, subchapter 63, section 4, lines 1-3)

And again: Μένει δὲ ἀθάνατος ὁ στέφανος οὗτος κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ κυρίου· οὐ γὰρ μαραίνεται ὡς ἄνθος. "This crown remains deathless, as an image of the Lord: for it does not fade like the flower." (Paedagogus, Book 2, chapter 8, subchapter 63, section 5, lines 4-5) Clement of Alexandria was an influential forerunner in developing Christian allegory.

It was a cliché, but also significant, that in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, Theodosius received upon his death

the crown of victory: “Theodosius was removed, in the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he loved, on the 28th day of Baunah; and he received the crown of victory with the assembly of the saints in the land of the living for ever.” (PO 4 [=1.4], p. 468)

ὕψικάρηνον : This long adjective makes for a lofty crown. The word ὕψικάρηνον was used by Nonnus in his *Paraphrase* to describe the hill on which Christ gathered his apostles, who sat around him like a crown (6.6-8):

καὶ δαπέδου λοφόεντος ἐρημάδα πέζαν ὀδεύων
εἰς ὄρος ὕψικάρηνον ἀνήιε· μεσσοφανῇ δὲ
ἐζόμενον στεφανηδὸν ἐκυκλώσαντο μαθηταί.

Traveling to a solitary place by foot, with the land rising, he went up a lofty hill; his disciples made a circle like a crown around him, who was seated in their midst. (6.6-8)

The term ὕψικάρηνον was also used in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus, to describe both virginity and Christ’s virgin bride, who is the Church; see *Carmina moralia.*, column 562, line 4; and column 631, line 2. As the sixth-century monumental art at Ravenna shows, the virgins join the martyrs in receiving crowns from Christ and the Virgin Mary. Thus the adjective ὕψικάρηνος was already associated with crowns and Christ, but it was Dioscorus who made the connection that Christ was the lofty crown.

πάμφυλον : The word appears only here in Dioscorus’s poetry. It was not used by Homer or Nonnus. Thus the word is noteworthy. Its importance is

emphasized by the unusual meter, which puts πάμφυλον in an awkward but striking position. The main *caesura* comes after the third foot: that is, in an unusual fashion, the verse *caesura* corresponds to the metrical foot break:
 -ρηνον || πάμφυλον = — — || — ~ ~

This *metaphorical* imagery, that Christ is a lofty crown consisting of all the tribes, recalls the scene in the Apocalypse where the twenty-four elders in crowns are surrounding the center throne in heaven:

εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος ... καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνοι εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρόνους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ... And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. (4:2-4)

The elders are the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament—the sons of Jacob, who represent the twelve tribes of Israel—and the twelve apostles of the New Testament (cf. Apoc. 21:12-14).

κιβώτιον : An unusually small word, which carried a large number of connotations. As mentioned above, κιβώτιον is the diminutive neuter form of the feminine

κιβωτός. Dioscorus contracted the ending to create an even smaller word, thus emphasizing it as the *antithesis* of the large phrase ζτέφος ύψικάρηνον πάμφυλον, which occupied most of the verse. A κιβώτιον was a “small box” or “small chest”. The word was not used by Homer or Nonnus, and was used only here by Dioscorus. Yet it was a common word in Greek literature, and in Christian literature it could refer to a church’s collection box for the poor. See: Καὶ τὸ κιβώτιον δὲ τοῦτο ἐκείνου τοῦ κιβωτίου πολλῶ βέλτιον καὶ ἀναγκαιότερον· οὐ γὰρ ἱμάτια, ἀλλ’ ἐλεημοσύνην ἔχει συγκεκλεισμένην, εἰ καὶ ὀλίγοι εἰσὶν κεκτημένοι (Joannes Chrysostomus, In Matthaeum, vol. 57, page 385, lines 1-3); and Τέως δὲ παρὰ σαυτῷ τίθει, φησὶ, καὶ ποίησόν σου τὴν οἰκίαν ἐκκλησίαν, τὸ κιβώτιον γαζοφυλάκιον (Joannes Chrysostomus, In epistulam i ad Corinthios, vol. 61, page 368, lines 54-56). The same author, John Chrysostom, in an extended *metaphor* contrasts the κιβώτιον that holds extra clothing to the Body of Christ, which consists of the destitute:

