

## COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 VERSO

### Verses 20-35: Christ

#### Verse 20

[Ϝ χαίρε]τέ μοι, βασιλῆες, ἐπὶ χρόνον ἄσπετον εὖκ[λ]εις.  
*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* κκοπιάζετε. 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.

[Ἐ 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, ἱερῆες, ἐπ’ ἀλλήλοισιν ἰόντες·  
Χαῖρε, πρόεδρε τύφε· χαῖρε, πόλις μεγάλη.  
Αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ χθονίων μὲν ὑπέρτερός εἰμι θεώκων,  
Ἴμείρω 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.”

εὐκ[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 εὐδειε (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 εὐκ[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 τῆς 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, εἶτα 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: οὗτοι 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, *Thesmophoriazusaie* 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᾽άνευθε : “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.

τεῆς : 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, ἀλάσθω, 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 ἕνα, 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] πεφρικώτα 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 τῆς 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 -ικότ-. 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: ... δέμια χερσί / ... 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.

ύμετέρησιν ... χερσί : The pronominal adjective ύμέτερος appears in both Homer and Nonnus, and is used in two other poems by Dioscorus: Poem 11.71 (ύμετέρων Heitsch 3.71) and 34.19 (ύμετέρων 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: οὐδείς 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 Χριστὸς· καὶ γὰρ ἓν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δούλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν. καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἐστὶν ἓν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλά. ... 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 ἀρωγῆ[c] / [δεινῶν 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); ποταμῆια 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 ἀεργάξει : The restoration [πίστ]ιν is by Maspero and based on Poem 5.8 (Heitsch 6.8): π[ί]σ[τιν] ἀ[ε]ργάζων Τριάδ[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 ὠδῖνας τοῦ θανάτου καθότι οὐκ ἦν δυνατὸν 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: ὡς 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 Sophi-ae 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 *syllipsis*: 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 [μῆ τ]ρομέεις, σκηπτουῦχε, τὸ σὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλεῖται·  
27 [συ] ρτέφος ὑψικάρηνον· πάμφυλον ἔσσι κιβώτιν,  
28 [ἀκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι τεῆς 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 σκηπτουῦχε 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 χτέφος, 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 θάλλεις (Heitsch 4a.12, 5.3) and θάλλοις (Heitsch 2.29, 12b.9) with no change in meaning.

The Dioscorian phrase μὴ τρομέεις is found nowhere else in Greek literature. The phrase μὴ τρομέεις 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]ρομέεις, 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:

οὔτω γὰρ πολύμορφον ἐφίλατο κόσμον ἀλήτην  
ὑψιμέδων σκηπτοῦχος, ὅτι χραισμήτορα φωτῶν  
μουνογενῆ λόγον υἷα πόρεν τετράζυγι κόσμῳ,  
ἔφρα 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 πιφάσκεις  
αὐτόματος σκηπτοῦχον Ἰουδαίων με καλέσσας,  
ἢ 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 κείνος 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

*Homero-centones*, 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.

[cù] ζτέφος ὑψικάρηνον πάμφυλον : Maspero suggests [ὡς] “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 κιβώτιον 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 ἔσσι.

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 χρυσῶ 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· μεσσοφανῆ 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  $\zeta\tau\epsilon\phi\omicron\varsigma\ \upsilon\psi\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}\rho\eta\nu\omicron\nu\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\mu\phi\upsilon\lambda\omicron\nu$ , 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 σαυτῶ 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 σητόβρωτα, δὸς τοῖς πτωχοῖς· ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ εἰσὶν 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 ὡς ἔν γε τῇ κιβωτῷ Χριστός· κατεσκευάστο γὰρ ἐκ ξύλων ἀσήπτων ἐκείνη, καὶ τὸν θεῖον ἐν ἑαυτῇ κατεπέκαζε νόμον, ὅς 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 αὐτῆ, 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 [cύ] ... 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)

[ἀκτ]ῖνες ἀστράπτουσι τεῖς περικαλλέος ὀμφῆς : The verse begins with an  
*alliteration* of *alpha* sounds (ἀκ- 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 ἐγγίξειν 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 βρονταὶ ...

*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.

[ἀκτ]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, ἀκτίς is used for lightning (Pindarus, Pythia 4.198) and the ray of Zeus, which is lightning: ὦ Διὸς ἀκτίς, 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: ὅσπερ 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 ἕξαστράπτων (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 ἔσθῃτι 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.

ὄμφῃς : In Homer, ὄμφῃ always refers to the gods, especially when communicating to mortals. See for example: ταῦτα θεῶν ἐκ πεύσεται ὄμφῃς. “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 ὄμφῃν 3.49) and the voice of John the Baptist (ἀγνὸν Ἰωάννην θεοδέγμονος ἔγκυον ὄμφῃς 5.127). And it is associated with the Spirit, when Christ says: μύθων δ’ ἡμετέρων ῥόος ἔνθεος, οὐς ἀγορεύω, ζωὴ ὁμοῦ καὶ πνεῦμα πέλει καὶ ἐτήτυμος ὄμφῃ. “The inspired stream of our words, which I speak, is both life and Spirit, and a truthful voice” (6:195-196). Throughout Greek literature, ὄμφῃ usually carries divine and oracular connotations.

And there is some Classical precedence to Dioscorus’s “lovely voice”. The term ὄμφῃ can be modified to imply that the voice is sweet or tuneful. Compare Dioscorus’s phrase with Pindar’s ὄμφαὶ μελέων (Fragmenta 75.19) and ἀδείαι ... ὄμφαί (Nemea 10.34). And in the *Theogony*, we find a phrase similar to Dioscorus’s περικαλλέος ὄμφῃς: 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

[ἀκτ]ῖνες and ὀμφῆς “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 ὡς περ φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν ὅλον τὸν οἶκον οὗ ἦσαν καθήμενοι. καὶ ὤφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ 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 ἰμείρων 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, ὀππόθι βαίνω, / ὕμέας ἰμείροντας ἀνέμβατον οἶμον ὀδεύειν. " ... 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)

... ὡς δὲ τεκοῦσαν

Χριστὸς ἶδεν θεόπαιδα καί, ὃν φιλέεσκε μαθητήν,  
μητέρι μῦθον ἔλεξε· γύναι φιλοπάρθενε μήτερ,  
ἡνίδε παρθένον υἱά. καὶ ἔμπαλιν εἶπε μαθητῆ·  
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, ὡς 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 ἰμεῖρων 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 ceῖο.

[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), στρατάρχος (verse 15), and κκηπτούχος (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 ὑμῖν distantly echoes the plural pronoun ἄμῃν 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 Ἄπολλον (Aeschylus, Agamemnon 513; Eumenides 85; etc.); ὦναξ Ἄπολλον (Sophocles, Oedipus Tyrannus 80); and ὦναξ without Ἄπολλον

(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 πανομο[ί]οτος.

πανομο[ί]οτος : 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: *κεῖνο*. 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 (ἔπλεο), 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 (Θεὸς ... πόρεν) to Christ and his Church (ἕμμι).

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 ἶδου ἵππος λευκός, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ' αὐτὸν πιστὸς [καλούμενος] καὶ ἀληθινός, καὶ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ. οἱ δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ [ὡς] 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.