



1993

## Channels of Imperishable Fire: The Christian Mystical Allegories of Dioscorus of Aphrodito

Clement A. Kuehn  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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Aaron R. Kuehn

1534 Estes

Chicago, IL 60626

April 15, 1993

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHANNELS OF IMPERISHABLE FIRE :  
THE CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL ALLEGORIES  
OF DIOSCORUS OF APHRODITO

VOLUME I

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

BY

CLEMENT A. KUEHN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 1993

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## PREFACE

The Greek poems by Flavius Dioscorus (A.D. c. 520 - c. 585) were discovered in 1905 in an archive of papyri buried in the ruins of the ancient village of Aphrodito in Upper Egypt.<sup>1</sup> It was soon recognized that his poetry was remarkably different from the poetry of his contemporaries; yet it could not be determined why it was so strange and difficult to understand.<sup>2</sup> At least one editor said that the obscurity was the result of a lack of skill in writing Greek.<sup>3</sup> Dioscorus was bilingual, and his native language was Coptic.<sup>4</sup> Yet the documents which were discovered with the poetry show

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<sup>1</sup>The initial collection of Dioscorian poems by Jean Maspero contained only the 13 best preserved poems owned by the Cairo Museum and M. Beaugé; J. Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte: Dioscore, fils d'Apollôs," *REG* 24 (1911): 427. Ernst Heitsch gathered a larger selection of Dioscorian poems from many different sources, including the museums at Cairo, Berlin, and London, and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1963), 127-52. See Viljamaa's list of Heitsch's omissions—which list is now incomplete; T. Viljamaa, "Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry of the Early Byzantine Period," *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum Societas Scientiarum Fennica* 42 (Helsinki, 1968), 33 note 55. Heitsch's collection (including one Dioscorian poem [S 10] from volume 2) contains twenty-nine poems (716 verses), twenty-one of which are encomia. The encomia are written in dactylic hexameter and iambic trimeter. This collection also includes epithalamia, ethopoeiae, and an anacreontic. If one adds the Dioscorian *chairetismos*, the isopsephistic encomium to St. Senas, and the poem to the new monk, the total amount of verses comes to about 737. Jean-Luc Fournet is currently working on a complete edition of the Dioscorian poems.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Maspero said succinctly: "In certain places, the phrases are so obscure that one can ask if the author himself understood them." "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 427.

<sup>3</sup>"At no moment has he any real control of thought, diction, grammar, metre, or meaning." H. Milne, *P.Lond.Lit.*, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Coptic is the last stage of the Egyptian language. In written form, the Coptic language used the Greek alphabet with the addition of several letters. The Coptic Period is the era in Egypt from the beginning of the use of this Coptic alphabet until the Arab

that Dioscorus, a lawyer, was a skillful writer of Greek and Coptic,<sup>5</sup> and his expertise in drafting legal documents was sought not only by Aphroditans but also by the nobility in Antinoopolis (the second most important city in all of Egypt). Another scholar said that consideration should be given to interference by the Coptic language and way of thinking.<sup>6</sup> Yet, although Dioscorus undeniably incorporated the Coptic culture into his poetry, philologists have not been able to show where the Coptic language, culture, or "cognitive style" was responsible for any of Dioscorus' nearly incomprehensible passages.<sup>7</sup>

This dissertation will attempt to demonstrate that many of the difficulties in understanding the poems' literal meaning arise from the fact that the Dioscorian encomia (poems of praise) belong to a sixth-century Egyptian experiment in Christian mystical poetry: the concealed allegory. The romantic epyllion (a short epic) of *Hero and Leander* by Musaeus of Alexandria (end of the fifth - beginning of the sixth century A.D.) is the only other surviving example of such poetry from this era. Although it is likely

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invasion—that is, from the second century B.C. to the middle of the seventh century A.D. See A. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1991), s.v. "Copt," by P. du Bourguet; "Coptic Language, Spoken," by E. Ishaq.

<sup>5</sup>L. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988), 16-56, esp. 24-36.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 62-63, 156-59.

<sup>7</sup>Ewa Wipszycka pointed out, and correctly so, that MacCoull was too narrow in her perspective; elements in the Greek poetry which were (according to MacCoull) influenced by the Coptic culture were, in fact, common to Greek poetry from other countries of the eastern empire. See E. Wipszycka, review of *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World*, by L. MacCoull, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 48 (1991): 529-36, esp. 535-36. With respect to Dioscorus' Greek language, Wipszycka remarked (p. 535): "The Greek language of Late Antiquity is astonishingly uniform from one country to the next."

that this epyllion was already recognized by Procopius of Gaza (c. 465 - 528) as a mystical allegory, it was only after the extensive research by Thomas Gelzer in 1967 that the mystical elements of *Hero and Leander* were recognized by modern critics.<sup>8</sup> The Dioscorian encomia have a mystical level of meaning which—like that in *Hero and Leander*—is evident and at times obtrusive but does not dominate the literal level.

In order fully to understand the evidence for mystical allegory in Dioscorus' poems, one must give attention to the mystical and allegorical aspects of the society and culture—not specifically Coptic—which affected or may have affected the poet and his poetry. An important influence was the Christian mystical poetry which preceded Dioscorus. In the early Byzantine period there did not yet exist a clearly defined tradition of Christian mystical poetry. From Synesius of Cyrene (c. 365 - c. 414) to Symeon the New Theologian (949 - 1022),<sup>9</sup> each poet's description of the mystical union was unique. These mystical poems were not only different from one another, but also remarkably different from the poetry of their contemporaries. In fact, one of the few characteristics they shared was their uniqueness. The introduction, therefore, will survey this mystical poetry.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>T. Gelzer, "Bemerkungen zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 129-48; and 25 (1968): 11-47; idem, ed., *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, in the *Loeb* series (Cambridge, 1978), 291-343. Although Gelzer's arguments are persuasive, not every literary critic has been convinced. See R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1986), 157-61, 159 note 52.

<sup>9</sup>Since Symeon's mystical poems postdate Dioscorus' poems by more than four hundred years, they will not be discussed in this study. For the uniqueness of his style, see J. Koder and J. Paramelle, ed. and trans., *Syméon le Nouveau Théologien: Hymnes*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1969), 78-81. Some of his vocabulary was derived from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite; *ibid.*, 73, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Because of the difficulty in translating mystical literature, in my introduction I

With this survey there will be a discussion of the allegorical interpretations of the Homeric epics by late Neoplatonists. The style in which Dioscorus composed the allegories in his encomia,<sup>11</sup> and his concept of his rôle as inspired poet—these were derived from the literary theories of the pagan Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (c. 410 - 485). It is a commonplace that pagan Neoplatonism had a significant effect upon early Christian thought, especially Christian mystical theology.<sup>12</sup> Origen, Evagrius, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Gregory of Nyssa made extensive use of Neoplatonic hermeneutics and Neoplatonic models of the mystical cosmos. For example, the effect of Proclus on Pseudo-Dionysius was so pervasive that Pseudo-Dionysius has been called by some modern critics a "baptized Proclus."<sup>13</sup> What hierarchies of angels were for Pseudo-Dionysius were for

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have offered translations of the Greek and Latin texts. All translations, unless indicated otherwise, are my own.

<sup>11</sup>Perhaps not all the verses carry a deeper level of meaning. On the literal level of meaning, some verses are didactic and stress the importance of modesty, humility, and justice. Other verses are traditional features of early Byzantine encomiastic poetry.

<sup>12</sup>R. Baine Harris describes Neoplatonism as follows: "Seen in its boldest profile, then, Neoplatonism is an effort to reconcile Aristotelianism with Platonism through an appeal to a still higher unifying principle than is found in either of the two, namely, an Ultimate First Principle that is *both* transcendent and immanent in all nature, indefinable *and* knowable, self-sufficient *and* creative throughout the universe without an act of will. It is an effort to subsume the major elements of Aristotle's system within a revised but fundamentally *Platonic* framework of thought." "A Brief Description of Neoplatonism," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris (Norfolk, 1976), 8. For the cross-influence of Neoplatonism and Christianity, see the collection of essays in D. O'Meara, ed., *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Norfolk, 1982). Cf. H. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Collegetown, Minn., 1991), 13-14; R. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1972), 160-63, 166-72; Harris, 12-20.

<sup>13</sup>See Lamberton, 232 note 270. Lamberton (p. 232) suggested that Pseudo-Dionysius "may well have been a Christian student of Proclus himself." See Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "New Objective Links Between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, 64-74. Walther Völker, while recognizing Pseudo-Dionysius' debt to



Proclus hierarchies of Olympian gods and their spiritual processions.<sup>14</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius' discussion of evil is almost a paraphrase of Proclus' discussion of the same.<sup>15</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius' understanding of biblical symbolism corresponds to Proclus' understanding of Homeric symbolism. As Robert Lambertson points out:

For the author [Pseudo-Dionysius] of the corpus, the Hebrew Bible constitutes an authoritative theological source nearly as remote and problematical as the poems of Homer were for Proclus. His response to this problem closely parallels the approach of the pagan Athenian Neoplatonists. Like Proclus, the author lives in a world of *παραπετάσματα*, simultaneously masking and (to the initiate) revealing the divine, and the most striking and disorienting of the mythic attributes of the divine are explicitly the most valuable, because they stimulate the search for truth.<sup>16</sup>

If Dioscorus had studied under John Philoponus at Alexandria, as suggested by MacCoull,<sup>17</sup> Dioscorus almost certainly would have been introduced by this Christian Neoplatonist to Proclus' theories on mystical allegory.

Whomever Dioscorus, however, may have had for a teacher, his reading of the *Iliad* (of which he owned a codex) would have been influenced by

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Neoplatonism, pointed out the equally significant patristic influences; *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 22 and *passim*.

<sup>14</sup>Wallis, 161; R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954), 68-81.

<sup>15</sup>H. Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in her Lehre vom Bösen," *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438-54. When Koch was writing, the debate had narrowed down to the question: who was the source for whom? Koch proved that "Proklus die Quelle, Dionysius der Benutzer ist" (p. 442). See also J. Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagiten in der Lehre vom Übel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895): 253-73, 721-48.

<sup>16</sup>Lamberton, 245-46.

<sup>17</sup>"Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1987): 163-68.

Neoplatonic allegorical interpretations of Homer.<sup>18</sup>

The introduction will also discuss another influential aspect of Late Antique - early Byzantine culture: monks and monasteries. Dioscorus' father, Apollos, founded a monastery and eventually entered the monastic life. Maspero suggested that Dioscorus himself eventually became a monk.<sup>19</sup> For his entire adult life, Dioscorus had a close and constant working relationship with the monks and monasteries of the Thebaid. His father made him curator of the monastery he had founded; and for these and other monks, Dioscorus drew up petitions, arbitrated legal cases, leased land, etc. It is perhaps through them that he came into direct contact with Christian mysticism. It will thus help elucidate his poetry if we can arrive at some general understanding of the mysticism being practiced by Christian monks in the eastern empire in the early Byzantine period.

Chapter 1 will discuss the discovery and dispersal of Dioscorus' papyri. Autograph copies of Dioscorus' poems are now in libraries and

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<sup>18</sup>Lamberton concluded (p. xi): "The Neoplatonic allegorists refashioned Homer not by any interference with the text itself, but by exerting their influence on the other factor in the equation of reading: the reader. In so doing, they predisposed subsequent readers to expect, and so to discover, a certain scope of meaning in early epics. . . . [They] generated a *reading* of the received text of Homer that was to become inseparable from the meaning of that text for later generations." The *Iliad* was considered by Proclus to be the more mystical of the two epics.

<sup>19</sup>"The poet himself, despite his taste for pagan and mythological poetry, was no less pious than his father. As curator he sometimes took care of the business affairs of the monastery. Perhaps he was even more; some letters, which are not dated, are addressed to his ἀδελφική διάθεσις and to his ἀδελφότης (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67067, 67068). It is possible that following the example of his father, Dioscorus, the court poet of the dukes of the Thebaid, the former lawyer of Aphrodito with his close relationship to Justinian, ended his days in a monastic habit inside the family monastery of Apa Apollos." Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 468. See also L. MacCoull, "A Coptic Monastic Letter to Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Enchoria* 18 (1991): 23-25; eadem, *Dioscorus*, 121-23.

museums throughout Egypt, Europe, and the United States; and papyri with his verses continue to turn up in museum collections.<sup>20</sup> The documents which were discovered with his poems—dealing with his legal activities in Aphrodito and Antinoopolis, his trips to Constantinople, his property and its management, etc.—give a vivid if not complete picture of the life of the poet and his community. The deeply religious and poetic environment around Aphrodito, the collapse of the central government's control over its tax collectors, the threat of barbarian raids—all these deeply affected Dioscorus and helped shape his poems. Thus the discussion of the papyri will be followed by a biography of the author.

Chapter 2 will discuss one poem in detail, *P.Cair.Masp. I 67097 verso F*. This two-part poem, like all Dioscorus' poems, is complex; in addition to having a mystical level of meaning, its literal level contains a parody satirizing the cult of icons.<sup>21</sup> His attitude coincides with Monophysite condemnations of the burgeoning practice of icon worship.<sup>22</sup> Yet while the

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<sup>20</sup>The verses on P.Berol. Inv. No. 21334 were not recognized as Dioscorian until around 1991, when Herwig Maehler identified them; they are in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. See C. Kuehn, "A New Papyrus of a Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract, P.Berol. Inv. No. 21334" *ZPE* (forthcoming).

Dioscorus' poems are the oldest autograph compositions by a known poet. For a survey of autograph poems found on ancient papyri, see M. Parca, *Ptocheia or Odysseus in Disguise at Troy* (*P. Köln VI 245*) (Atlanta, 1991), 3-4 note 7.

<sup>21</sup>The early Church had emphasized the spirituality of its worship; this was partially in adherence to the Scriptural message and partially in reaction against pagan veneration of idols. "Finally, in the first half of the sixth century, we encounter the first hint in literature of *proskynesis* [prostration] being practiced before images in churches." E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *DOP* 8 (1954): 94; see also 88-95.

<sup>22</sup>Monophysiticism is the doctrine that the incarnate Christ was one person with one divine nature; through his birth by the virgin *Theotokos* (Mother of God), Christ took on the flesh and attributes of man. This doctrine was developed and supported in particular by Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, and Severus, patriarch of Antioch. It had a strong influence

parody shows disdain for icon worship, the mystical level shows the proper place where Christian worship should be directed: the spirit. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F is encomiastic in nature, but different in form from Dioscorus' other encomia. The mystical allegory is also different because it follows closely the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. The allegory, however, is easier to discern, and thus serves as a good introduction to the mystical allegory in the encomia.

Chapter 3, the final chapter, will focus on the elements of mystical allegory in Dioscorus' encomia. Many verses and phrases in the encomia make little or no sense on the literal level of meaning. These problematic verses gave Dioscorus the reputation (among modern readers) of being incomprehensible. Whereas a lack of sense on the literal level is not a valid argument for a deeper level of meaning, these verses contain images or vocabulary which reveal a structure among themselves and a relationship with the mystical theologies of Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Scripture. Because his encomia employ similar techniques and often repeat verses, they will be discussed as a group rather than individually; and the focus will be on the mystical allegory of the encomia as a whole, rather than the particular allegory in each poem.

Dioscorus' encomia were also influenced by the allegorical art of the

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on the Eastern Church during the fifth and sixth centuries, especially in Upper Egypt and Syria. This doctrine was condemned as heretical in A.D. 451 at the Council of Chalcedon. This Council espoused the doctrine that the incarnate Christ was one person with two natures, divine and human. Although the distinction between the two doctrines is difficult to discern, a fierce conflict arose between the believers of each doctrine; it often resulted in persecution of the Monophysites. See W. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1972); idem, "Monophysitism," *The Coptic Encyclopedia*.

early Byzantine period. Many surviving Christian icons depict Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the saints, and the angels as government magistrates and nobility. In Chapter 3 several pertinent examples will be examined and compared to Dioscorus' poetry.

