

COMMENTARY TO POEM 17 RECTO

Verses 5-10: Christ

Verses 5-8

- 5 [λώϊόν ἐστιν ἐόν παναοίδιμον οὔνομα μέλψαι],
6 [ὅττι χ]άρις καὶ χάρμα καὶ ε[ύε]πίης φ[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς],
7 [ύμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἷα 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]ᾶρις 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]ᾶρις 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]ᾶρις : 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 ἠύξανεν 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 κεχαρομένος, “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:

ὕμῖν δ’ ἔμπεδα ταῦτα φίλα φρονέων ἀγορεύω,
ὕμείων ἵνα χάρμα πέλοι καὶ πᾶσιν ἐν ὑμῖν
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 θέσπις ἀηδῶν,
Ἡρόδοτος πολύιδρις, 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, ὡσεὶ χόρτος αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτοῦ· / ὡσεὶ 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, ἀκίχητος, ἐν ἀρρήτῳ λόγος ἀρχῆ,
ἰσοφυῆς γενετῆρος ὀμήλικος υἱὸς ἀμήτωρ,

καὶ λόγος αὐτοφύτσιο θεοῦ γόνος, ἐκ φάεος φῶς·
πατρὸς ἔην ἀμέριστος, ἀτέρμονι σύνθρονος ἔδρη·
καὶ θεὸς ὑψιγένεθλος 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 ὡς γλυκέα τῷ λάρυγγί μου τὰ λόγια 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

[ῥυμνε]ῦσαι νέον υἱὰ πολυκλήπτρου 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 υἷα and πολυκλήπτρου παλλατίου are contrasted further by word length: two syllables, two syllables || four syllables, four syllables. The short and spry words νέον υἷα 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 υἷα : 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 υἷα “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):

Ἴδ', ὦ 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 ὀρῶντας 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 ἑξαπτερύγων.

... 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 χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, καθαρισμόν τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν 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 κἀγὼ 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 πολυκρήπτρου, 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 οὔ. 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]κυδήεντα : Maspero’s restoration of the beginning of the verse was [τον πολυ]κυδηεντα, 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]κυδήεντα, 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 πολυκυδήεις 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: πολυκυδής, 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' ἔλπωρῆσι 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[ί]λ[ο]ν ἄνθο[ς] in verse 6. Second, it comes after the main *caesura* of the verse, which is again feminine: εἰν τᾶ || φῖ λῶχ ρῖτ 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 εὐσεβῆς 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 θεϊότητα 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 ἠνεώχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδεν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καταβαῖνον ὡσεὶ 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 αὐτούς 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 ὤπασε 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 [οιοῖον δῶρο]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 (χειῖλος 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.

ᾠπάαε : 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 ᾠπάαε πομπόν (Il. 13.416); σοὶ γάρ με πατήρ ἅμα πομπὸν ᾠπάασεν (Il. 24.461; cf. Od. 9.90); ἅμ’ ἠγεμόν’ ἐσθλὸν ᾠπάασον (Od. 15.310); ἀρχὸν δὲ μετ’ ἀμφοτέροισιν ᾠπάαε (Od. 10.204); and πολὺν δέ μοι ᾠπάαε λαόν, i.e. “made me leader over many” (Il. 9.483). The restored exclamatory adjective οἶον with ᾠπάαε can be compared to ᾠ Ζεῦ, γυναικῶν οἶον ᾠπάαε 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 ᾠπάαε 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 ἔδον λόγον υἷα πατήρ θεὸς ὄπασε 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 ... τάπερ θεὸς ὄπασε 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' οὐρανόθ[εν θε]ὸς ἄγνός / Χρηστόν, ἄγαλμα ἑοῖο, δῖον φάος ὄπ[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: ὄσσάτιόν 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 ἐῷ 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· ἢ 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 μεταβῆ 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· κἀγὼ 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

τῆ ζωῆ πεπόρευσαι, καὶ οὐ μὴ ἄψηταί 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 eternal 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 rejects the Homeric meaning of the phrase and adopts an exclusively Christian meaning. Is this evidence of a mishmash of Hellenistic and Christian sensibilities? 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 νομευε̅ι. 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 οὐδὲν με ὑστερήσει. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Ps. 22/23:1) And: ὡς ποιμὴν ποιμανεῖ τὸ ποῖμνιον αὐτοῦ· καὶ τῷ βραχίονι αὐτοῦ συναῖξει 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 εἶμι 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)

*[ἦλυθεν] : 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 ... ἵκανεν ... ἦλυθεν “he has come ... he has come ... he came.”