Εἰ γὰρ μὴ βούλει ταῦτα γενέσθαι σιτόβρωτα, δὸς τοῖς πτωχοῖς· ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ τὰ ἱμάτια ταῦτα εἰδότες τινάσσειν καλῶς. Καὶ γὰρ τοῦ κιβωτίου τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ τιμιώτερόν τε καὶ ἀσφαλέστερον. Οὐδὲ γὰρ μόνον φυλάσσει τὰ ἱμάτια, οὐδὲ ἀνάλωτα διατηρεῖ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λαμπρότερα ἐργάζεται. Τὸ κιβώτιον πολλάκις μετὰ τῶν ἱματίων ληφθὲν ἐσχάτη σε περιέβαλε ζημία· ταύτην δὲ οὐδὲ θάνατος λυμήνασθαι δύναται τὴν φυλακὴν.

If you do not wish for these things to be eaten by moths, then give them to the poor: for they are the ones that know how to shake out these coats well. Indeed the Body of Christ is more valuable and more

secure than the coffer. It not only preserves the coats, and not only keeps them incorruptible, but also makes them more brilliant. Often the coffer, having been stolen with the coats, puts you at an extreme loss. But not even death is able to ruin this safe.

The related word, κιβωτός, was used to refer to the Ark of the Covenant, which in turn was used in Christian literature as a symbol of Christ's humanity. See: Προανευποῦτο δὴ οὖν ὥς ἔν γε τῇ κιβωτῷ Χριστός· κατεσκεύαστο γὰρ ἐκ ξύλων ἀσῆπτων ἐκεῖνη, καὶ τὸν θεῖον ἐν αὐτῇ κατεπέκασσε νόμον, ὃς ἐστι Λόγος Θεοῦ. "The Ark was an early type of Christ: for it was prepared from wood that was not liable to decay and it protected in itself the divine law, which is the Word of God." (Cyrillus Alexandrinus, De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate, vol. 68, page 385, lines 12-15) The same term κιβωτός was used in the Septuagint for Noah's ark (Gen. 6:14 ff.), which in Christian literature became a type of the Church. Didymus the Blind writes: καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς αὐτὴ, σώσασα τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ εἰσφρήσαντας, εἰκὼν τῆς σεπτῆς ἐτύγγανεν Ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς ἐντεῦθεν ὑπαρχούσης ἡμῖν ἀγαθῆς ἐλπίδος. "This ark, having saved those that had entered into it, became an image of the august Church and of our good hope that is within." (Didymus Caecus, De trinitate, vol. 39, page 696, lines 7-10)

All three images—the poor-box, Noah's ark, and the Ark of the Covenant—would have arisen in the minds of the audience when they had heard κιβώτιν, and all relate to the Body of Christ. Thus the statement [cὺ] ... ἔσσι κιβώτιν is religiously accurate and profound. But the most important imagery is created by the entire verse, which is an original adaptation of the Apocalypse verse:

Καὶ εἶπεν μοι, Γέγοναν. ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.
And he said unto me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the
beginning and the end.” (21:6)

[ἄκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι τεῖς περικαλλέος ὀμφῆς : The verse begins with an
alliteration of *alpha* sounds (ἄκ- ἀστρά-) that are echoed in the second half
of the verse by -καλ- . And as mentioned above, the final *sigma* sound on
every word creates a *consonance* that ties the verse together.