Dioscorus' epithalamia (wedding poems) and ethopoeiae (poems which deal with imaginary situations) employ imagery which is different from that in the encomia; thus these poems will not be included in this study.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study is the fruition of the labor and sacrifices of many people, all of whom I thank deeply and sincerely. I would like to give special thanks to the following. First I would like to thank my *Lebensgefährtin*, Elisabeth Angele, whose love and patience made the years of research and writing bearable—at times, even enjoyable. Thanks also to my son Aaron, especially for his tolerance, his *aequus animus*, and his readiness to offer me his computer and graphics skills. I am also especially grateful to Prof. James G. Keenan, who together with me took the plunge into this research project; despite the distance, the high waves, and some nasty reefs near the coast, he was always there to encourage and offer sensible and seasoned advice. I am also grateful to Leo Sweeney, S. J., who was a fountain of Socratic wisdom and infinite generosity. Special thanks also go to Prof. Edwin P. Menes, who taught me that even if I was right, I had to present my evidence clearly and argue my case persuasively. And thanks to Prof. Brian Lavelle, who made sure that I was prepared to do just that.

Special thanks also go to the directors and the staff of the libraries of Loyola University of Chicago, especially Cathy Miesse and Lorna Newman, whose assistance made Cudahy Library the ideal research center. And finally, a tip of the hat to Dr. Edmonds and Patti Schor of LUCID.

To my mother and father

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of papyrological sources follow John F. Oates, Roger S. Bagnall, William H. Willis, and Klaas A. Worp, "Checklist of Editions of Greek and Latin Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets," 4th ed., *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists: Supplements* Number 7 (1992). Abbreviations of journals follow the *Index des périodiques dépouillés* in *L' Année Philologique*, compiled by J. Ernst, V. Pöschl, and L. Stephens, vol. 60 (Paris, 1991), xv-xxxvii. Abbreviations of Greek authors and their works follow LSJ, xvi-xxxviii; abbreviations of biblical books, patristic authors, and their works follow Lampe, ix-xliv. Abbreviations of Latin authors and their works follow T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1966), vii-xi. Other frequent abbreviations are:

- H E. Heitsch, ed., *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1963). Citations of the poetry of Dioscorus refer to section 42 (pp. 127-52.); references are to poem and line number.
- Heil G. Heil, ed., *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De coelesti hierarchia, De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (Berlin, 1991). Individual works abbreviated CH and EH; references are to page and line number.
- Jaeger W. Jaeger, H. Langerbeck *et al.*, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, 11 vols. (Berlin, 1921, 1925; Leiden, 1952- ). Citations of individual works are followed by a reference to page and line number.
- Kroll W. Kroll, ed., *Proclus Diadochus: In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1965). All citations of the 5th and 6th Essays refer to volume 1, pp. 42-205; references are to volume, page, and line number.
- Lampe G. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, with Addenda et Corrigenda (Oxford, 1961).
- LSJ H. Liddell, R. Scott, H. Jones, *A Greek - English Lexicon*, 9th ed., with Supplement (Oxford, 1968).

- M J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca* [*Patrologia Graeca*], 162 vols. (Paris, 1857-1866). References are to volume and page number.
- PO R. Graffin, F. Nau, and F. Graffin, eds., *Patrologia Orientalis*, (Paris, 1907- ). References are to volume and page number.
- Ritter A. Ritter, ed., *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De mystica theologia, Epistulae*, in *Corpus Dionysiacum II* (Berlin, 1991). Individual works abbreviated *MTh* and *Ep*; references are to page and line number.
- Suchla B. Suchla, ed., *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De divinis nominibus*, in *Corpus Dionysiacum I* (Berlin, 1991). Individual work abbreviated *DN*; references are to page and line number.
- Trevisan P. Trevisan, ed. and trans., *S. Giovanni Climaco: Scala Paradisi*, 2 vols. (Torino, 1941). References are to volume and page number.



## PAPYROLOGICAL SYMBOLS\*

[ $\alpha\beta\gamma$ ]	missing letters supplied by the editor
` $\alpha\beta\gamma$ ´	insertion above the line by the scribe
{ $\alpha\beta\gamma$ }	deletion by the editor
< $\alpha\beta\gamma$ >	addition by the editor
...	approximate number of illegible letters
[...]	approximate number of missing letters
[ - - - ]	an unknown number of letters are missing
( $\alpha\beta\gamma$ )	resolution of a symbol or abbreviation

Sublinear dots indicating doubtful letters will not be used in this dissertation.

\*Cf. *Chronique d’Egypte* 7 (1932): 285

Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of primary and secondary texts are my own.

## INTRODUCTION

Christian mystical allegory in Greek and Latin poetry made its first appearances during the early Byzantine period.<sup>1</sup> These allegorical compositions were the natural outcome of a long tradition of allegorical interpretations which sought to find mystical significance in pagan and Judeo-Christian literature.<sup>2</sup> Robert Lamberton made the following important observation on the relationship between allegorical interpretations and allegorical compositions in the early Byzantine period:

The beginnings of deliberate and conscious allegorical poetry in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries after Christ, appear to represent the transfer into the creative realm of the expectations with which allegorizing interpreters approached Homer and other early texts. The tradition of epic poetry was one of allegory, of masked meanings—or so the dominant tradition of interpretation claimed—and poets such as Prudentius and 'Musaeus' seem to have created poems designed to be approached with exactly these expectations.<sup>3</sup>

The poetry of Dioscorus was among these first experiments in mystical allegory, and it too was evidently influenced by the tradition of allegorical interpretation. In order to facilitate an understanding of the elements of mystical allegory in Dioscorus' poetry<sup>4</sup>—the subject of this

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<sup>1</sup>R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1986), x.

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.*, chapter four: "The Interaction of Allegorical Interpretation and Deliberate Allegory," 144-61.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, x.

<sup>4</sup>Dioscorus' poems are not epics; his encomia, however, were composed primarily in an epic meter and vocabulary.

dissertation—the introduction will first define *mystical allegory*. It will then examine how the poet's close relationship to the monasteries in Upper Egypt may have influenced the mysticism of his poetry. Finally, it will discuss the Christian mystical poems and Neoplatonic allegorical interpretations which may have influenced Dioscorus and against which Dioscorus' poetry may be compared.

### Some Definitions

Since I have labeled the encomia by Dioscorus as mystical allegories, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by *mystical* and *allegory*.

#### *Mysticism*

A comprehensive definition of the term *mysticism* is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Even a simple review of all the uses of this word and related words in Christianity and other religions, ancient and modern, would fill a volume. As Harvey Egan notes:

Defining the word mysticism is no easy task. At the turn of the century, one noted scholar of mysticism, William Ralph Inge, listed twenty-six different definitions. To do full justice to the contemporary interest and research in the mystical traditions of the East and West, psychology, the occult, altered states of consciousness, psychedelic drug experiences, charismatic phenomena, etc., would perhaps require listing several hundred, often irreconcilable definitions of mysticism.<sup>5</sup>

The following definitions and qualifications apply only to my general use of the term *mysticism* and related terms in this study:<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>H. Egan, *What Are They Saying About Mysticism?* (New York, 1982), 1.

<sup>6</sup>I am grateful to Leo Sweeney, S.J., for his contributions and guidance in developing these definitions. See also H. Egan, *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition* (New York, 1984), 7-14 (a review and evaluation of Augustin Poulain's and Evelyn Underhill's lists of characteristics). For general studies of the nature of ancient mysticism (Greek, Christian, and Gnostic), see especially C. Macleod, "Ἀνάλογος : A Study in Ancient Mysticism, with a

1) The *mystical union* is a state in which a person in this life somehow becomes genuinely one with God. Two essential features of this experience are: a) an experiential, true knowledge of divine things (often called *gnosis* or *theoria*); and b) unconditional, overwhelming love from God and for God (often called *agape* or *eros*).<sup>7</sup>

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note on Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.42," in *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 292-305; A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford, 1981)); L. Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism* (Edinburgh, 1990); L. Dupré, intro., *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, ed. by L. Dupré and J. Wiseman (New York, 1988), 3-26. For detailed analyses of the characteristics of mysticism as described by early Christian and Jewish mystical writers, see the multi-volume series by Walther Völker: *Scala Paradisi. Eine Studie zu Johannes Climacus und zugleich eine Vorstudie zu Symeon dem Neuen Theologen* (Wiesbaden, 1968); *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens* (Wiesbaden, 1965); *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden, 1958); *Gregory von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955); *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus*, (Berlin, 1952); *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien* (Leipzig, 1938); *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen, 1931). These seven mystical authors played an essential role in the early development of Christian mysticism; the volumes on Pseudo-Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa contain excellent bibliographies and discussions of the secondary literature.

For two excellent bibliographies (arranged categorically) on mysticism and specific mystical authors, see Louth, 205-10; E. Underhill, *A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, revised ed. (Strand, 1930), 475-507. For a brief bibliography on mysticism in general, see H. Egan, ed., *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1991), 610-15. For brief bibliographies on individual Christian mystical authors, see L. Dupré and J. Wiseman, eds., *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*; a bibliography is located after the selections from each author.

<sup>7</sup>Not necessarily in this order. Some mystical authors emphasized the primacy of one, some the other. As Kallistos Ware noted: "Evagrius, in his scheme of the spiritual ascent, regarded *gnosis* or knowledge as superior to love; but for John [Climacus] the summit of the ladder is love, and there can be nothing higher than this." K. Ware, intro., *John Climacus: The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. by C. Luibheid and N. Russell (New York, 1982), 58. See also Dupré-Wiseman, 14-17.

The aspect of love was left out of William James' definition of mysticism; *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York, 1914), 380-82. In James' important discussion of mysticism in relation to psychology, he offered the following four distinctive characteristics of the mystical experience:

1) "*Ineffability*.—The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no

- a) A person can approach this state through contemplation, exegesis of divinely inspired literature, or writing. These practices can be combined, and ascetic practices are usually corollary to them.
- b) Through the above, a person can predispose himself or herself to the union; but it is God who precipitates the union

adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others."

2) "*Noetic quality*.—Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain."

3) "*Transiency*.—Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day."

4) "*Passivity*.—Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, ... when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power."

Underhill found James' definition unsatisfactory, and added four more characteristics (p. 81; cf. pp. 82-94):

- 1) "True mysticism is active and practical, not passive and theoretical. It is an organic life-process, a something which the whole self does; not something as to which its intellect holds an opinion."
- 2) "Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, re-arranging, or improving anything in the visible universe. ... His [the mystic's] heart is always set upon the changeless One."
- 3) "This One is for the mystic, not merely the Reality of all that is, but also a living and personal Object of Love. ... It draws the whole being homeward, but always under the guidance of the heart."
- 4) "Living union with this One—which is the term of his adventure—is a definite state or form of enhanced life. ... It is arrived at by an arduous psychological and spiritual process—the so-called Mystic Way—entailing the complete remaking of character and the liberation of a new, or rather latent, form of consciousness."

Underhill (p. 92) later added a corollary: "True Mysticism is never self-seeking."

and plays the decisive, dominant rôle.<sup>8</sup>

c) Although some critical faculties may remain, the union itself is not perceived by the corporeal senses, by reasoning, or by the imagination (whether in sleep or awake).

- 2) A *mystic* is a person who experiences such a divine union.
- 3) The mystical union can have either of the two following natures:
  - a) The mystic loses his or her identity completely in the identity of the transcendent One. This is the nature of the mystical union in Plotinus' *Enneads* VI 9.11: ἐπεὶ τοίνυν δύο οὐκ ἦν, ἀλλ' ἐν ἧν αὐτὸς ὁ ἰδὼν πρὸς τὸ ἐωραμένον, ὡς ἂν μὴ ἐωραμένον, ἀλλ' ἠνωμένον. *When accordingly there were not two, but there was one—he looking at that which was seen as though it were not seen, but united [with him].*
  - b) The mystic unites with the One but nevertheless maintains his or her identity. This is a kind of beatific vision experienced through the spiritual senses.<sup>9</sup> This type of union was succinctly described by Teresa of Avila (1515-82), when she said: "The soul is completely suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves; the memory . . . is almost lost; the intellect does not work discursively . . . but is not lost. . . . It is as though amazed by all it understands; because God desires that it understand—with regard to the things His Majesty represents to it—that it understands

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<sup>8</sup>See Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, 198-200.

<sup>9</sup>For a discussion of the spiritual senses as described by Origen, see Louth, 67-70.

nothing."<sup>10</sup> This is the kind of mystical union—*differentiated unity*—found in the descriptions by Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Evagrius, and Dioscorus.

- 4) *Mysticism* is the entire organic process in the mystic's life which culminates in the mystical union.<sup>11</sup> This process is often divided by theorists into three distinct phases: purgative, illuminative, and unitive. Until the last stage in a mystic's spiritual development, the mystical union is a transient part of his or her *mysticism*.
- 5) *Mystical cosmology* is a description of the celestial, noetic realm (where the union takes place) and its relationship to the created realm (perceived by the senses, by reasoning, or by imagination).
- 6) *Mystical theology* is a series of doctrines which attempts to elucidate and define mysticism and the mystical experience.

These general characteristics of mysticism and the mystical experience will become clearer in the discussions of monastic mysticism and mystical poetry below. Some specific characteristics of Dioscorus' mysticism, however, should be pointed out here. In the Neoplatonic mystical theology of Proclus, the Olympian gods of Greek mythology assist the human soul in attaining mystical union with the One.<sup>12</sup> In the Christian mystical theology

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<sup>10</sup>Translated by K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1976), 518; quoted by Egan, *Christian Mysticism: The Future of a Tradition*, 2.

<sup>11</sup>Underhill wrote (p. 76): "Mysticism is no isolated vision, no fugitive glimpse of reality, but a complete system of life carrying its own guarantees and obligations." For more on mysticism as an organic process, see eadem, 81-82.

<sup>12</sup>R. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (London, 1972), 149-57; cf. 161.

of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, these pagan deities are replaced by the nine ranks of angels<sup>13</sup> and the object of the spiritual union is the Holy

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<sup>13</sup>For the role of angels in mediating the divine union, see Pseudo-Dionysius *Celestial Hierarchy* 4.1-4 (Heil 20.3-24.4). It appears that Pseudo-Dionysius allows for two kinds of mystical unions: those made directly with Christ and those mediated through the angels. The first sort is granted by Pseudo-Dionysius as an exception to the rule (CH 4.3; Heil 22.1-11). The second sort (through angelic intermediaries) is indicated by Pseudo-Dionysius in three ways. First, it follows the divinely established hierarchy; Pseudo-Dionysius says specifically:

οὗτος ὁ θεσμὸς ὄρισταί παρὰ τῆς πάντων ὑπερουσίου ταξιαρχίας τὸ καθ' ἑκάστην ἱεραρχίαν πρώτας καὶ μέσας καὶ τελευταίας εἶναι τάξεις τε καὶ δυνάμεις καὶ τῶν ἡττόνων εἶναι τοὺς θειοτέρους μύστας καὶ χειραγωγούς ἐπὶ τὴν θείαν προσαγωγὴν καὶ ἔλλαμψιν καὶ κοινωνίαν. (CH 4.3; Heil 22.18-22. Cf. CH 4.3; Heil 22.11-17)

*This law was laid down by the leader of the order, transcendent over all, that for each hierarchy there are the first, the middle, and the perfected ranks and powers; and that the more divine are the initiators and guides for the lower ones to the divine approach, enlightenment, and union.*

This statement is made about the communication among the first triad of angels; it applies also to the communication between the three triads and between angels and man. Second, Pseudo-Dionysius points out that even the incarnate Christ communicated with his Father through the angels; see CH 4.4 (Heil 23.9-24.4). Third, Pseudo-Dionysius states specifically that the ninth rank, the angels, are responsible for conveying the divine communion to man:

τὴν δὲ τῶν ἀρχῶν καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων καὶ ἀγγέλων ἐκφαντορικὴν διακόσμησιν ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ἱεραρχίαις δι' ἀλλήλων ἐπιστατεῖν, ἵν' ἢ κατὰ τάξιν ἢ πρὸς θεὸν ἀναγωγὴ καὶ ἐπιστροφή καὶ κοινωνία καὶ ἔνωσις καὶ μὴν καὶ ἡ παρὰ θεοῦ πάσαις ταῖς ἱεραρχίαις ἀγαθοπρεπῶς ἐνδιδομένη καὶ κοινωνικῶς ἐπιφοιτῶσα μετ' εὐκοσμίας ἱερωτάτης πρόοδος. Ἐνθεν ἡ θεολογία τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεραρχίαν ἀγγέλοις ἀπονενέμηκεν, ἄρχοντα τοῦ Ἰουδαίου λαοῦ τὸν Μιχαὴλ ὀνομάζουσα καὶ ἄλλους ἔθνῶν ἐτέρων. (CH 9.2; Heil 37.8-15)

*The revelatory order of archons, archangels, and angels have jurisdiction among themselves over human hierarchies, so that there might occur in an orderly fashion the procession to God, and the return, and the communion, and the union; and in addition, the outpouring (πρόοδος) from God might be given in a proper fashion and in communion spread with sacred harmony to all hierarchies. It is for this reason that Scripture assigned our hierarchy to the angels, naming Michael as archon over the Hebrew people and other angels over the other nations.*

One should note that this entire passage is expressed in Neoplatonic terminology, especially the ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἀναγωγὴ καὶ ἐπιστροφή καὶ κοινωνία καὶ ἔνωσις, which is adapted to Christian beliefs.

Völker, however, seems to interpret only one way to the mystical union with God, and this direct way is in conflict with the normally severe hierarchical order; cf. *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, 205-06. Yet Pseudo-Dionysius seems to say that only the first triad of angels (seraphim, cherubim, thrones) looks directly upon God; other ranks of angels and the martyrs and mystics receive the divine vision through the conveyance of the superior ranks of



Trinity.<sup>14</sup> In the mystical allegories of Dioscorus, the function of the angels in facilitating the mystical union is by and large taken over by saints and martyrs,<sup>15</sup> and although the Holy Trinity is still an important element, it is Christ with whom the poet unites.<sup>16</sup> Christ, however, is the embodiment of the Holy Trinity; thus there is little distinction between Dioscorus and Pseudo-Dionysius with respect to the object of the mystical union. Finally, as pointed out above (1 c) and unlike the visions of saints and angels described by John Moschus (c. 540 - c. 634), Dioscorus encounters the martyrs

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angels. Because a mystic becomes "angel-like" (a frequent expression in Pseudo-Dionysius and other Church Fathers), does not necessarily mean that the mystic becomes seraphim-like. See Pseudo-Dionysius' lengthy discussion about the functions of the individual ranks of angels (CH 7.1-13.4; Heil 27.4-49.20). For the rôle of intermediaries in the mystical union, see R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954), 328-29; Louth, 175-77. For the similarities between angels and the Olympian gods, see Wallis, 161.

<sup>14</sup>See *Mystical Theology* 1.1 (Ritter 141.1-142.4); *Divine Names* 2.1-11 (Suchla 122.1-137.13); C. Luibheid and P. Roorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York, 1987), 166 note 86; Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*, 207.

<sup>15</sup>One cannot easily identify the sanctified addressees of Dioscorus' poems. Dioscorus rarely gives historical details; his focus is on the mystical presence, not the saint as historical person. One might compare Dioscorus' disregard of saints' biographies to the descriptions of saints by Prudentius; the latter conflated mythological characters, historical personalities, and saints to create the characters for his poems. In a detailed examination of Prudentius' treatment of St. Hippolytus, Martha Malamud observed: "He exercises the poet's freedom to alter not only details, but also basic elements and even identities. He is particularly fond of conflating the legends of people who bear the same name, even when he is well aware that the two belong to entirely separate traditions and have nothing in common except their names." *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca, 1989), 79.

<sup>16</sup>For the rôle of the Holy Trinity and the Word in early Byzantine mysticism, see Dypré-Wiseman, 12-14. For the Holy Trinity as the object of the vision in Evagrius' ascetic-mystical theology (discussed below), see J. Bamberger *Evagrius Ponticus. The Praktikos; Chapters on Prayer* (Spencer, Massachusetts, 1970), lxxxviii-xcii. For the rôle of the Holy Trinity in the verses of Dioscorus, see L. MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," *Studia Patristica* 18 (1987): 163-68; eadem, "μονοειδής in Dioscorus of Aphrodito: An Addendum," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 25 (1983): 61-64; eadem, "A Trinitarian Formula in Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 24 (1982): 103-10.

and Christ not with the corporeal eyes or in the imagination or in dreams; it is an experience in the spiritual, noetic realm beyond image or concept.

### *Allegory*<sup>17</sup>

David Dawson, in his examination of the effects of allegory (interpretative and creative) on culture and society in ancient Alexandria, states:

The history of the study of allegory is characterized by extreme diversity and fundamental disagreement over allegory's nature and function. Scholars even question whether the category designates any clearly identifiable or reliably discernible literary form or mode of interpretation at all.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, Dawson attempts a definition of allegory applicable to the field of his study: the Alexandrian allegories by Philo (c. 20 B.C. - c. 50), Valentinus (c. 100 - c. 165), and Clement (c. 150 - c. 215). His definition is generally applicable to allegories of the early Byzantine period as well; it is as follows:<sup>19</sup>

My understanding of the basic literary character of ancient allegory is similar to classical rhetorical definitions of the procedure, which are based on the etymology of the Greek term itself. Derived from *allos* ("other") and *agoreuein* ("to speak in the agora," i.e., "publicly"), *allêgoria* means most simply "to say something other than what one seems to say."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The term will be defined more specifically in chapter 3.

<sup>18</sup>D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992), 11.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup>For ancient uses and definitions of the term *allegory* and related terms, see J. Pépin, *Mythe et Allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1976), 85-92; *idem*, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie* (Paris, 1970), 11 note 1; J. Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of An Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge, 1987), 263-68; Dawson, 243-4 note 9; Lamberton, 145 note 3. For a definition and discussion of allegory with an emphasis on mystical allegory, see R. Hoornaert, "Allégorie," *Dictionnaire de*

Dawson then qualifies this statement as follows:<sup>21</sup>

Interpretations and compositions designated as "allegorical" must have a narrative dimension. By "narrative," I mean nothing more complicated than a story that has a beginning, middle, and end, and depicts the interaction of characters and events over time.<sup>22</sup>

The reason for this qualification is to distinguish allegory from similar literary techniques: metaphor, etymology, and personification. Metaphor is a literary device which implies an analogy, but this analogy is not developed by the author.<sup>23</sup> Etymology is the process of analyzing a word for its fundamental roots and their original meanings. Since contemporary usage of a word will usually differ from an older use, allegorists often used etymology to support their discovery or creation of a second meaning in a text.<sup>24</sup> Finally, personification is the endowment of a nonhuman entity (whether animal, plant, inert matter, or concept) with human attributes. Personifications are used extensively in allegory, and a human identity usually implies some action; but personification by itself does not create an allegory.<sup>25</sup>

For the study of early Byzantine allegory, it is necessary to make an

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*spiritualité*, vol. 1 (1937): 310-14. See also C. Macleod, "Allegory and Mysticism in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa," in *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 309-26.

<sup>21</sup>Dawson, 3-4.

<sup>22</sup>For further definitions of the term *narrative*, see *ibid.*, 244 note 10.

<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of Quintillian's statement that allegory is a sustained series of metaphors, see Whitman, 8 note 5.

<sup>24</sup>For the uses of etymology in allegory, see Lamberton, 38-41, 280-82 and *passim*; Dawson, 23-72 and *passim*; Whitman, 36-41 and *passim*.

<sup>25</sup>Dawson, 5-7. For a history of the term *personification*, see Whitman, 269-72; for a bibliography of studies about personification, see *ibid.*, 4-5 note 2.

additional qualification to the above general definition. One must distinguish between allegorical *interpretation* and allegorical *composition* (also called *creative* or *deliberate* allegory).<sup>26</sup> The former refers to a reader examining a literary work (either present before him physically, or recollected clearly or vaguely), finding various levels of meaning in it, and relaying his findings either orally or literally. The second refers to an author creating a new piece of fiction (prose or poetry) with multiple levels of meaning; the author neither claims nor implies that the piece is an interpretation of an already existing piece of literature.<sup>27</sup> Antiquity produced a spectrum of allegorical literature—from self-conscious commentary at one end to seemingly independent creation at the other.<sup>28</sup> Examples of the poles of the spectrum are the *Commentary to the Song of Songs* by Gregory of Nyssa and the *Psychomachia* by Prudentius. Gregory methodically quoted passage after passage from this biblical poem and explained their mystical meanings. Like Gregory, Prudentius began his poem *Psychomachia* with an explanation of the mystical significance of the biblical story of Abraham. Unlike Gregory, however, Prudentius proceeded

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<sup>26</sup>For other terms applied to these two kinds of literary activity, see Dawson, 244-45 note 11. For discussions of the distinction, see *ibid.*, 4; Pépin, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie*, 11-15. For the interplay between the two activities, see Lamberton, 144-61; Whitman, 3-11, and *passim*.

<sup>27</sup>For a brief but good bibliography on literature dealing with allegorical interpretations, see Whitman, 3 note 1; for more extensive bibliographies, see Dawson, 302-18; Lamberton, 330-39. The best general study of ancient allegorical interpretation is by Jean Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, 2nd ed. (full citation above); an excellent bibliography of ancient allegorical literature and modern studies can be found on pp. 517-48. This monograph will be cited simply as Pépin.

For a brief bibliography on allegorical composition, see Whitman, 6-7 note 4.

<sup>28</sup>Dawson, 4.

to create an entirely new story with two concurrent levels of meaning: 1) an epic battle and the building of a temple; and 2) ascetic purification and the preparation for Christ's entrance into man's soul. Between these two poles fall the allegories by Valentinus; from allegorical interpretations of Scripture and certain Gnostic texts, he created new allegories. Although his sources remain vaguely evident, Valentinus attempted to conceal the direct relationship, especially by abolishing any chronological sequence which was present in his source material.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of chronology in the allegories by Valentinus and others makes it necessary to qualify the concept of *narrative* in allegory.<sup>30</sup> The concepts of time, chronology, and development were problematical for mystical allegorists, who stressed the simultaneity of actions in the spiritual world.<sup>31</sup> In the noetic, eternal realm of God, there is no time; time is a

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 127-70.

<sup>30</sup>Valentinus' attempts to purge Christian and Gnostic myths of their temporal aspects was described briefly by Dawson in the following way (p. 133): "Valentinus bases his revision of Gnostic myth on his perception of the essential 'dynamic' or 'movement' underlying its baroque narrative. One must be cautious in using temporal expressions to characterize this 'deep sense' since Valentinus seeks to dissolve the temporal, narrative features of his predecessors' myths. This dynamic is best thought of as a transformative 'occurrence' consisting of three 'moments': original fullness, subsequent lack, and ultimate recovery or fulfillment. . . . This Christian narrative is generated by a spiritual problem (fallenness, sin, evil), which in turn implies the loss of a superior antecedent state (paradise, creation, image of God) and looks for a subsequent solution (salvation, redemption, kingdom of God). Valentinus appropriates and alters this thoroughly traditional narrative structure in order to transform Gnostic myth through a series of metaphorical associations and substitutions that are tantalizingly complex in their allusiveness and resonance. Drawing especially on the metaphors of names and naming (and associated images and themes), Valentinus' allegorical reading attempts to neutralize the sequential, narrative aspects of both the precursor Gnostic myth and the tripartite Christian narrative by calling into question the notion of temporality that necessarily underlies all narrative sensibility. He seeks to purge from Gnostic myth much of its sequential, narrative structure and many of its distinctive characters and events, in order to produce a much more austere account of loss and recovered fullness."

<sup>31</sup>For simultaneity in Proclus' allegorical interpretations, see Lambertson, 210-14, 227-28; A. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen, 1980), 63. Simultaneity in the noetic sphere was emphasized by Proclus but was

product of matter and space, which do not exist there. For instance, the "other" meaning of the Homeric epics, as interpreted by Proclus, is devoid of sequentiality—everything happens at once. Homer, however, had to write sequentially; he therefore depicted this eternal situation by presenting events on the mystical level of meaning in no logical sequence. Nevertheless, the literal level of the Homeric epics does contain chronological narrative, which has a beginning, middle, and end. Proclus' works are allegorical interpretations; in allegorical compositions of the early Byzantine period, the mystical level of meaning interfered in the chronology on the literal level. In Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, the sudden appearance of *Sapientia* upon the throne in the temple is unexpected and startling.<sup>32</sup> In Musaeus' mystical allegory *Hero and Leander*, the episodes of the love affair are developed disproportionately. In the allegorical encomia by Dioscorus, the narration on the literal level is basically limited to an exuberant *moment*: the poet's meeting with the magistrate who brings peace and removes all evil. This moment is a reflection of the ecstatic and transient mystical experience portrayed on the deeper level of the poems.

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not, of course, a new idea; it was already mentioned by Sallustius (Lamberton, 171) and suggested by Philo (*ibid.*, 212).

<sup>32</sup>The interference of the deeper level of meaning upon the narrative of the literal level is extensive. Whitman observes (pp. 88-89): "In its details, too, the *Psychomachia* is full of discontinuities. Instead of developing a sustained, interlocking action, it presents a series of disjointed episodes, although the episodes do become longer and more intricate as the poem progresses. In this it is similar to the disjunctive tendencies we have analyzed in allegorical exegesis during the period. While the abstract events of Prudentius' poem cohere more closely than the fitful encounters of [Athanasius'] Antony, they never develop the kind of causal sequence vital to a convincing history, either personal or ecclesiastical. Even within individual episodes of the poem the action is basically an abrupt cancellation of one abstraction by another. Often, the two abstractions do not even directly touch, let alone interact fully with each other." Whitman concludes (p. 91): "Prudentius' allegorical composition undermined the continuities of *narrative* by . . . restricting the legitimate capabilities of its characters."

The mystical experience, however, is not presented chronologically. In practice, *apatheia* normally precedes the union; yet the "other" meaning of the poems moves freely from the mystical union, to ascetic purification, to loss of the union by recollections of evil—in other words, Dioscorus' poetic presentations do not follow the logical development of "the mystical way." And his efforts to remove any sense of sequentiality on the deeper level of meaning caused a corresponding loss of narrative development on the literal level. That characters on the literal level interact in space and time cannot be doubted; that this interaction shows no logical progression is equally clear.

Thus when I say that Dioscorus' encomia are mystical allegories, I mean generally that the poems have a second level of meaning which attempts to depict a transient, experiential union between the inspired poet and Christ. The encounter takes place during or as part of the poem's creation; but the actual union is in the noetic realm of existence (beyond image and concept), and chronology and sequentiality on the deeper level of meaning are purposefully eliminated in order to convey the simultaneity of eternity. In each poem (except perhaps poem H.1) the union is facilitated by a martyr or angel, to whom on the deeper level of meaning the encomium is addressed. It is these elements of mystical allegory in the poetry of Dioscorus that this dissertation will attempt to elucidate.

### **Monks and Mysticism**

Since Dioscorus' connection to the monks in Upper Egypt was close and constant (see chapter 1), one would like to know what influence the monks' mysticism had on Dioscorus' poetry. This question is in fact three-

fold: did the monks of Upper Egypt practice mysticism? what kind of mysticism? and can this mysticism be discerned in the poetry of Dioscorus?

There survives little information about the mysticism of the sixth-century monks in Upper Egypt.<sup>33</sup> John Moschus' *Spiritual Meadow* and John of Ephesus' *Lives of the Eastern Saints* include accounts of sixth-century Egyptian monks (primarily from Lower Egypt); but these two authors were not interested in mysticism as much as supporting, respectively, the Chalcedonian and Monophysite causes. And the papyri documents, such as those found in Dioscorus' archive, deal primarily with

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<sup>33</sup>In regard to the period between 450 and 650, only vague glimpses into the mystical lives of the monks of Upper and Lower Egypt can be found in the transmitted texts, papyri, ostraca, and archaeological remains. One of the best (if somewhat outdated) reviews of the sources is the published dissertation by P. van Cauwenbergh, *Étude sur les moines d'Égypte, depuis le concile de Chalcédoine (451) jusqu'à l'invasion arabe (640)* (Paris, 1914). For the life and the writings of the Coptic abbot Besa (d. c. 474), the successor to Shenoute, see especially K. Kuhn, "A Fifth-Century Egyptian Abbot," *JTS* 5 (1954): 36-48, 174-87; *JTS* 6 (1955): 35-48; D. Bell, ed. and trans., *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* (Kalamazoo, 1983). For the collection of stories about sixth-century monks in Palestine and Egypt by John Moschus (c. 540 - c. 634), see M.87, part 3, 2843-3116 (with a Latin translation). For a French translation (without the Greek text), see M.-J. Rouët de Journel, trans., *Jean Moschus. Le pré spirituel* (Paris, 1946). For discussions, see H. Chadwick, "John Moschus and his Friend Sophronius the Sophist," *JThS* 25 (1974): 41-74; N. Baynes, "The *Pratum Spirituale*," in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 261-70; R. Browning, *Medieval and Modern Greek* (Cambridge, 1969), 35. For the Syrian *Lives of the Eastern Saints* by John of Ephesus (c. 507 - c. 589), which is especially important because of its coverage of Monophysite monks in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Constantinople in the sixth century, see E. Brooks, ed. and trans., *John of Ephesus: Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in PO 17 (pp. i-307, with intro.), 18 (pp. 511-698), and 19 (pp. 151-285, with index). For a discussion, see S. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis, John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, 1990). Dioscorus' own documents remain the best source of information on the Thebaid monks' business and legal concerns; these documents will be reviewed in chapter 1.