This verse is reminiscent of several important biblical images. The first involves
the trip to Damascus by Saul, who as a Roman soldier was on his way to
imprison Christians. He is knocked off his horse by lightning and hears a
voice from heaven. The biblical story uses περιήστραψεν “shone round like
lightning”, which is a compound form of Dioscorus’s verb ἀστράπτουσι:

Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι, ἐγένετο αὐτὸν ἐγγίζειν τῇ Δαμασκῷ, ἐξαίφνης
τε αὐτὸν περιήστραψεν φῶς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν
ἤκουσεν φωνὴν λέγουσαν αὐτῷ· Σαούλ Σαούλ, τί με διώκεις;
*And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there
shined round about him a light from heaven. And he fell to the earth,
and heard a voice saying unto him: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou
me?”* (Acts 9:3-4)

The second biblical passage, part of which we have already discussed, is
found in the Apocalypse:

καὶ κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνοι εἴκοσι τέσσαρες, καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς θρό-
νους εἴκοσι τέσσαρας πρεσβυτέρους καθημένους περιβεβλημένους
ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν στεφάνους χρυσοῦς. καὶ
ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταί ...

*And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones. And upon
the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white
raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the
throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices” (4:4-5)*

And finally, the Lord speaking from heaven in thunder and lightening is a
frequent image in the Psalms: καὶ ἐβρόντησεν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κύριος, / καὶ ὁ
ὑψιστος ἔδωκεν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ· / καὶ ἐξαπέστειλεν βέλη καὶ ἐσκόρπισεν
αὐτοὺς / καὶ ἀστραπὰς ἐπλήθυνεν καὶ συνετάραξεν αὐτούς. “The Lord also
thundered in the heavens, / and the Highest gave his voice. / Yea, he sent out
his arrows and scattered them; / and he shot out lightnings and discomfited
them.” (Ps. 17:14-15 / 18:13-14; cf. Ps. 77:18; etc.)

Dioscorus’s verse combines the lightning and divine voice into one *metaphor*,
which is original but also raises a problem. In the Bible, when the Lord
speaks in lightning and thunder, it is intimidating. Yet Dioscorus describes
Christ’s voice as περικαλλέος “very beautiful”. Thus there is a *dichotomy*
between the first half of the verse and the second. The *dichotomy* is
intensified by a mismatching pair: [ἀκτ]ῖνες and ὀμφῆς “the rays ... of your
voice”. The distance between these two words shows the powerful influence
of the voice, but voices do not normally emit light rays.

[ἄκτ]ῖνες : The restoration is by Maspero. In Homer, the word is found only in the dative case and refers to the rays of the sun. In the Classical period, ἄκτις is used for lightning (Pindarus, Pythia 4.198) and the ray of Zeus, which is lightning: ὦ Διὸς ἄκτις, παῖσον! “O ray of Zeus, strike!” (Sophocles, Trachiniae 1086) It is also used for the rays of fire: τὰς δὲ ἐντὸς τοῦ πυρὸς ἀκτῖνας διαδεδεμένας (Plato, Timaeus 78d).

ἀστράπτουσι : means literally “to lighten” or “to hurl lightnings”. Later it comes to mean “to flash like lightning” (Sophocles, Oedipus Coloneus 1067). This word is used by Homer and Nonnus, and used again by Dioscorus (perhaps in a compound form) at Poem 9.3 (Heitsch 20.3). The verb has divine connotations going back to Homer, who uses it to describe omens sent by Zeus, since lightning travels from heaven to earth (Il. 2.353; 9.237; etc.).

The verb ἀστράπτω and its noun equivalent ἀστραπή are also used in biblical literature. In the Gospel of Luke, lightning is a *simile* for Christ appearing in his divine glory at the end of time: ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ ἀστραπή ἀστράπτουσα ἐκ τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰς τὴν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν λάμπει, οὕτως ἔσται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου [ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ αὐτοῦ]. “For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.” (Lc. 17:24) Again in the same Gospel, a compound form of the verb is used to describe Christ in his glory on Mount Tabor: τὸ εἶδος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἕτερον καὶ ὁ ἱματισμὸς αὐτοῦ λευκὸς ἐξαστράπτων (Lc. 9:29). And Luke uses the participle of the verb to describe the clothing of the angels at Christ’s empty grave, when a small group of

women visit: εἰσελθοῦσαι δὲ οὐχ εὑρόν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἀπορεῖσθαι αὐτάς περὶ τούτου καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς ἐν ἐσθῇτι ἀστραπούση. ... εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτάς· τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν; “And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ... they said unto them: ‘Why seek ye the living among the dead?’” (Lc. 24:3-5) The women’s response to the lightning-bright vision is dread: ἐμφοβῶν δὲ γενομένων αὐτῶν καὶ κλινουσῶν τὰ πρόσωπα εἰς τὴν γῆν “they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth” (Lc 24:5).

Similarly in the Apocalypse, when the Ark of the Covenant is revealed in heaven, flashes of lightning and voices arise: καὶ ἠνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ [ὁ] ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ὤφθη ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη. “And the temple of God was opened in heaven. And there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament, and there were lightnings and voices and thunderings and an earthquake and great hail.” (Apoc. 11:19)

These and similar biblical passages show that: (1) lightning carries divine connotations; (2) divine lightning is often associated with divine speech; and (3) the flash and accompanying blast usually cause trepidation. Close encounters with lightning are not described with the words “very beautiful”. Thus there is a *dichotomy* between the flashing rays at the beginning of the verse and the lovely voice at the end.

ὁμφῆς : In Homer, ὁμφή always refers to the gods, especially when communicating to mortals. See for example: ταῦτα θεῶν ἐκ πεύσεται ὁμφῆς. “These things will be learned from the voice of the gods.” (Il. 20.129). It is also used for the voice of the dream sent by Zeus to Agamemnon (Il. 2.41). In the Classical Era, it is used for oracles sent by the gods (Theognis 808; Sophocles, Oedipus Coloneus 102; etc.) and even for the omens of birds (Apollonius Rhodius 3.939). Nonnus in his *Dionysiaca* also tends to limit the term to divine and oracular utterances. In his *Paraphrase*, he uses it for the voice of Christ (Χριστὸς ἀνήρυγε θέσκελον ὁμφήν 3.49) and the voice of John the Baptist (ἀγνὸν Ἰωάννην θεοδέγμονος ἔγκυον ὁμφῆς 5.127). And it is associated with the Spirit, when Christ says: μύθων δ’ ἡμετέρων ῥόος ἔνθεος, οὓς ἀγορεύω, ζωὴ ὁμοῦ καὶ πνεῦμα πέλει καὶ ἐτήτυμος ὁμφή. “The inspired stream of our words, which I speak, is both life and Spirit, and a truthful voice” (6:195-196). Throughout Greek literature, ὁμφή usually carries divine and oracular connotations.

And there is some Classical precedence to Dioscorus’s “lovely voice”. The term ὁμφή can be modified to imply that the voice is sweet or tuneful. Compare Dioscorus’s phrase with Pindar’s ὁμφαὶ μελέων (Fragmenta 75.19) and ἀδεῖαι ... ὁμφαί (Nemea 10.34). And in the *Theogony*, we find a phrase similar to Dioscorus’s περικαλλέος ὁμφῆς: Hesiod describes the inspiring voice of the Muses as περικαλλέα ὄσσαν (verse 10).

Yet there still exists a *dichotomy* between the first half of the verse and the second, because lightning-like flashes commonly cause fear, not admiration, and because voices do not emit rays of light. Perhaps the incongruity between

[ἄκτ]ῖνες and ὁμοῦς “the rays ... of your voice”, which words are separated by the entire verse, stresses the spirituality: it is the divine Spirit of Christ that now communicates in lightning. For the Spirit’s relationship to Christ, see John 14:26: ὁ δὲ παράκλητος τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατὴρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” When the Holy Spirit does come to teach the disciples, it is in the form of fire from heaven:

καὶ ἐγένετο ἄφνω ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἦχος ὥσπερ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν ὅλον τὸν οἶκον οὗ ἦσαν καθήμενοι. καὶ ὥφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαι ὥσπερ πυρὸς καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐφ’ ἓνα ἕκαστον αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐπλήσθησαν πάντες πνεύματος ἁγίου. καὶ ἤρξαντο λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις καθὼς τὸ πνεῦμα ἐδίδου ἀποφθέγγεσθαι αὐτοῖς. (Acts 2:2-4)

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Thus the apparent incongruity of the image of rays flashing from a voice is solved when one examines the verse through a spiritual lens: it is the Spirit of Christ that Dioscorus is now describing.