For the excavations of a fifth-sixth century Thebaid monastery, see W. Godlewski, *Le monastère de St. Phoibammon*, vol. 5 in the series *Deir el-Bahari* (Warsaw, 1986); for the dates of the monastery, see the discussion on pp. 60-62; for a survey of the ostraca and papyri, see pp. 51-59.

It is uncertain whether John Climacus' accounts of Egyptian monasticism in his two mystical essays date from the end of the sixth century or the beginning of the seventh; nevertheless, John is an important source of information about monasticism and mysticism in Lower Egypt during this period.



the monks' business and legal concerns. Thus any clear information about mysticism among the monks of central and southern Egypt must be obtained through extrapolation from material from other centuries or other areas of Egypt and the eastern empire.

The Pachomian literature,<sup>34</sup> the writings of Evagrius (composed probably between 383 - 399), the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (composed around 400), the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladius (composed around 420) the *Collationes* by John Cassian (composed around 425), and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* (whose oral tradition was first written down around the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth) show clearly that mysticism was an entrenched facet of monasticism in Upper and Lower Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>35</sup> The writings of John Climacus, who had spent time in Egypt and later became abbot of the most important monastery in Sinai, indicate that mysticism was still thriving among the monks in Lower Egypt at the end of the sixth century.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup>This includes Pachomius' (290 - 346) letters, his *Rules*, his *Instruction Concerning a Spiteful Monk*, his *Instruction on the Six Days of the Passover*, and the various Greek and Coptic *Lives* of Pachomius and his successor Theodore (d. 368). For the manuscript traditions of these *Lives*, see P. Rousseau, *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1985), 37-55. It should be noted that the Pachomian monasteries were not only numerous and near to Aphrodito, but Pachomius himself in his writings emphasized the significance of visions of saints and of Christ—true, noetic visions. See Rousseau, 140-41.

The mysticism of St. Antony (as it appears in the *Life* by Athanasius), who was the traditional founder of Christian monasticism, must be considered separately; yet Armand Veilleux offered the following general observation: "The first great figures of christian monasticism in Egypt—Antony, Makarios, Amoun, for example—were eminently liberated human beings, deeply in touch with their heart and with God. . . . Their aim was nothing less than a personal encounter with God beyond all human mediations." A. Veilleux, pref. to *Besa: The Life of Shenoute*, ix.

<sup>35</sup>The writings of Shenute and Besa are devoid of mysticism; see K. Kuhn, "A Fifth-Century Egyptian Abbot: III. Besa's Christianity," 35-48; Veilleux, xi.

<sup>36</sup>See especially the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Steps 4 and 5 (Trevisan I 98-241). Concerning the life of John, little has been established. The cognomen Climacus was attached

focus of most of this literature, however, was the practical, ascetic side of mysticism: the prayers and practices which led to *apatheia*, which itself was a prerequisite for contemplation, discernment, visions, and the mystical union.<sup>37</sup> One comment by Climacus about Upper Egypt supports the earlier evidence that mysticism was practiced by the monks in the Pachomian monasteries; but he suggests that the mystical union was not achieved as frequently as among the monks in Lower Egypt.<sup>38</sup>

The central figure in Egyptian monastic mysticism was Evagrius Ponticus (345 - 399). Evagrius' profound influence can be attributed to his skill as a synthesizer; in his written corpus he combined the esoteric

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to his name later, because he was the author of the *Κλίμαξ* (*ladder*); he was called John Scholasticus by Daniel. Daniel, the abbot of a nearby monastery at Raithu, is our most complete source of information about John. Daniel suggested to John to write the *Ladder*; but in his brief biography, Daniel does not show himself well-informed about John's life. The most commonly accepted dates for John are c. 579 - c. 649; Benesevic places him much earlier (c. 532 - c. 596); see Ware, 2-3. Peter Trevisan, editor of an excellent Greek edition and Italian translation (*S. Giovanni Climaco: Scala Paradisi*, 2 vols. [Torino, 1941]), places John at c. 540 - c. 610.

<sup>37</sup>Secrecy with regard to mystical experiences was traditional. With respect to the mysticism and reticence observable in the Pachomian documents of the fourth century, Rousseau said (pp. 146-48):

Fear, even of demons, could lead to self-awareness. Self-awareness led to self-knowledge and self-discipline. Those when combined brought purity of heart. Purity of heart could make possible the vision of God, yes; but also—and, for Pachomius, perhaps even more so—it encouraged a keener understanding of one's fellows. . . . Is that a tentative way of suggesting that the final goal for Pachomius, reached by way of vision, was love? Love is a notion that proves elusive in the Pachomian corpus. Fear, purity, knowledge, freedom, goodness, gentleness—all of them are present, but love is less frequently made explicit. . . . What the sources provide us with, therefore, even when "tidied" in so analytic a way, is a spiritual pathway more than an account of the destination. The reticence, the economy involved was undoubtedly deliberate. It helped Pachomius to avoid, among other things, a false γῶσις and a false mythology. . . . So the goal a monk aimed at—and love must have been very close to its center—was always implied, rarely revealed [emphasis is mine].

<sup>38</sup>See *Scala Paradisi* 27.181 (Trevisan II 243-45). See also the observations made by Rousseau (pp. 119-48) on the goal of asceticism among Pachomian monasteries in the fourth century.

mystical cosmology of Origen, the ascetic-mystical theologies of the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa—all three of whom he knew personally), and the tradition of the Desert Fathers (which he learned as a monk in Upper Egypt).<sup>39</sup> Different sources, however, tended to dominate different works; and sometimes Evagrius was contradictory.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of his writings spread throughout the monasteries of the Eastern Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries;<sup>41</sup> and the writings of John Climacus show that Evagrius' influence was still strong at the end of the sixth century.<sup>42</sup> Thus, considering the importance of mysticism in the monastic tradition of Egypt (Upper and Lower), and the impact which Evagrius had upon that mysticism, one can speculate that there was some degree of Evagrian mysticism among the monks with whom Dioscorus came in contact. Indeed, the depiction of evil in the Dioscorian poems has many affinities

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<sup>39</sup>It is shared traditions which probably account for the similarities between the ascetic-mystical theology of Evagrius and that of Pachomius; Rousseau, 142-43. Compare Pachomius' attitude toward *apatheia*, *agape*, and the mystical union, with Evagrius' attitude toward the same; Bamberger, lxxxi-lxxxvii.

<sup>40</sup>Bamberger, lxxii.

<sup>41</sup>Despite differences in native language and dogma, the monasticism of Syria, Palestine, and Upper and Lower Egypt shows a remarkable homogeneity between the end of fourth and the middle of the seventh century. Whether in a cenobitic, eremitic, or one of several in-between situations, the early Byzantine monks had many attitudes and practices in common—much of which can be attributed to Evagrius. Their spiritual goal was a closer union with God. This goal was facilitated by a radical withdrawal from cares of the world and was prepared for by prayer. A monk's life was devoted to prayer; and the highest form of prayer was a personal, experiential union with God. The monks believed that God and the angels assisted them; and demons, by stimulating the monk's passions, hindered them. The initial stages of prayer, therefore, were marked by personal battles against the passions and demons. These battles were called the "practical" or the "active" or the "ascetic" life; and the victory was *apatheia*, which was necessary for the mystical union.

<sup>42</sup>Bamberger, liv-lv note 127.

with Evagrius' own depiction. The other features of Dioscorus' mystical allegories could have been derived from generally available literature or an education in Alexandria (see the discussions below); Evagrius, however, was an Egyptian monk who wrote for monks.<sup>43</sup> Thus Dioscorus' affinities with Evagrius were possibly owing to the poet's monastic connections.

### *Evagrius Ponticus (345 - 399)*

The mystic Evagrius was one of the most influential figures—or *the* most influential figure—in Christian monasticism of the East and West in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>44</sup> In order to understand Evagrius' popularity among monks of the early Byzantine period,<sup>45</sup> it is helpful to examine three

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<sup>43</sup>This is evident not only in the content, but also in Evagrius' style. Bamberger observed (pp. lxxvii-lxx): "Evagrius carried his asceticism even into his writing and exercised a severe restraint which rarely gave free rein to his pen. The monk is always in evidence with insistence on a gravity and concentration of expression . . . All these factors went to make the *Century* (a collection of one hundred sententiae) a form much appreciated by the later Byzantine world. Some of its greatest spiritual masters saw in it the literary genre admirably suited to convey the mystery of a spiritual experience which was ever renewed in its concrete uniqueness and which always escaped the confining limits of logical analysis. Then too it had the additional advantage of providing short, concise sayings which the monks could readily memorize and ponder in their meditation or call to mind in times of trial."

<sup>44</sup>The most comprehensive discussion in English of Evagrius' life, influence, and doctrines is by Bamberger, xxiii-xciv. (For a list of Evagrius' works, see Bamberger, lix-lxxvii.) See also Louth's discussion of Evagrius in his chapter on the monastic contribution to mysticism, pp. 98-113. An excellent survey of Evagrius' life and writings, and a discussion of the doctrines, literary style, and manuscript history of the *Praktikos* can be found in volume one of A. and C. Guillaumont, *Évagre le Pontique: Traité pratique ou le moine*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1971). A more general discussion of Evagrius' life, doctrines, and influence can be found in A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia gnostica' d'Évagre le Pontique et l'histoire de l'origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Paris, 1962). For a list of the editions of Evagrius' writings (in the original Greek or in Syriac translations), see A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, vol. 1, pp. 9-10; for a bibliography of secondary literature on Evagrius, see *ibid.*, 10-13.

<sup>45</sup>Evagrius was not popular among all monks. Soon after his death in 399 an anti-Evagrian and anti-Origen movement arose among some Coptic monks in Lower Egypt. To avoid a rebellion, the patriarch of Alexandria, Theophilus, who had earlier wanted to ordain Evagrius a bishop, now convened a synod of bishops in order to condemn him and Origen; and he sent troops to disperse Evagrius' followers. Although temporarily quenching the teachings of Evagrius in Lower Egypt, this action assured the spread of Evagrian's

major influences: 1) his close friendship with the Cappadocian Fathers while in Pontus and in Constantinople; 2) his study of Origen's works while living among the monks of Palestine; and 3) his sixteen years of severe asceticism and prayer among the Coptic monks of Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis, where he composed his written works and where he died prematurely at the age of 54.

Evagrius was born in 345 at Ibora in Pontus, which is in present-day Turkey. This was close to St. Basil's family estate, and Evagrius, the son of a local bishop, soon came under Basil's influence and was ordained a lector by him. The monasteries in Pontus, under the leadership of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, were flourishing; but it seems that Evagrius declined at this point to enter the monastic life. In 379 he was ordained deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus; he was then invited by Gregory to come (as archdeacon) to Constantinople and the Second Ecumenical Council. A close, lifelong friendship developed between them; and even later in Egypt, Evagrius continued to consider Gregory of Nazianzus "his wise master."<sup>46</sup> Gregory was elected president of the Council, which convened in 381 under Emperor Theodosius; and Gregory of Nyssa, brother of Basil, gave the opening address. Concerning Evagrius' relationship with Gregory of Nyssa, Bamberger speculates (pp. xxxviii-xxxix): "Doubtless he and Evagrius also

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ascetical and mystical theology to the rest of the Eastern Empire and to the West. Palladius and John Cassian eventually found shelter with John Chrysostom in Constantinople. See Bamberger, xlvi-1. After having denounced the teachings of Origen, Theophilus continued to read Origen; see Bregman, 176 note 43.

<sup>46</sup>A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique*, vol. 1, p. 22. It should be noted that Gregory of Nazianzus was highly regarded by the Copts. One of the liturgies of the Coptic Church was attributed to his authorship; see S. Malan, *The Divine EYXOΛOΓION, and the Divine Liturgy of S. Gregory the Theologian* (London, 1875).

discussed some of the problems of the spiritual life which Gregory had treated of in his writings. It seems very likely that it was at this period that the theological views which Evagrius would take from Gregory of Nyssa came to his knowledge and were first reflected upon." It is possible not only that Gregory of Nyssa helped Evagrius develop his views on the ascetic and mystical life, but also that Evagrius helped disseminate Gregory's ideas. I. Hausherr, in his analysis of the *Chapters on Prayer*, argued that Evagrius was the one responsible for popularizing the works of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>47</sup>

After falling in love with the wife of a prominent courtier, Evagrius fled Constantinople to Jerusalem, where he was invited to stay in a hospice near a convent and monastery run by a certain Melania and her friend Rufinus. Melania and Rufinus had originally come from Rome; and after having first spent some time among the monks in the Egyptian desert, they founded a convent and monastery on the Mount of Olives. Melania was an avid reader of Origen's works, and Rufinus translated several of them into Latin. It was here where Evagrius probably received the monastic habit and likewise his deep interest in Origen. From Jerusalem Evagrius himself went to Egypt joining some Origenist monks in the desert at Nitria, forty miles south of Alexandria. He made visits south to Scetis, where he became a disciple of Macarius the Great (c. 300 - 390; also called Macarius the Egyptian);<sup>48</sup> he also became a disciple of Macarius of Alexandria (c. 296 - c.

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<sup>47</sup>"Le Traité de l'oraison d'Évagre le Pontique (Pseudo-Nil)," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 15 (1934): 169-70.

<sup>48</sup>For Macarius and the apophthegmata associated with him, see B. Ward, trans., *The Desert Christian: Sayings of the Desert Fathers, the Alphabetical Collection* (New York, 1975), 124-38.

393), who was then priest for a group of monks at Kellia.<sup>49</sup> Evagrius eventually moved to Kellia, some fifty-two miles south of Alexandria, where he remained fourteen years until his death.

One of Evagrius' chief contributions to Christian mysticism was his integration of ascetic and mystical theologies. Similar to Origen's purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways, Evagrius presented three integrated stages in spiritual development. In the ascetic stage, through prayer, charity, and following the commandments one strives to free oneself from the tyranny of passionate emotions. The next stage is contemplation of God in natural phenomena and Scripture. Through this lower form of contemplation one learns the attributes of God, but not his essence. In the third stage of development, a soul transcends all sensory perceptions and emotions, all images in the mind and all concepts, in order to free itself for communion with God in his incomprehensible essence.<sup>50</sup> The soul does not achieve union with God by its own striving, but by completely stripping itself it makes itself available to God's gracious and loving touch. In Evagrius' beatitudes (*De oratione* 118-23), the man who is pure in heart and poor in spirit is the man who has striven to reject passions and all concepts, and who has attained complete ἀναισθησία. God then takes compassion on this soul and reveals himself:

Στήθι ἐπὶ τῆς φυλακῆς σου φυλάττων τὸν νοῦν σου ἀπὸ νοημάτων κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς στήναι ἐπὶ τῇ οἰκειᾷ ἡρεμίᾳ, ἵνα ὁ συμπάσχων τοῖς

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<sup>49</sup>For this Macarius and the apophthegmata associated with him, see *ibid.*, 151-52.

<sup>50</sup>As Evagrius himself put it: Μακάριός ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς, ὁ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς, ἄυλος καὶ ἀκτῆμων γίνεται (*De oratione* 119; M.79.1193B); and Μακάριός ἐστιν ὁ νοῦς, ὁ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς προσευχῆς τελείαν ἀναισθησίαν κτησάμενος (*De oratione* 120; M.17.1193B). See also *De oratione* 4.