A resolution of the *dichotomy* between ἀστράπτουσι, which is terrifying, and περικαλλέος, which is attractive, can now be found: it lies in the final effect of the lightning. In Psalm 17, quoted above, the Lord's lightning and thunderous voice make David's enemies flee. In Acts, the voice in the lightning brings a sudden end to Saul's violent persecutions. In the Apocalypse, the lightning and voices from the throne signal the end of the evil reign of Babylon. All these outcomes are highly desirable. In Dioscorus's hymn, the Spirit's voice is as frightening as lightning. But because it has beautiful results, it is lovely.

Verses 29-30

[..] ὑψίκαρῃ[νον .].ν.. λαυράτα ... κατ..αφ..[
[.....]..ς ἰμεύρων φιλοπάρθενος ε[
[..] *the lofty cro[wn] port[rait*
[.....] *lover of virginity, desiring [*

λαυράτα : This word does not appear in Homer or Nonnus. It is not used elsewhere in the poetry of Dioscorus. If the reconstruction, tentatively suggested by Fournet, is correct, then on the surface level Dioscorus is referring to a laurel-wreathed portrait of the emperor, the λαυράτον; on the allegorical level, he is referring to an icon.

It would be in keeping with Dioscorus's style to use the term λαυράτον to maintain the surface level of meaning and also to suggest the λαύρα. The word λαύρα means literally "alley", but was used to describe monasteries. The festival to St. Theodosius, where this hymn could have been recited, could have occurred in a monastic environment. It would be this religious connotation—as well as the surface level of meaning—that governed the choice of words; otherwise, Dioscorus would have used the word εἰκών, which we find often in his poetry.

ἰμείρων φιλοπάρθενος : Although we do not have the entire verse, there seems to be an *antithesis* between "desiring" and "loving virginity". Yet the term ἰμείρω does not have to suggest sexual desire. For example, it is used by Aeschylus for the desire for battle (Agamemnon 940) and by Sophocles for the desire for life (Fragmenta 952). ἰμείρω is used by Homer and Nonnus, and in two other poems by Dioscorus. In one of the two occurrences in the *Paraphrase*, Nonnus uses the verb in participial form to describe the desire of the apostles to follow Jesus: ... καὶ οὐ θέμις, ὁππόθι βαίνω, / ὕμέας ἰμείροντας ἀνέμβατον οἶμον ὁδεύειν. " ... and it is not right that you travel the inaccessible path where I am going, although you desire it." (7.138-139) In the other, the verb describes the desire to kill Jesus (7.75).

Dioscorus uses the word φιλοπάρθενος ("loving virginity" or "loving virgins") again at Poem 18.50 (Heitsch 5.26). This word does not appear in Homer, but often in Nonnus's *Dionysiaca*. It appears only twice in the *Paraphrase*, with several other forms of the word in a dense *polyptoton* at the climax of the narrative. Jesus on the cross turns to his mother and addresses her as

“one who loves virginity.” Jesus then calls her attention to her new virgin son, John. Jesus then turns to the disciple that he loved, John, and addresses him as “one who loves virginity,” and calls his attention to the Virgin Mary. Jesus then hands her over to John’s guardianship, and the latter makes the Virgin part of his household. (Cf. Jo. 19:26-27)

... ὥς δὲ τεκοῦσαν

Χριστὸς ἶδεν θεόπαιδα καί, ὃν φιλέεσκε μαθητήν,
μητέρι μῦθον ἔλεξε· γύναι φιλοπάρθενε μήτερ,
ἡνίδε παρθένον υἱά. καὶ ἔμπαλιν εἶπε μαθητῇ·
ἡνίδε παρθενική, φιλοπάρθενε, ...