ἀγνοοῦσι, καὶ σοὶ ἐπιφοιτήση, καὶ τότε λήψη δῶρον προσευχῆς  
εὐκλεέστατον. (*De oratione* 69; M.79.1181C)

*Stay on your guard—guarding that your soul, free from thoughts at the time of prayer, stays in its own peace; so that the one who has compassion for the ignorant may visit even you. And then you may receive the gift of prayer which is most glorious.*

The three stages of development are intimately linked.<sup>51</sup> Though man's effort is required, ultimately every stage depends upon the loving grace of God (see *De oratione* 62 and 63); and having achieved the third stage, one must still guard against passions.

In the tract *Chapters on Prayer (De oratione)*, which will be discussed below, the passion which is mentioned most often is anger; the fiercest passion, however, is *acedia*, a sort of despondency or *ennui* (in Baudelaire's sense of the word). The chief passionate emotions, called *logismoï*, are eight in number,<sup>52</sup> and each is under the jurisdiction of a particular demon. Demons attempt to rouse the passions by external affairs, by memories, and even by visions. The rationale behind the demons' activities is that a person's spirit, obscured by passion, becomes incapable of pure prayer and contemplation of God, which is the full flowering and ultimate goal of every soul.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Bamberger, xcii-xciv.

<sup>52</sup>Through John Cassian, Evagrius' list eventually became the "Seven Deadly Sins" of the Middle Ages.

<sup>53</sup>Like Evagrius, John Climacus believed that the demons work upon man by exciting passions in him. John wrote that fundamentally the passions are holy and belong to man's nature; the demons, however, misdirect them. For example, anger was meant to be used against the devil; instead, men are enticed to use it against one another. See especially Step 26 (*Trevisan* II 199) and Step 9 (*Trevisan* I 305). John Climacus used Evagrius' list of eight passions and in Evagrius' order. (John's various catalogues of passions are discussed by Ware,



His ascetic-mystical theology was spread not only by his instruction of the monks in Egypt and by his writings,<sup>54</sup> but also by his friends, disciples, and other authors influenced by him. Palladius, a disciple of Evagrius, incorporated into his *Lausiatic History* (a collection of stories about the monks of Egypt) an entire chapter on Evagrius.<sup>55</sup> (The surviving Syriac manuscript incorporates even more Evagrian material than the surviving Greek manuscript.)<sup>56</sup> Within two years after Evagrius' death, Rufinus, the

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62-66.) He developed the list, however, and combining the passions which need to be controlled and the virtues which need to be attained, John created 30 steps toward divine illumination. The top steps, Dispassion (Step 29) and Love (Step 30), correspond to Evagrius' concept of "pure prayer" and "essential contemplation."

Demonology was an important aspect of early Christian monasticism. The *Life of St. Antony* by Athanasius is virtually a tract on demonology; see R. Meyer, trans., *St. Athanasius: The Life of Saint Antony* (Westminster, Maryland, 1950), 13-14. For an overview on demonology in the writings of the Church Fathers, see E. Mangenot, "Démon," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, vol. 4 (1939): 339-84. For Shenute's demonology, see H. Jaye, "A Homily of Shenoute of Atripe on Human Will and the Devil: Translation, Commentary, and Literary Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis U., 1980), passim. For the demonology of his successor, Besa, see K. Kuhn, "A Fifth-Century Egyptian Abbot: III. Besa's Christianity," 37-38. Demons also play an important rôle in Dioscorus' prose documents; see L. MacCoull, "*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67188v 1-5: Dioscorus' 'Gnostica,'" *Tyche* 2 (1987): 96-97; cf. eadem, "A Coptic Monastic Letter to Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Enchoria* 18 (1991): 25.

Pachomius' writings show an attitude toward demons and λογισμοί which is very similar to Evagrius'. Rousseau speculates that even in the Thebaid in the fourth century, Pachomius could have been influenced by Origen or Neoplatonism (p. 136); in addition, Pachomius was probably influenced by Gnostic literature of a kind similar to *The Shepherd* by Hermas (pp. 136-38). The most important influence, however, was the tradition of the Desert Fathers, as reflected in the *Apophthegmata patrum*; Rousseau, 142-43, 139 note 90, 141 note 97. See also Rousseau's bibliography on demons and monks, p. 136 note 75.

<sup>54</sup>His works were quickly translated into Syriac and Armenian; and there survive several sixth-century Syriac manuscripts. He is still highly honored by the Syrian, Armenian, and Georgian Churches. Neither Bamberger nor Claire Guillaumont, however, speak about Coptic manuscripts; Evagrius' feast day in the Coptic Church is the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

<sup>55</sup>The influence of Evagrius on the *Lausiatic History* was even more pervasive; as Bamberger noted (xxix note 25): "It is now well established that the *Lausiatic History* is fundamentally conceived in the spirit of the Evagrian theological system."

<sup>56</sup>The Greek text with an excellent introduction and commentary has been edited by C.

Jerusalem friend of Evagrius, published Latin translations of his works; St. Jerome noted that these translations were widely read.<sup>57</sup> The *Historia Monachorum*, short biographical stories about Egyptian monks (written as the result of an expedition by seven visitors between the years 394 - 395), contains a section on Evagrius and his demonology.<sup>58</sup> Another important disciple was John Cassian, who played a significant rôle in transmitting the Evagrian ascetic-mystical theology to the West.<sup>59</sup> Many of Evagrius' teachings were also preserved in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.<sup>60</sup> This was a collection of brief *sententiae* and anecdotes attributed to a wide selection of Egyptian monks who came to be known as the Desert Fathers;<sup>61</sup> although

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Butler, *The Lausiaca History of Palladius*, vol. 6 of *Texts and Studies* (Cambridge, 1898-1904). For a translation of the Syriac edition, see E. Budge, *The Book of Paradise*, 2 vols. (London, 1904).

<sup>57</sup>Bamberger, xxvii-xxviii. Before the end of the fifth century, more works were translated into Latin by the historian Gennadius.

<sup>58</sup>For the Greek text and commentary, see A.-J. Festugière, *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (Bruxelles, 1971), esp. 123. The Latin translation of this text is traditionally ascribed to Rufinus.

<sup>59</sup>Through his *Conferences* (the discourses of twenty-four Egyptian monks) and *Institutes*. For a good discussion of John Cassian, see O. Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1968). Chadwick's study also contains a succinct review (pp. 1-30) of ancient transmitted sources about early Egyptian monasticism.

<sup>60</sup>See A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique*, vol. 1, pp. 305-07. For the actual sayings (in German translation) see B. Miller, trans., *Weisung der Väter* (Freiburg, 1965), #227-33 (from the alphabetic collection); # 998 (from the Latin collection). Miller (pp. 497-516) has included a very extensive bibliography (compiled by Uta Ranke-Heinemann) on early Christian monasticism. See also Ward, 63-64 (and a good bibliography on early Christian monasticism, pp. 254-57). For Evagrius in the Syriac manuscripts, see E. Budge, trans., *The Wit and Wisdom of the Christian Fathers of Egypt* (Oxford, 1934), 445 s.v. St. Evagrius.

<sup>61</sup>There are various ancient versions of the collection, arranged by author and by subject; see Ward, 254; Miller, 8-9; O. Chadwick, 1-3. An analysis of the *Apophthegmata's* relationship to Scripture can be found in D. Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford, 1992).

the sayings came from the fourth and fifth centuries, the first written manuscripts (in Greek) were made in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>62</sup> Claire Guillaumont noted that if one attempted to note where Evagrius' influence is perceptible in Byzantine writers' works or where he was directly quoted, "la liste serait longue." According to Guillaumont, authors who quoted or used significant portions of Evagrius' *Praktikos* included: Socrates Scholasticus (in his *Ecclesiastical History*), Mark the Hermit, Dorotheus of Gaza, John Climacus, Maximus Confessor, John of Damascus, and the list continues through the centuries.<sup>63</sup> Concerning the influence of his writings, Bamberger remarks (pp. lv-lvii):

It is clear that some of the greatest Byzantine writers had studied Evagrius very thoroughly and had incorporated his basic concepts of the spiritual life in varying degree into their systems of ascetic and mystical theology. In recent times it has been possible to trace out a good deal of the course traveled by Evagrian theology through the centuries. Besides the considerable influence he had upon Maximus the Confessor [c. 580 - 662], Evagrius contributed to the theology of Diadoch of Photicus [fifth century], St John Climachus [c. 532 - c. 596], Hesychius [seventh century], Nicetas Stethatos [1020 - c. 1090], and Symeon the New Theologian [942 - 1022]. . . . Pseudo-Denis [fifth - sixth century], the Areopagite, who was perhaps more influential in the West than in the East, though he had a considerable number of followers in Byzantium, is now known to have borrowed some of the basic elements of his own theological system from Evagrius.

I. Hausherr concluded: "Evagrius is the chief source of the properly contemplative spirituality of the Byzantine tradition, to such an extent that its centuries old tradition should properly be described as Evagrian spirituality."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>See A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité Pratique*, vol. 1, p. 305.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 304-17.

<sup>64</sup>"Oraison Hesychaste," *Orientalia Christiana* 9 (1927): 134ff. Paraphrased by

In 553, however, at the Fifth Ecumenical Council convened by Justinian, Evagrius along with Origen was condemned as a heretic.<sup>65</sup> These condemnations were repeated at the Sixth (680), Seventh (781), and Eighth Council (869). In Evagrius' esoteric *Kephalaia Gnostica* non-orthodox ideas are clearly evident; and this particular work has survived to the modern day only in Syriac translations. Many of his other works, however, appear free of non-orthodox philosophy; they continued to be circulated in the original Greek, though some under pseudonyms. The *Praktikos*, which deals with the ascetic life and with prayer, was an immensely popular work and continued to be copied in Greek under his own name. The *Chapters on Prayer* (De oratione) continued to be copied in Greek manuscripts, but these were circulated under the name of St. Nilus of Sinai (d. c. 430); likewise other works were preserved in Greek under the names of St. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and even Origen. It is ironic that some later authors such as Maximus Confessor and John Climacus, who owed a great deal to Evagrius for their own ascetic-mystical theologies, showed only disdain when mentioning his name.<sup>66</sup>

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Bamberger, xxxii.

<sup>65</sup>The contemplative and cosmological aspects of Evagrius' ascetic-mystical theology, seen clearly in his *Kephalaia gnostica* and his *Letter to Melania*, is a development of Origen's cosmology; and both authors were deeply indebted to Platonism and Neoplatonism. Their more obvious Platonic ideas were the pre-existence of souls and the ultimate return of all rational creatures to an original henad (where they would become ἰσοχρίστοι); these non-orthodox speculations were used as the official grounds for their condemnation by the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553. Justinian's rôle was significant. According to Bamberger (xxvi): "As a result of this official condemnation the *Kephalaia Gnostica* were, on orders of Justinian, destroyed in their original Greek version. . . . The whole affair was initiated and energetically guided through the Council by the Emperor. In fact, the Council's part was largely to ratify, by acclamation, the letter of Justinian which contained the anathemas."

<sup>66</sup>Bamberger, 21 note 32. Although John criticizes Evagrius by name, John's ascetic-mystical theology is based upon and a development of Evagrian spirituality. John's criticism

At the time of the preparations and perhaps during the sessions of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Dioscorus himself was in Constantinople. It certainly would have been a significant affair in the capital city; and it certainly would have been important for Dioscorus, who was so closely tied to monastic activities in Egypt.<sup>67</sup> There are no surviving records of

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of Evagrius is so curious, that it warrents a brief examination. John wrote (Trevisan I 343):

Ἐδόκησεν ὁ θεήλατος Εὐάγριος τῶν σοφῶν σοφώτερος τῇ τε προφορᾷ καὶ τοῖς νοήμασι γενέσθαι· ἀλλ' ἐπεύσθη ὁ δειλαῖος, τῶν ἀφρόνων φανείς ἀφρονέστερος, ἐν πολλοῖς μὲν, πλὴν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ·

*Evagrius, driven by a demon [lit., driven by a god] thought that he was wiser than the wise in both what he said and what he thought; but the wretched man was deceived, appearing more senseless than the senseless in many things, but especially in this:*

What John goes on to describe is a very minor detail in Evagrius' ascetic theology. Evagrius suggested that the beginning monk practice a crash diet; then the new monk will appreciate what little food is given to him. John does not say that this technique is wrong, but simply that it is too quick; the diet should be gradually diminished. The oddity of John's criticism was pointed out by Bamberger, 21 note 32; the apparent hypocrisy of the statement was pointed out by Ware (p. 166 note 58):

His [Evagrius'] Origenist cosmology led to his condemnation at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553. But his ascetic theology, with its sharp distinction between action and contemplation, its list of eight principal temptations, and its account of dispassion leading to love, remained fundamental for monasticism. Climacus, in spite of his abuse of Evagrius, is clearly much influenced by him.

It is hard to believe that John was not aware that his ascetic-mystical theology was based upon Evagrius. Although Evagrius' works were condemned, his more traditional and less theoretical works continued to be circulated in Greek under his name. Climacus does make use of Evagrian terminology. One must then conclude that either John was blindly prejudiced by the decisions of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (which seems unlikely), or John was simply offering a smoke-screen. By condemning the name of Evagrius (although focusing the condemnation on a trivial point), John Climacus could make extensive use of Evagrius' spirituality and writing style without his own *Ladder* being condemned for Evagrianism during that ecclesiastically unstable period.

<sup>67</sup>The immediate impetus for Justinian's condemnations was a group of Palestinian monks at the New Lavra near Jerusalem, who had a strong interest in Origen and Evagrius. These monks were opposed by the *hegoumenos* of the Great Lavra; the conflict was highly political and personal, stemming from the jealousy of the papal apocriary, Pelagius, against the influential Theodore Askidas. After the Council, the monks at New Lavra were expelled by troops and replaced by monks from the Great Lavra. See P. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)* (Leiden, 1979), 61-63; A. Guillaumont, *Les 'Képhalaia gnostica,'* 81-166; Bamberger, lii-liii. Guillaumont showed that the Origenist controversy in

Dioscorus' reaction. His poetry, however, seems to have been influenced by Evagrius' ascetic-mystical theology. Chapter 3 will show that Dioscorus' images and structure are dependent upon the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (who himself was influenced by Evagrius).<sup>68</sup> The esoteric mystical works of Pseudo-Dionysius and even of Gregory of Nyssa, however, do not provide sufficient information to interpret the mystical significance of many of Dioscorus' images. The key to some of these images is found in Evagrius, especially his very practical *Chapters on Prayer*.

*Evagrius' "Chapters on Prayer" and Dioscorus' Encomia*

At the time of writing *Chapters on Prayer*, Evagrius was living an ascetic life in a semi-cenobitic community at Kellia, some fifty-two miles south of Alexandria; the date was probably 390-95. This work shows several similarities with the poetry of Dioscorus; below are some of the most important:

1. Evagrius introduced the work with a brief letter addressed to an unknown recipient, possibly Rufinus in Palestine. The treatise was divided into 153 brief *sententiae* and anecdotes; and Evagrius explained in the letter that the number of *sententiae* (each is called a *chapter*) is significant: it was the number of fish caught by Peter and served to Christ and his disciples for breakfast on the morning of the Lord's third appearance after his resurrection (Jn. 21:11-14). The number also represents a triangle of

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the sixth century was against Origenism as shaped and taught by Evagrius; A. Guillaumont, "Évagre et les anathématismes antiorigénistes de 553," *Studia Patristica* 3 (Berlin, 1961): 219-26.

<sup>68</sup>Bamberger, lvii and note 138.

numbers, 51 x 3, which represents the Holy Trinity.<sup>69</sup> This description and Evagrius' further discussion of the significance of the number 153 is echoed by Dioscorus' own interest in numerology, shown by his isopsephistic encomium to Saint Senas. Here, the numerical value of the letters of each verse add up to 5680, which may relate to the date of the saint's martyrdom.<sup>70</sup>

2. Another similarity between the letter and Dioscorus' poetry can be seen in Evagrius' pun on the name of the Egyptian monk Macarius the Great; punning names was a device frequently used by Dioscorus.<sup>71</sup>

3. A motif in the poetry of Dioscorus is tears. For example, Dioscorus wrote: δέξεο ἡμῆς γενιῆς τὰ δυσίμερα δάκρυα μόχθων (H.8.3).<sup>72</sup> Literally, the verse means: *Receive the tears—wrung from the torments of love—of the*

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<sup>69</sup>Evagrius emphasized the importance of the Trinity. For Dioscorus' own emphasis on the Holy Trinity, see MacCoull, "A Trinitarian Formula in Dioscorus of Aphrodito," 103-110; "μονοειδής in Dioscorus of Aphrodito: An Addendum," 61-64; "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," 163-68. MacCoull argues that Dioscorus' Trinitarian concepts are derived from an education in Alexandria under the Christian Neoplatonist John Philoponus. Cf. Viljamaa, 83 note 24.