When Christ saw the one that had borne the divine Son, and the disciple whom he loved, he said these words to his mother: “Woman, mother who loves virginity, lo! a virgin son.” And he said to his disciple on the other side: “Lo! a virgin woman, one who loves virginity, ... (Paraphrasis 19.138-141)

Traditionally, the apostle John was also the author of the Gospel that served as the foundation for Nonnus’s *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John*. Romanus the Melodist, the hymnwriter and older contemporary of Dioscorus, uses the term φιλοπάρθενος only once and only when describing John. The apostle is also called θεολόγος, which recalls the evangelist tradition.

ὁ θεολόγος καὶ φίλος τοῦ Χριστοῦ
Ὅτε οὖν ἦλθες πρὸς μαθητεῖαν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἄλλους ἡγαπήθης,
σοφέ, ὥς πρᾶος καὶ φιλοπάρθενος.

*The theologian and friend of Christ:
When therefore you came to the discipleship,
you were loved
beyond all others,
wise one,
because you were kind and loved virginity.*

(Cantica dubia, Hymn 60, proem-strophe + section 4, line 1)

Because of the condition of the Dioscorian papyrus, it is impossible to say who is the subject of the words ἰμείρων and φιλοπάρθενος. One might note, however, that virginity was highly prized in the early Byzantine culture. And in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, virginity is the first attribute named for Theodosius; his writing skills are named later.

Verses 31-32

[οὐδαμὸς] δὲ ἄναξ πανομοῖ[ι]ος ἔπλετο σεῖο.
[οὐραν]όθεν Θεὸς ὑμῖν πόρεν διαδήματα φωτός.
*[No] lord was ever like you:
From heaven God has given you diadems of light.*

These two verses are held together and united by *omicron assonance*. Both verses have a quick rhythm, with a preponderance of dactyls. The only spondees in the couplet are found at [οὐδαμὸς] δὲ ἄναξ, “no lord”, where the five long syllables create a majestic beginning. Unlike the rest of the words in the verse, ἄναξ

has no *omicron*. Thus, because ἄναξ does not fit with the rest of the verse metrically or phonetically, it resonates. Up to this point in Poem 17, Dioscorus has signified authority with the word βασιλεύς three times: in referring to God (verse 8), the Old Testament patriarchs (verse 19), and the New Testament saints (verse 20). He has also used the words πολύκκηπτρος (verse 7), στρατιάρχος (verse 15), and κκηπτοῦχος (verse 26). This is the first time that he has used the Homeric word ἄναξ. Therefore the word choice, *assonance*, and meter strengthen the meaning of the verse: there is no one else in Poem 17 like Christ the ἄναξ.

Verse 32 creates a *chiasmic ring structure*, which supports the image of a diadem. The term Θεός recalls verses 9 and 13, and the plural pronoun ὑμμι distantly echoes the plural pronoun ἄμμιν of verses 1 and 2. Helping further to unify the poem, the διαδήματα recalls the crown of 27 and 29, and the φωτός recalls the light imagery in verse 28.

[οὐδαμός] δὲ ἄναξ : The restoration is by Maspero. Οὐδαμός, because it is a contraction of οὐδὲ ἄμός, has a long *alpha* and fits the epic meter perfectly. But it creates a couple of heavy spondees in an otherwise light verse. Although not used by Homer and Nonnus, the word οὐδαμός appears already in Hesiod.