<sup>70</sup>See L. MacCoull, "An Isopsephistic Encomium on Saint Senas by Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *ZPE* 62 (1986): 51-53.

<sup>71</sup>For a partial list, see Viljamaa, 83.

<sup>72</sup>See also H.1 verso 5: [π]εφρικότεα τραγικώτερα δάκρυα λείβειν.

Unless noted otherwise, all quotations from the poetry of Dioscorus are taken from section 42 of E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1963), 127-52; the references are labeled H., followed by the poem number and verse number. All quotations from the *Chapters on Prayer (De oratione)* are taken from J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, vol. 79, part 1 (Paris, 1865); see under *S. Nili De Oratione*. All references are to page number and section. Chapter numbers, however, follow the order established by Bamberger, who with I. Hausherr concluded that the ordering found in the *Philokalia* is the original order. I have made some changes in the punctuation of the Migne text.

*hardships of my family*. The encomium is addressed to Ὁ πολίταρχε μέγιστε *O very great leader of the city* (verse 1), who has not been identified. While the *tears of the hardships of my family* could fit into an encomiastic petition to a political magistrate,<sup>73</sup> the fact that the tears arise from the torments of love makes the entire phrase absurdly hyperbolic—except on a deeper level of meaning. In the ascetic-mystical theology of Evagrius, tears are a significant part of spiritual evolution.<sup>74</sup> He wrote in Chapter 6: Κέχρησο τοῖς δάκρυσιν πρὸς παντὸς αἰτήματος κατόρθωσιν· λίαν γὰρ χαίρει σου ὁ Δεσπότης ἐν δάκρυσιν προσευχὴν δεχόμενος (M.79.1169A). *Make use of tears in order to gain the fulfillment of each request; for the Ruler, when he receives your prayer, rejoices very much in your tears*. Just as Evagrius says to the monk that God (ὁ Δεσπότης) enjoys receiving (δεχόμενος) a petition mingled with tears (ἐν δάκρυσιν), so Dioscorus' ruler (Ὁ πολίταρχε μέγιστε) receives (δέξο) the poet's loving tears (τὰ δυσίμερα δάκρυα).<sup>75</sup> For Evagrius, tears are a part of the intense spiritual desire which motivates the monk.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Such personal appeals, however, do not follow Menandrian guidelines; see Menander Rhetor 378.17-26, 423.28-424.2.

<sup>74</sup>John Climacus, who here was influenced by Evagrius, also stresses the importance of tears; see especially the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7.

<sup>75</sup>In Dioscorus, the family (ἰμῆς γενιῆς) should be interpreted as his spiritual family. See the Coptic letter sent by a priest or monk to Dioscorus in his capacity as curator for the monastery of Apa Apollon (founded by Dioscorus' father); the writer refers to Dioscorus in a spiritual sense as "your sonship." MacCoull, "A Coptic Monastic Letter to Dioscorus of Aphrodito," 23-25 and plate 7.

<sup>76</sup>Tears are a gift from God (Chapter 5) and are necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Chapters 5, 7, 8, and 78). The desire of the monk is a motif in Evagrius; for example: Ἰσάγγελος γίνεται μοναχὸς διὰ τῆς ἀληθοῦς προσευχῆς ἐπιποθῶν ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς (*De oratione* 113; M.79.1192D). *Through pure prayer a monk becomes like an angel, desiring to see the face of the Father in heaven*.



4. A unique and recurrent phrase in the Dioscorian encomia is: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον *I have come to the land of the All-Sovereign* (H. 2.4, 3.40, 5.4, 13.6, 6.23 with minor variations).<sup>77</sup> Dioscorus emphasizes the distance of the realm of the παμβασιλεύς from the realm of speech: ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος *he who is renowned among men* (lit. *the articulate ones*) and in the land of the All-Sovereign (H.5.4); and its distance from the world of care and responsibility: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον ἔκτοθι τ[έ]κνων *I have come to the land of the All-Sovereign, far from my children* (H.6.23). There is internal and external evidence that when Dioscorus in his poetry uses the word παμβασιλεύς, he is referring to God; and in chapter 3 it will be shown that Dioscorus is probably stating (on the deeper level) that the poet is in a state of mystic ecstasy. Ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος refers to the spiritual realm of the celestial hierarchy (τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας) as explicated by Pseudo-Dionysius.

It is possible that the actual choice of images derives from Evagrius, who uses similar imagery:

“Ὅταν ὁ νοῦς σου τῷ πολλῷ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν πόθῳ κατὰ μικρὸν οἶον ὑπαναχωρεῖ τῆς σαρκὸς, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐξ ἐνθυμήσεως ἢ κράσεως νοήματα ἀποστρέφεται, εὐλαβείας ὁμοῦ καὶ χαρᾶς ἔμπλεως γενόμενος, τότε νόμιζε ἡγγικέναι ὄροις προσευχῆς. (*De oratione* 61; M.79.1180C)

*When your soul in its great desire for God little by little withdraws (so to speak) from the flesh and turns away from every thought arising out of anxiety or temperament, becoming full of godly fear and joy at the same*

<sup>77</sup>For the substitution of the imperfect/second aorist ending for the perfect ending, see F. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods II: Morphology* (Milan, 1981), 355-56.

*time, then know that you have approached the boundaries of prayer.*

The boundaries of prayer are explained more fully in Chapter 142

(M.79.1197A):

Προσεύξασθαι ποθεῖς; μεταστάς τῶν ἐνθένδε, τὸ πολίτευμα ἔχε ἐν οὐρανοῖς  
διὰ παντός, οὐ λόγῳ ἀπλῶς ψιλῶ ἀλλὰ πράξει ἀγγελικῇ καὶ γνώσει  
θειτέρῃ.

*Do you desire to pray? By removing yourself from the things which are here, get your citizenship in heaven constantly, not simply in meager word but in angelic action and more divine knowledge.*

It seems that Evagrius is saying in these two passages that by withdrawing from the physical world (ὕπαναχωρεῖ τῆς σαρκὸς and μεταστάς τῶν ἐνθένδε) and by turning the spirit away from all thoughts which are inspired by passions or temperament (πάντα τὰ ἐξ ἐνθυμήσεως ἢ κράσεως νοήματα ἀποστρέφεται), the monk's soul in ardent desire for God (ὁ νοῦς σου τῷ πολλῶ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν πόθῳ; see also Chapters 52 and 54) approaches and enters the realm of spiritual contemplation (ὄροις προσευχῆς and τὸ πολίτευμα . . . ἐν οὐρανοῖς), which is known by the monk because of his sense of divine awe and joy (εὐλαβείας ὁμοῦ καὶ χαρᾶς ἔμπλεως γενόμενος) and his divinely-inspired actions and understanding (πράξει ἀγγελικῇ καὶ γνώσει θειτέρῃ). Elsewhere, Evagrius uses for the spiritual ascent the imagery of a *trip inland* and a *journey*: ἀνάβασις νοῦ πρὸς Θεόν (*De oratione* 35; M.79.1173D); and ἐκδημία (*De oratione* 46; M.79.1176D). The country reached is the state of *pure prayer*, which is a prelude to the mystical union. It is possible that Dioscorus' *land of the All-Sovereign* is this same state of *pure prayer*.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Compare the metaphors used by John Climacus, who was certainly influenced by

5. One of the most common motifs in the encomia of Dioscorus is peace, εἰρήνη. A typical usage can be found in H.9, whose addressee cannot be identified:

Θήβη πᾶσα χόρευσον, εἰρήνην δέχου·  
οὐ γὰρ θεωρήσεις κακουργικὴν ἔτι,  
οὐ βαρβάρων δέος, φιλοπραγμόνων κρίσιν.  
πάντη γὰρ εἰρήνη θεόπνευστος ῥέει.  
ὁ γὰρ στρατηγός, οὐ ξένος παρ[ί]σταται. (verses 1-5)

*All of Thebes dance! receive peace!*  
*For no longer will you see evil deeds,*  
*nor fear of barbarians, nor judgment of scoundrels.*  
*For everywhere flows divinely inspired peace!*  
*For the general, who is no stranger, is present!*

The importance of the motif of peace can be seen visibly on the papyrus *P.Lond.* V 1820, written by Dioscorus' hand. In this short fragment of an encomium, the word εἰρήνην is the first word of the last remaining verse.

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Evagrius:

Αὕτη οὖν ἡ τελεία τῶν τελείων ἀτέλεστος τελειότης . . . οὕτω λοιπὸν τὸν νοῦν ἀγιάζει, καὶ τῶν ὑλῶν ἀφαρπάζει, ὡς τὸ πολὺ τῆς ἐν σαρκὶ ζωῆς, μετὰ τὴν κατάληψιν μέντοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λιμένος, ἐν οὐρανῷ ἐξεστηκότα αὐτὸν πρὸς θεωρίαν ἀνυσοῖ (Trevisan II 295).

*This [apatheia] therefore is the perfect perfection of those who are perfect—but incomplete. What's more, it so sanctifies the soul and removes all earthly things that for most of this life in the flesh, after reaching **this celestial harbor**, the soul having gone into heavenly ecstasy is lifted up to contemplation of God.*

Ἐπάθειαν μὲν νοήσεις τὸ τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ Βασιλέως ἐν οὐρανοῖς παλάτιον· πολλὰς δὲ μονὰς, τὰς ἔνδον τῆς πόλεως ταύτης κατασκηνώσεις. (Trevisan II 301).

*Think of apatheia as the celestial palace of the Emperor in heaven, and as the many apartments which you will occupy inside this city [cf. Jn. 14:2].*

The verse is set off from the others; and the word is written in large letters and marked by a sign of the cross.<sup>79</sup>

The concept of peace, of course, was a traditional facet of Hellenistic encomia; but it was not emphasized to the degree found in Dioscorus.<sup>80</sup> Peace—bestowed by angels on the man in prayer and bestowed by God during the mystical union—was also a motif in the works of Evagrius.<sup>81</sup> For example, regarding the former Evagrius says:

Ἐπιστάντος ἀγγέλου ἀθρόον ἅπαντες ἀφίστανται οἱ ἐνοχλοῦντες ἡμῖν, καὶ εὐρίσκεται ὁ νοῦς ἐν πολλῇ ἀνέσει, ὑγιῶς προσευχόμενος. . . . (*De oratione* 30; M.79.1173B)<sup>82</sup>

*When an angel appears, immediately all those annoying us desist, and the soul rests in profound relaxation, praying purely. . . .*

Regarding the latter:

. . . Ὁ δέ γε Θεὸς τουναντίον δρᾶ, αὐτῷ τῷ νῷ ἐπιβαίνει, καὶ ἐντιθεὶς αὐτῷ γνῶσιν, ὡς βούλεται, καὶ διὰ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀκρασίαν κατευνάζων. (*De oratione* 63; M.79.1180D)

*. . . But God does just the opposite; he enters the soul itself, and infuses knowledge (γνῶσις) into it (as much as he wants) and through the soul calms the turmoil of the body.*

Evagrius' attitude toward peace may be derived from the tradition of the

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<sup>79</sup>I am grateful to T. S. Pattie and the British Library Department of Manuscripts for providing me with a photograph of this papyrus.

<sup>80</sup>Menander Rhetor 375.5-376.23, 377.13.

<sup>81</sup>For the nature of this peace, its theoretical background, and its relationship to *apatheia*, see Bamberger, lxxxi-lxxxvii.

<sup>82</sup>See also Chapters 74 and 80.

Desert Fathers; St. Antony speaks of the aura of peace as the way to discern between a vision which is divine and one which is demonic.<sup>83</sup>

While Dioscorus shows a similar emphasis on peace, his choice of vocabulary (εἰρήνη) seems to be derived directly from the New Testament:<sup>84</sup>

Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν· οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν. . . . ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ εἰρήνην ἔχητε· ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ θλίψιν ἔχετε. (Jn. 14:27-16:33)

*I leave you peace, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. . . . These things I have said to you so that you might have peace in me.*

6. Evagrius emphasizes that a thought which gives rise to anger prevents or interrupts *pure prayer* and *essential contemplation*; this concept may help explain the mystical significance of Dioscorus' recollections of injustice and harm. Dioscorus' descriptions of wrongdoings seem firmly based on historical fact. In remarkable contrast to the unusually vague descriptions of the honorees, the descriptions of the evildoers and their crimes include names, dates, and even amounts of money. A good example of such specificity can be seen in H.8.5-11:<sup>85</sup>

ὅτι καὶ Γαβριῆλις χερεῖονα τῶν πρὶν ἐέρξεν  
Πενταπολίτης Θεόδωρος ἀτάσθαλα ἔργα καὶ αὐτὸς  
ἡμετέρων σφετέρισσεν ἀλωῶν καρπὸν ἀπούρας.

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<sup>83</sup>Athanasius *Vita Antonii* 35-37, 43.

<sup>84</sup>Cf. Prudentius' extensive use of *pax*, which too may have influenced Dioscorus. For the mystical poetry of Prudentius and its possible influence upon Dioscorus, see the discussion below.

<sup>85</sup>See also H.3.54ff., H.4β, H.6.18ff., H.10.19ff.

χῶρον ἄ[π]αντα θέριζε μελισταγέων σταφυλάων.  
 θρέμματα ἠδὲ βόας πόρεν ἄρ σὰ κτήματα πάντα  
 οὖν[ε]κεν ἑνδεκάτης Θεοδόσιος ὧν λάβε χρυσῶν  
 [ἡμετ]έρης [γ]ενιῆς βιοτήσιον. . . .

*That Gabriel committed wicked deeds worse than those  
 Theodore of Pentapolis committed before: he [Gabriel]  
 having seized the harvest from our threshing floors, claimed it as his own.  
 He reaped all the land of its honey-dripping clusters.  
 The flocks and cattle he handed over as though all belonging to you—  
 because of the gold which Theodosius took in the eleventh indiction—  
 the scant sustenance of our family.<sup>86</sup>*

One of Dioscorus' exceptional talents is his ability to match the style to the contents. Here the account of the wrongdoings is elliptical, condensed, and grammatically incorrect—exactly as a person in anger would speak or think. The result is a confused picture; but the crimes described can be a little more clearly understood by reference to related materials from Dioscorus' archive.<sup>87</sup> The village of Aphrodito had the imperial prerogative of *autopragia*, the right to collect and deliver its own imperial taxes to the provincial treasury; and Dioscorus' father, Apollos, had for a while carried out that responsibility. Dioscorus could not remember Aphrodito ever having been in arrears in its tax payments. Yet in the eleventh indictional year (547/8), taking advantage of Apollos' death, Theodosius, a local government official, collected the taxes but did not deliver them to the

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<sup>86</sup>Cf. the translation and discussion by G. Malz, "Three Papyri of Dioscorus at the Walters Art Gallery," *AJP* 60 (1939): 173-74.

<sup>87</sup>See the discussion by Malz (pp. 174-76) of the documents related to this poem.

public treasury. The provincial office then collected the taxes a second time. Dioscorus, it seems, went once to Constantinople and obtained an imperial rescript against Theodosius; but Theodosius ignored it. Dioscorus then went a second time to Constantinople in 551, and now obtained a second rescript and a letter of support from the Praefectus Orientis addressed to the duke. It is unknown whether the matter ever was resolved.<sup>88</sup> So much for οὐν[ε]κεν ἑνδεκάτης Θεοδοσίου ὧν λάβε χρυσῶν. Theodorus' misdeeds are described in poem H.6: Theodorus of Pentapolis stole four pounds of gold (= 288 gold solidi) from Dioscorus, which put Dioscorus in financial straits. Gabriel, perhaps a subordinate state official, has not been identified; but Dioscorus says that his deeds were worse than those of Theodorus. He stole for himself Dioscorus' crops (ἡμετέρων σφετέρισσεν ἄλωων καρπὸν ἀπούρας) and ravaged all the vineyards (χωρὸν ἄ[π]αντα θέριζε μελισταγέων σταφυλάων). He apparently also took the cattle (θρέμματα ἡδὲ βόας); but Gabriel may in fact have turned the livestock over to the public treasury (πόρεν ἄρ σὰ κτήματα πάντα) to pay for the taxes stolen by Theodosius (οὐν[ε]κεν ἑνδεκάτης Θεοδοσίου ὧν λάβε χρυσῶν).