While ἄναξ can mean any sort of lord or master, in Homer it was used to refer to divinities, especially Apollo the son of Zeus (ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων Il. 7.23, 7.37, 16.804, 20.103, and 8.334). This usage was continued during the Classical Era, when we find: ὁ Πύθιος ἄναξ (Aeschylus, Agamemnon 509); ἄναξ Ἀπολλων (Aeschylus, Agamemnon 513; Eumenides 85; etc.); ὦναξ Ἀπολλων (Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus 80); and ὦναξ without Ἀπολλων

(Herodotus 1.159, 4.150, etc.). The title was also used for other divinities, such as Zeus, Poseidon, and the Dioscuri. Homer also used the term ἄναξ to designate heroes, such as Agamemnon the commander-in-chief, and Teiresias the blind prophet (Il. 1.442; Od. 11.144, 151; etc.). The term could be used to designate the sons or brothers of kings (Isocrates 9.72, etc.).

Dioscorus uses the word frequently; see verse 34 below (a restoration) and Heitsch 2.1, 6; 3.32; 4a.15; 5.7, 13, 60; 6.16; 12b.8; 13.7; etc.). Nonnus uses the term frequently in the *Dionysiaca*. In the *Paraphrase*, he employs it to designate Christ, often in a set phrase occupying the first one and a half feet: Χριστὸς ἄναξ (1.68, 3.142, 7.117, 7.141, 7.153, etc.).

Here, on the allegorical level, Dioscorus uses the term ἄναξ to designate Christ as God and man (following the twin usage of ἄναξ for god and hero in Homer). In that sense there is no one like him: neither in the Trinity nor on earth. His uniqueness is underlined by the unusual adjective πανομοῖ[ι]ος.

πανομοῖ[ι]ος : This word is uncommon in Greek literature. The adjective appears first, perhaps, in the 2nd century A.D. in the epic writer Oppianus (*Cynegetica*, Book 4, line 173). It is used later by Nonnus, Apollinaris, and at least twice in the *Greek Anthology* (AP 7.599: Julien; and AP 9.482: Agathias). With these authors, it is followed by a dative case. Dioscorus uses the word also at Poem 4.23 (Heitsch 12b.5), where he follows it with a dative. Here, however, Dioscorus seems to follow it with a genitive: *ceĩo*. This unique use of the genitive with this adjective further underlines the specialness of the ἄναξ.

Because it is a negative expression, the παν- underlines the negative: literally “not at all similar.”

ἔπλετο : As mentioned in the discussion of verse 16, this form can be taken as an imperfect or aorist tense. In Homer, the imperfect goes unaugmented. In the aorist it can be translated as a present tense: “he became” equals “he is”. I translated the same verb above (ἔπλετο), which was used for Theodosius, as an imperfect (“you were”) and I repeat that tense here.

To summarize verse 31: Dioscorus created a remarkable blend of style and meaning to establish that the Lord is absolutely unique. Stylistically, Dioscorus chose words that were unusual: ἄναξ in this hymn, and πανομοίος in Greek literature. He created a quick dactyl couplet, in which ἄναξ stood out with its two slow syllables. He created an *omicron assonance*, in which ἄναξ stood out with its *alphas*. And the final word of the verse (the genitive σεῖο), which referred back to the ἄναξ, was a grammatical anomaly. The poet has pulled all stops, but so skillfully that his craftsmanship goes almost unnoticed.

[οὐραν]όθεν ... πόρεν : The restoration is by Maspero. The pair of words is found in Nonnus, when speaking of God’s gift of manna to the Jewish people in the desert: ... ἀμετρήτῳ ποτὲ λαῶ / οὐρανόθεν πόρεν ἄρτον, ... “He once gave bread from heaven to an immeasurable people (Paraphrasis 6.129-130).