The problems described here by Dioscorus are obviously jumbled and the surviving documents do not provide all the missing information. What is most important, however, for the deeper level of meaning, is that Dioscorus is recalling events which would make anyone angry. This accords with Evagrian ascetic-mystical theology, in which the demons attempt to thwart contemplation of God by stirring anger. In the *Chapters on Prayer* and throughout his pastoral works, Evagrius places much emphasis on

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<sup>88</sup>See chapter 1 for a discussion of these imperial documents.

demons; and his insightful analyses of their characters and activities have left their mark on all subsequent mystical theologies.<sup>89</sup> Although Evagrius' demonology has roots in Plato and Origen, the main influence seems to have been Coptic.<sup>90</sup> The important role which demons play in the ascetic's spiritual growth was established already by St. Antony, as he was portrayed in Athanasius' *Life of Antony*,<sup>91</sup> As seen in Antony's own experiences, each stage of spiritual development is marked by an intensified onslaught of demons. This concept was developed further by the Desert Fathers and then refined and systematized by Evagrius. According to Evagrius' analysis, there are eight kinds of demons responsible for stirring eight evil passions (*logismoi*).<sup>92</sup> Although *acedia*, a sort of *ennui* or despair, is the deadliest *logismos* for the spiritual growth of the monk, anger is the *logismos* which is dealt with most extensively in the *Chapters on Prayer*. The demons prevent inspired prayer by employing primarily three kinds of tools:

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<sup>89</sup>A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, vol. 1, pp. 38-112. It should be kept in mind that although most of Evagrius' works were written for anchorites, who were on the front lines in the battle against demons, he also wrote for cenobites; and his theories were applicable to all people. The documents of Dioscorus give evidence not only of many monasteries and convents around Aphrodito, but anchorites as well (see, for instance, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003).

<sup>90</sup>Bamberger, 6.

<sup>91</sup>For a discussion of the authenticity of this *Life*, see O. Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 3-5.

<sup>92</sup>The effect which *logismoi* have upon a man is succinctly described by Evagrius in Chapter 71 (M.79.1181C-D): Οὐ δύναται δεδεμένος δραμεῖν, οὐδὲ νοῦς πάθει δουλεύων προσευχῆς πνευματικῆς τόπον ἰδεῖν· ἔλκεται γὰρ, καὶ περιφέρεται ἐκ τοῦ ἐμπαθοῦς νοήματος, καὶ οὐχ ἴσταται ἀκλόνητος. *Someone chained is not able to run; the soul which is a slave to passions is not able to see the place of inspired prayer. For it is dragged and born about by the impassioned thought and does not stand unshaken.*

The *logismoi* and the rôle of demons are described in greater detail in his *Praktikos* and *Antirrhetikos*; the latter work deals exclusively with the *logismoi* and is one of Evagrius' most orthodox works, using the Bible and the Coptic desert tradition as sources.



pragmatic concerns,<sup>93</sup> memory, and visions.<sup>94</sup> Concerning the second, Evagrius observed (*De oratione* 24; M.79.1172C):

Προσευχομένου σου δεόντως, τοιαῦτά σοι ἀπαντήσῃ πράγματα, ἵνα δόξης δίκαιον εἶναι πάντως τῷ θυμῷ χρήσασθαι.

*When you are praying as one ought, such affairs will occur to you so that you deem it completely right to become angry.*

It is important to observe that for Evagrius, the monk is not harmed by any misdeed, but by the *later reflection* which gives rise to anger.

In *Chapters on Prayer*, Evagrius' descriptions of the detrimental effect of anger—stirred by deeds or by recollection—are extensive. In addition to the example quoted above, Evagrius describes in Chapter 139 (M.79.1196D) how demons use external events to interfere with contemplation:

Νύκτωρ μὲν ταραττεῖν δι' ἑαυτῶν ἐξαιτοῦνται τὸν πνευματικὸν διδάσκαλον οἱ δαίμονες. Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν δι' ἀνθρώπων περιστάσεσι καὶ συκοφαντίαις καὶ κινδύνοις τοῦτον περιβάλλουσι.

*At night the demons demand to disturb among themselves the inspired master. Yet during the day, they surround him with crises and false accusations and threats coming from men.*

The most evil demon (ὁ πονηρότατος δαίμων) makes particular use of anger as one of two ways to destroy advanced contemplation (*De oratione* 47; M.79.1176D-1177A):

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<sup>93</sup>See *De oratione* 10 (M.79.1169B).

<sup>94</sup>The demons are very crafty in the use of deceptive visions. Sometimes they appear like angels (Chapter 95) or Christ himself (Chapter 73); often they try to terrify or simply distract with demonic visions: Ψόφους μὲν καὶ κτύπους καὶ φωνὰς καὶ αἰκτισμοὺς ἐκ δαιμόνων ἀκούσεται ὁ καθαρῶς ἐπιμελούμενος προσευχῆς . . . (*De oratione* 97; M.79.1188D). The monk is encouraged to keep his wits about him and pray to Jesus.

“Ὅταν πολλὰ ποιήσας ὁ πονηρότατος δαίμων, μὴ δυνηθῆ ἔμποδίσαι τὴν τοῦ σπουδαίου προσευχῆν, μικρὸν ὑποχαλᾷ, καὶ μετέπειτα ἀμύνεται αὐτὸν προσευξάμενον· ἢ γὰρ εἰς ὀργὴν ἐξάψας ἀφανίζει τὴν ἐκ τῆς εὐχῆς συγκροτουμένην ἀρίστην κατάστασιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, ἢ πρὸς ἡδονὴν τινα ἄλογον ἐρεθίσας ὑβρίζει τὸν νοῦν.

*When the most devilish demon, having made many attempts, has not been able to impede the prayer of the devout, he lets up for a while. But then he takes vengeance on the man of prayer; for either enkindling the man to anger, he destroys the good peace strengthened within the man by prayer, or enticing to some irrational pleasure he insults the soul.*

Evagrius makes clear, however, that anger against a fellow human being is never warranted; the passage quoted above continues with the statement (*De oratione* 24; M.79.1172C):

Προσευχομένου σου δεόντως, τοιαῦτά σοι ἀπαντήσῃ πράγματα, ἵνα δόξης δίκαιον εἶναι πάντως τῷ θυμῷ χρήσασθαι· οὐκ ἔστι δὲ δίκαιος θυμὸς κατὰ τοῦ πέλας τὸ σύνολον. . . .

*When you are praying as one ought, such affairs will occur to you so that you deem it completely right to become angry; anger against your neighbor is not right at all. . . .*

Evagrius continues by saying that if one tries, the matter can be taken care of without anger. One cannot help but recall all the attempts by Dioscorus to settle through legal channels—despite their apparent inefficacy—the violence and crimes instigated by the pagarchs and other local officials against Dioscorus, his village, and the local nuns and monks.

As was said above, these wrongdoings seem to be based on fact, and their presentation is effective on the literal level. Their significance on the

deeper level is difficult to interpret in light of Dionysian mystical theology, whose description of evil is extremely esoteric;<sup>95</sup> but the passages do find mystical significance in the light of Evagrian ascetic-mystical theology, according to which the soul in or near *essential contemplation* is besieged by anger. In poem H.6, Dioscorus' immediate reaction after the recollection of wrongs is to reconfirm his *pure prayer* and his removal from the world of cares: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον ἔκτοθι τ[έ]κνων (verse 23). And in poem H.8, following Evagrian precepts,<sup>96</sup> the poet turns humbly to the mercy of the all-powerful Lord: Νῦν δὲ φαεινῶν / [σοῦ πρ]οκυλ[ιν]δόμε[ν]ος πόδας ἴχνων, ὕψος Ἄρειον. *With my poetry I fall now in worship before your shining tracks, war-like Highness* (verses 11-12; see the discussion of these verses in chapter 3).

There are many more motifs shared by Dioscorus and Evagrius, including fear, justice, misery, song, and humility; and both authors make allusions to the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. It is not necessary, however, to examine all the similarities in detail. The six discussed above—numerology, puns, tears, the imperial *country* of mystical union, peace, anger—show that the mystical level of meaning in Dioscorus' encomia relates to the ascetic-mystical theology of Evagrius. Thus Dioscorus' close relationship to the monks of Upper Egypt may have helped shape his poetry.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>*De divinis nominibus* 4.19-35 (Suchla 163.7-180.7). Cf. H. Boese, ed., *Procli Diadochi: Tria Opuscula (De Providentia, Libertate, Malo), Latine et Graece* (Berlin, 1960), 172-265.

<sup>96</sup>See, for example, *De oratione* 94, 96, 97, 98.

<sup>97</sup>Bregman saw a close relationship between monasticism, Neoplatonism, and the Cappadocian Fathers; he said succinctly (p. 141): "For the Cappadocians, Christianity could

### Early Verse Descriptions of the Christian Mystical Experience

The above discussion has shown that it was possible for Dioscorus, with his close connections to the monks and monasteries in the Thebaid, to have become acquainted firsthand with Christian mysticism. There were also several poems to which Dioscorus could have turned for inspiration and guidance in writing mystical poetry. As mentioned in the preface, each of his predecessors was unique in his style of presenting the mystical vision; and Dioscorus' mystical allegories were also unique. Yet some facets of Dioscorian poetry reflect these earlier poems, and a knowledge of them can increase one's understanding and appreciation of what Dioscorus was doing. The three most important Christian predecessors are examined below. Although the New and Old Testaments are the ultimate source of all authentic Christian mysticism, the examination below does not include biblical poetry which relates to mysticism, or allegorical interpretations of biblical poetry. These had an influence upon Dioscorus and will be mentioned where appropriate in the following chapters; but an adequate discussion of mystical poetry in the Bible is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>98</sup> This examination does include, however, a discussion of Proclus' allegorical interpretations of Homeric verse, because his interpretations seem to have had a significant influence on the mystical poetry of both Musaeus and Dioscorus.

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be understood in terms of monastic life, and monastic life in terms of Alexandrianism." Cf. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1969), 15.

<sup>98</sup>I am not aware of any comprehensive research on mystical poetry in the Bible; for general discussions of mysticism in the Bible, see Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, 1-15; Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery*, 72-130.

*Mystical Philosophy and the Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene*

Although the actual mystical experience was beyond concept and reason, some mystical writers attempted to describe it by using terms and techniques derived from philosophy. A good example of mystical philosophy can be seen in *Ennead VI* by Plotinus (205 - 270), who came from Lycopolis, a few miles north of Aphrodito, and is called the Father of Neoplatonism.<sup>99</sup> Porphyry (who was a close disciple of Plotinus, editor of his works, and author of his biography) wrote that his master had experienced four mystical unions during the time when Porphyry knew him:<sup>100</sup>

τέλος γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ σκοπὸς ἦν τὸ ἐνωθῆναι καὶ πελάσαι τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεῷ.  
ἔτυχε δὲ τετράκις πού, ὅτε αὐτῷ συνήμην, τοῦ σκοποῦ τούτου ἐνεργείᾳ  
ἀρρήτῳ [καὶ οὐ δυνάμει].<sup>101</sup>

*His goal and his aim was to be made one with, and to be with, the God who was over all. He accomplished this aim four times—when I was with him—through an ineffable force [and not through his own ability].*

The following passage from the written works of Plotinus begins with an

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<sup>99</sup>For a discussion of Plotinus' relationship to Neoplatonism, see L. Sweeney, "Are Plotinus and Albertus Magnus Neoplatonists?" in *Graceful Reason: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Presented to Joseph Owens, CSSR*, ed. L. Gerson (Toronto, 1983), 177-202. See also Wallis, 37-93.

<sup>100</sup>Plotinus was reluctant to put his mystical philosophy in writing. Many of his treatises were composed at the request of Porphyry, who later collected them into six groups containing nine essays each (hence the name *Enneads* [ἐννεάδες]). For Porphyry's biography of Plotinus, see P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, eds., *Plotini Opera*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1964), 1-38. See also S. MacKenna and B. Page, trans., *Plotinus: The Six Enneads* (Chicago, 1952), v-vi.

<sup>101</sup>Porphyry *De vita Plotini* (Henry-Schwyzzer 23.15-18). See also Porphyry's long poem about Plotinus and his mystical philosophy; Henry-Schwyzzer, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1964), 28-31.

exhortation to secrecy; he then briefly describes the experience, and mentions the spiritual nature of this kind of perception. The passage clearly reveals an attempt to describe the mystical union by using concepts taken from Plato.<sup>102</sup>

This is the purport of that rule of our Mysteries: Nothing Divulged to the Uninitiate: The Supreme is not to be made a common story, the holy things may not be uncovered to the stranger, to any that has not himself attained to see. There were not two: beholder was one with beheld; it was not a vision compassed but a unity apprehended. The man formed by this mingling with the Supreme must—if he only remember—carry its image impressed upon him: he is become the Unity, nothing within him or without inducing any diversity; no movement now, no passion, no outlooking desire, once this ascent is achieved; reasoning is in abeyance and all Intellection and even, to dare the word, the very self; caught away, filled with God, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation; all the being calmed, he turns neither to this side nor to that, not even inwards to himself; utterly resting he has become very rest. . . . There indeed it was scarcely vision, unless of a mode unknown; it was a going forth from the self, a simplifying, a renunciation, [τὸ δὲ ἴσως ἦν οὐ θέαμα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλος τρόπος τοῦ ἰδεῖν, ἕκστασις καὶ ἄπλωσις καὶ ἐπίδοσις αὐτοῦ] a reach towards contact and at the same time a repose, a meditation towards adjustment. This is the only seeing of what lies within the holies: to look otherwise is to fail. . . . Fallen back again, we awaken the virtue within until we know ourselves all order once more; once more we are lightened of the burden and move by virtue towards Intellectual-Principle and through the Wisdom in That to the Supreme. This is the life of gods and of the godlike and blessed among men. (*Ennead VI 9.11.1-49*)<sup>103</sup>

It is evident above that Plotinus did not limit himself to abstract terms; in fact he made extensive use of metaphors, similes, symbols, and exegeses of pagan myths.<sup>104</sup> An example of his use of similes is his

<sup>102</sup>See the critical apparatus in Henry-Schwyzler, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1982), 288-90.

<sup>103</sup>Because of the complexity of the Greek and the length of the quotation, only the English translation has been given. The English translation of this and the following passage is by S. MacKenna and revised by B. Page; see the citation above. For the Greek text, see Henry-Schwyzler, vol. 3 (Oxford, 1982), 288-90.

<sup>104</sup>The method of mystical philosophy was also used extensively by Pseudo-

comparison of the mystical union to entering a sanctuary of a temple (cf. the temple imagery used by Prudentius, discussed below):

He has overpassed even the choir of the virtues; he is like one who, having penetrated the inner sanctuary, leaves the temple images behind him—though these become once more first object of regard when he leaves the holies; for There his converse was not with image, not with trace, but with the very Truth. (*Ennead* VI 9.11.17-21)

It is this type of philosophical descriptions of the mystical union which informs the poetry of Synesius of Cyrene (c. 365 - c. 414). These poems traditionally have been called hymns because of their religious nature; they were never meant, however, to be sung by a congregation.<sup>105</sup> There is little agreement among modern critics with regard to the spirituality of Synesius, who was a convert to Christianity.<sup>106</sup> When and to what degree was he a pagan Neoplatonist? a Christian? And to what phases of his spiritual life do the individual hymns belong? In many ways, the controversies among modern critics are similar to those surrounding other early Byzantine writers, such as Gregory of Nyssa, Nonnus of Panopolis, and Musaeus.<sup>107</sup> Jay Bregman observes (pp. 14-15): "Cherniss has argued

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Dionysius the Areopagite (who will be discussed in chapter 3), especially in his short but very influential treatise *The Mystical Theology*. Here too, the author included an exhortation to secrecy before the uninitiated (*MTh* 1.2; Ritter 142.12-143.3); and though he included exegeses of biblical passages (*MTh* 1.3; Ritter 143.8-144.15) and metaphors and similes, his basic approach was conceptual.