ὑμμι ... διαδήματα φωτός : After emphasizing the absolute uniqueness of the Lord, the poet now addresses him with a plural pronoun ὑμμι and shows him

receiving diadems. These diadems are not the same as the lofty crown above (στέφος ὑψικάρηνον, verses 27 and 29). If Dioscorus was influenced by the pictorial art in the church, the διαδήματα φωτός could be saints' haloes or even the medallions holding images of the saints. See the encaustic icon of St. Peter (Figure 3) and the Coptic tapestry of the *Theotokos* (Figure 5), both from the 6th century. These haloes and medallions would be golden and in sunlight perhaps gleam. Through such an allusion to pictorial art, the Dioscorian imagery of diadems of light from heaven would recall the biblical concept that the faithful were entrusted to Christ's care by God (Jo. 6:39; etc.) And the plurality repeats the motif that the Body of Christ is made up of the many faithful (see the discussion of ὑμετέρησιν ... χερσίν in verse 23 above). In other words: successful nurturing of the faithful would lead to their sainthood (διαδήματα φωτός) and this care was entrusted by God (Θεός ... πόρεν) to Christ and his Church (ἡμεῖς).

There is, however, another interpretation possible, and both allegorical meanings can coexist simultaneously. The poet pointed out that the word διαδήματα is important. Literally "a band", the term is used neither by Homer nor by Nonnus, and by Dioscorus only here. To further stress it, the poet surrounded the five syllable word with words of only two syllables. Diadem imagery combined with light imagery is found in a Christian context both in Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria. Clement quotes an account given by the prophet Sophonias about the prophet's ascent into the fifth heaven. There the angels are called lords, wear diadems, and sit on thrones of light (*Stromata*, Book 5, chapter 11, section 77, subsection 2, lines 1-6). In Eusebius, the imagery is used to describe the rewards that Christ is given in heaven:

ταῦτα δὴ οὖν ἅπαντα θεσπίζουσα ἡ προφητεία ἐδήλου δι' ὧν φησιν· «καὶ Ἰησοῦς ἦν ἐνδεδυμένος ἱμάτια ῥυπαρά». πλὴν ἀλλὰ ταῦτα ἀποθέμενος κατὰ τὴν εἰς οὐρανούς ἄνοδον καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς αἰχμαλωσίας εἰς τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐπάνοδον, τῷ τῆς πατρικῆς θεότητος στεφανοῦται διαδήματι, καὶ τὴν λαμπροτάτην στολὴν τοῦ πατρικοῦ φωτὸς περιτίθεται, κιδάρει τε ἐνθέῳ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀρχιερατικοῖς κόσμοις κατακοσμεῖται.

The inspired prophet referred to all these things when he said: "And Jesus was clad in filthy garments." But He put them from Him by his Ascension into the heavens, and the return from our condition of slavery to his own [glory], and He is crowned with the diadem of his Father's divinity, and is girt with the bright robe of his Father's light, and is glorified with the divine mitre and the other high priestly adornments.

(Demonstratio evangelica, Book 4, chapter 17, section 19, lines 1-5)

And most significantly, one of the final images in the Apocalypse is that of Christ wearing diadems and surrounded by light:

Καὶ εἶδον τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠνεωγμένον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος λευκός, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ' αὐτὸν πιστὸς [καλούμενος] καὶ ἀληθινός, καὶ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ. οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ [ὥς] φλὸξ πυρός, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ διαδήματα πολλά

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth

judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems (19:11-12)

Inspired by Christian art, and influenced by Patristic and biblical imagery, Dioscorus perhaps wove two diadems of meaning together to create the allegorical level of verse 32.

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 [Faded handwritten text in Cyrillic script, likely a list or inventory, with some words like "книжка" (booklet) and "содержит" (contains) visible.]

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These are the oldest surviving poems written by the hand of a known poet. Dioscorus's sixth-century manuscripts, with revisions and corrections, were discovered on papyrus in 1905 beneath the village of Kom Ashkaw, Egypt (ancient Aphrodito). The manuscripts are now held in museums and libraries around the world. Although Dioscorus was an Egyptian, he composed his poetry in Greek, the cultural language of the Byzantine Era. Once considered obscure, the meaning of the poems becomes clear when seen through the lens of Byzantine spirituality. The first collection of his poems was published by the young Jean Maspero in 1911. The first volume of this new critical edition begins with an exploration of the allegorical meaning of one of Dioscorus's masterpieces, the Hymn to St. Theodosius.