<sup>105</sup>See C. Lacombrade, ed. and trans., *Synésios de Cyrène*, vol. 1: *Hymnes* (Paris, 1978), 4.

<sup>106</sup>The problems surrounding the nature of Synesius' Christianity and the hymns' relationship to his faith are too complex and unresolved to discuss here. A thorough discussion of the controversies surrounding his life, poetry, and faith can be found in J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop* (Berkeley, 1982); an overview of the issues and the recent scholarship can be found on pp. 1-15, 177-84. See also Lacombrade's introduction to the hymns, pp. v-34.

<sup>107</sup>For the spirituality of Gregory of Nyssa and Musaeus, see below. With respect to Nonnus, Joseph Golega argued persuasively that the apparently pagan *Dionysiaca* was

persuasively that Gregory of Nyssa was basically a Neoplatonist rather thinly disguised as a Christian. Daniélou has taken the opposite position: Gregory was a Christian who expressed himself in Platonic language, the intellectual *koine* of late antiquity. But Synesius has not found his Daniélou. This is not surprising, since he was unique in his world." The poetry is peculiar and complex.<sup>108</sup> It is written in the Dorian dialect and employs what was considered (at that time) typically pagan meters.<sup>109</sup> The contents are a blend of Neoplatonic philosophy and Christian faith. Hymn 9 (1) offers a good example of his mystical philosophy in verse form. Although Synesius was made bishop of Ptolemaïs in 410, it cannot be said with certainty that he was a Christian when he composed this poem.<sup>110</sup> Yet he was considered without

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written by Nonnus when the author was already a Christian—not before a conversion, as had been thought. *Studien über die Evangeliendichtung des Nonnos von Panopolis: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Bibeldichtung im Altertum* (Breslau, 1930), 62-88.

Dioscorus' poetry offers valuable insight into the rôle of paganism in poetry written by Christians. Although his documents give evidence that he was a devout Christian for his entire life, his poetry gives little obvious indication of his faith; his verses employ a pagan format, Homeric vocabulary, and pagan mythology. See G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 63-69.

<sup>108</sup>U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff pointed out their similarity to the hymns of the pagan Neoplatonist Proclus; "Die Hymnen des Synesios und Proklos," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 14 (1907): 272-95. For the Greek text of Proclus' hymns, see E. Vogt, ed., *Procli Hymni* (Wiesbaden, 1957). For Proclus' epigrams, see T. Gelzer, "Die Epigramme des Neuplatonikers Proklos," *MH* 23 (1966): 1-36.

<sup>109</sup>Synesius's use of the Dorian dialect was artificial and seems to have had two primary motivations. First, Synesius, although born in Cyrene of northern Africa, traced his ancestors back to Eurysthenes the Heraclid and was proud of his Dorian descent; see Bregman, 3, 18. Second, the Dorian dialect was the traditional language of religious lyrical odes, as seen in the dramas of the Athenian tragedians. Synesius may have wanted to make a connection between his hymns and these Classical verses.

<sup>110</sup>See Lacombrade's discussion of this poem (pp. 97-99); cf. Bregman, 29-36.

H. Marrou has drawn some interesting parallels between the Neoplatonism/Christianity dualism of Synesius and that of John Philoponus in Alexandria; H. Marrou, "Synesius of Cyrene and Alexandrian Neoplatonism," in *The Conflict Between Paganism and*



qualifications a devout apologist for Christianity by John Moschus, a contemporary of Dioscorus.<sup>111</sup>

Early in the poem, Synesius sings:<sup>112</sup>

Ὁ μὲν αὐτόσσαντος ἀρχά,	<i>The beginning which set itself in motion,</i>
ταμίας πατήρ τ' ἔόντων,	<i>the dispenser and father of beings,</i>
ἀλόχευτος, ὑψιθώκων	<i>unengendered, enthroned on high</i>
ὑπὲρ οὐρανοῦ καρήνων	<i>above the peaks of heaven,</i>
ἀλύτῳ κύδει γαιῶν	<i>exulting in his imperishable glory,</i>
θεὸς ἔμπεδος θαάσσει,	<i>God sits established,</i>
ἐνοτήτων ἕνας ἀγνά,	<i>pure unity of unities</i>
μονάδων μονάς τε πρώτα,	<i>and the first monad of monads,</i>
ἀπλότητας ἀκροτήτων	<i>unifying and giving birth to</i>
ἐνίσασα καὶ τεκοῦσα	<i>the simplest of the highest</i>
ὑπερουσίους λοχείαις·	<i>through his transcendent engenderings;</i>
ὄθεν αὐτὴ προθοροῦσα	<i>from here leaping forth</i>
διὰ πρωτόσπορον εἶδος	<i>through the help of the first-created form,</i>
μονάς ἄρρητα χυθεῖσα	<i>the monad itself ineffably being poured out,</i>
τρικόρυμβον ἔσχεν ἀλκάν ...	<i>held fast the triple-pointed strength ...</i> <sup>113</sup>

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*Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1963): 128-50. See also Bregman's discussion (pp. 161-62) of Marrou's position. It has been suggested by MacCoull that the Neoplatonist John Philoponus taught Dioscorus of Aphrodito; see chapter 1.

<sup>111</sup>Bregman, 177. Synesius' high status in the Church at the beginning of the fifth century is evident in the fact that the patriarch of Alexandria presided at his wedding.

<sup>112</sup>Singing and lyre playing are motifs in Synesius' poems; cf. the same motifs in the poetry of Dioscorus (H.2.14, 5.1, 6.18, 7.1-2, 12B.18, 28.2-4, al.).

<sup>113</sup>*Hymni* 9[1].52-66. The quotations from the hymns and their enumerations are taken from Lacombrade's edition. For the textual variants and the Neoplatonic symbolism of τρικόρυμβον, see Lacombrade, 102 note 3.

Verses 71-75 call for secrecy, a tradition in mystical literature and seen in the passage from Plotinus above. Synesius says: μένε, μηδὲ φαίνε δήμοις / τελετὰς ἀνοργιάστους. . . . τὰ δ' ἄνω σιγὰ καλύπτει *Stop, do not reveal to the multitude the mysteries that are without rites.*<sup>114</sup> The poem ends with the poet's soul leaving the manifest world and uniting with God, the soul itself now a god in the eternal dance:<sup>115</sup>

Ἄγε μοι, ψυχά, ποῖσα	<i>Come, my soul, drinking</i>
ἀγαθορρῦτοιο παγᾶς,	<i>from the spring which flows with goodness,</i>
ἰκετεύσασα τοκῆα	<i>supplicating the source,</i>
ἀνάβαινε, μηδὲ μέλλε,	<i>ascend, do not delay,</i>
χθονὶ τὰ χθονὸς λιποῖσα·	<i>leave to the earth those things of the earth;</i>
τάχα δ' ἀμμιγεῖσα πατρὶ	<i>swiftly mingling with the father,</i>
θεὸς ἐν θεῷ χορεύσεις.	<i>you as a divinity in the divine will dance.</i>

(*Hymni* 9[1].128-34)

For Synesius, experiential union with God is the culmination of life.<sup>116</sup> And the mystical experience, presented in philosophical terminology, is a pervasive theme of his hymns.<sup>117</sup>

### *The "Psychomachia" by Prudentius*

The first sustained and independent personification allegory was the *Psychomachia* by Aurelius Prudentius Clemens (348 - c. 405).<sup>118</sup> This Latin

<sup>114</sup>I have chosen the variant reading, instead of Lacombrade's ἀνοργιάστοις.

<sup>115</sup>Cf. Dioscorus' extensive dance imagery: H. 5.53, 9.1, 28.1, al.

<sup>116</sup>See Synesius' *Dion*, edited by N. Terzaghi, *Synesii Cyrenensis: Hymni et Opuscula*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1944), 233-78. Cf. Bregman, 125-45

<sup>117</sup>Bregman, 36.

<sup>118</sup>M. Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination* (Princeton, 1976), xi, 3.

allegory is of great significance to the history of literature, because it later inspired a popular genre of allegorical literature in the Middle Ages.<sup>119</sup> The *Psychomachia* is helpful in understanding Dioscorus' mystical allegories because the poet and his poem show five significant similarities to Dioscorus and his poetry. First, Prudentius was a layperson. Second, the poetry of Prudentius is anomalous: it is markedly different from the poetry of his contemporaries and went without imitation for centuries. Third, Prudentius makes considerable use of pagan literature and mythology as well as of Scripture. Fourth, on a deeper level of meaning Prudentius' use of Scripture is similar to Dioscorus' use of Scripture in the mystical allegory *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F (discussed in chapter 2).<sup>120</sup> Fifth, the

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Lamberton (p. 146) points out: "The practice of introducing into an epic narrative figures whose names indicate that they represent abstract qualities, but whose actions are otherwise comparable to those of heroes or gods, is as old as Homer, and is an epic commonplace richly exploited by Virgil and Ovid. In the earlier epic tradition, however, this allegory is one figure among many. For Prudentius, it is central and dominates the entire fiction."

The emphasis of Smith's monograph is that Prudentius used his pagan sources, especially Vergil, for two reasons. One was to elevate Prudentius' own subject matter; the second and more important reason was to deprecate the pagan sources. In other words, the uses of Vergilian material was both heroic and mock-heroic. See Smith, 234-300. For another view, according to which Prudentius was not attacking the pagan culture, see M. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca, 1989). Both these critics agree in their respect for Prudentius' genius, and reject the conclusions by other critics that Prudentius' poetry is uninspired, imitative, and decadent; see Smith, 16 note 18, 235.

<sup>119</sup>See E. Vest, "Prudentius in the Middle Ages" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 1932); Smith, 17 note 21.

<sup>120</sup>Macklin Smith notes (p. 222): "The *Psychomachia* progresses from Genesis to Apocalypse, from Old Testament to New Testament, and is in its totality an allegorical imitation of Scripture"; see her entire discussion (and chart) of the biblical progression in the *Psychomachia*, pp. 169-222. In a similar fashion—but without the *Psychomachia*'s typological significance—Dioscorus' poem is an allegorical imitation of the Apocalypsis Joannis, from its initial warning against corrupt faith to its final invitation to the eternal feast.

There is no need here to distinguish between typology and allegory, a distinction which (according to Dawson, p. 15) "arose much later, in large part as a result of Reformation

*Psychomachia* is a mystical allegory. Although many critics refer to it as a moral allegory, because of the battle between virtues and vices which dominates the first half of the poem, such a narrow label ignores the concluding verses of the *Praefatio* and the events which occur after the battle.

Little factual information about the author's life remains; there survives a rather abstract autobiographical preface (probably written by Prudentius for his *Collected Works*), and the author appears as a character in his own poems. He was born in Spain in A.D. 348. He rose in the bureaucratic ranks of power during the reign of Theodosius, who himself had been living in Spain before his accession in 379. Prudentius governed two cities (their names and locations remain unknown). He published his *Collected Works*, including the *Psychomachia*, in A.D. 405; he died sometime thereafter.

Literary critics agree that Prudentius' poetry is exceptional. Because of the peculiar and short-lived milieu in which he lived, or because of his personal genius, or (more likely) because of a combination of the two, his poetry is like no other composed before or for centuries after.<sup>121</sup> His *Peristephanon* contains the first poems to Christian martyrs.<sup>122</sup> His *Psychomachia* is exceptionally traditional in its epic style, yet very original in its personification allegory and extended correspondence to the Bible. Charles Witke describes his poetry as follows: "His own private synthesis is

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polemic against the use of allegory." See his discussion of the definitions of typology and the debates which surround it, pp. 254-6 notes 51-53.

<sup>121</sup>Malamud, 15-16; Smith, 9-28.

<sup>122</sup>Smith, 16. This is putting Pope Damasus' inscriptions aside.

between the Bible and Vergil, between his God and his culture."<sup>123</sup> The *Psychomachia*, though less refined and subtle than the *Kathemerinon*, quickly became his most popular work; it was considered a "classic" already in the sixth century,<sup>124</sup> and sixth-century codices still survive.<sup>125</sup> Yet not until the personification allegories of the Middle Ages did there appear any imitators.<sup>126</sup>

In the *Psychomachia*, Vergil's presence is brought continually to the forefront.<sup>127</sup> The first verse is almost a direct quote of a famous line from the Augustan epic writer. The latter wrote: "Phoebe, grauis Troiae semper miserate labores" (*Aeneid* 6.56). *Phoebus, you who have always taken pity on the heavy sufferings of Troy.*<sup>128</sup> Prudentius wrote: "Christe, graues hominum semper miserate labores" (*Psychomachia* 1). *Christ, you who have always taken pity on the heavy sufferings of mankind.*<sup>129</sup> Through the rest of the poem, Vergilian influence is pervasive. The battle scene is

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<sup>123</sup>C. Witke, *Numen Litterarum: The Old and the New in Latin Poetry from Constantine to Gregory the Great* (Leiden, 1971), 105; quoted by Smith, 5.

<sup>124</sup>Malamud, 26.

<sup>125</sup>See the description of these codices in M. Cunningham, ed., *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, vol. 126 of *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (Turnholt, 1966), x-xii, xxv.

<sup>126</sup>Compare, for example, Raban Maur's *On the Natures of Things* (beginning of the ninth century), John the Scot Eriugena's *Periphyseon* (third quarter of the ninth century), and especially the twelfth-century *Cosmographia* by Bernard Silvestris, *Anticaludianus* and the *Complaint of Nature* by Alain de Lille, and the *Roman de la Rose*.

<sup>127</sup>For a discussion of Dioscorus' use of the Hellenistic encomium format and pagan mythology, see my chapter 3.

<sup>128</sup>The quotation of Vergil is taken from the edition by R. Mynors, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (Oxford, 1969).

<sup>129</sup>The quotations of Prudentius are taken from the edition by Cunningham.

written in epic meter and copies Vergil's arrangement of narrative and dialogue. Even the battle strategies are Vergilian. One tenth of the total verses contains borrowed phrases;<sup>130</sup> these borrowings tend to occur in clusters, a phenomenon that has been called Prudentius' "*cento-like*" technique.<sup>131</sup>

One reason for the extensive use of his pagan predecessor was to elevate the subject of the poem; another reason was that Prudentius was trying to replace Vergil. Smith argued that Prudentius by using Vergil was not adding a Christian content to a pagan form; his use of these literary allusions was not emotionally neutral. Smith made this point clear in a discussion of the first verse (pp. 273-74):

Simply and directly, Apollo's initial place in the line has been occupied by Christ. The idol has been cast down, the true God is worshipped. As Prudentius has written elsewhere,

torquetur Apollo  
nomine percussus Christi, nec fulmina Verbi  
ferre potest; agitant miserum tot verbere linguae,  
quot laudata Dei resonant miracula Christi. (*Apo.* 402-405)

[Apollo writhes when the name of Christ smites him, he cannot bear the lightnings of the Word, the lashing tongue torments him sorely whenever the praises of the God Christ's wonderful works are sounded.]

No other text is as good commentary on the first word of the *Psychomachia*.

Prudentius was protesting against Vergil's vision of the world.<sup>132</sup> The world

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<sup>130</sup>See Smith, 234 note 1.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 259-71.

<sup>132</sup>Malamud argued (p. 4) that the use of pagan mythology by Prudentius and other poets of the period was not an attempt to revive or attack the Greek or Roman pagan culture, nor an attempt to imitate Homeric, Classical or Hellenistic Greek poetry or Roman poetry. Pagan mythology was simply an ingrained and expected feature of many genres of poetry—

visions of pagans and Christian heretics<sup>133</sup> are replaced by a cosmology based upon Scripture and orthodoxy. The overall plan of the *Psychomachia* is not based upon the *Aeneid*, but upon the Bible; and through allusions to Scripture, the *Psychomachia* moves from Genesis to the Apocalypsis. The ultimate significance of this deeper level of meaning depends upon allegorical interpretations of Scripture and is mystical; that is, "on the largest scale, the movement from Genesis to Apocalypse can be interpreted in terms of the soul's moral progress and final stasis with God."<sup>134</sup>

The opening verse (quoted above) points to an episode in the *Aeneid* which emphasizes the mystical meaning of the *Psychomachia*. Vergil's verse was spoken by Aeneas before the most profound religious experience of his life: his personal descent to Hell and to the Elysian Fields. What is interesting with respect to Dioscorus' poetry is that Aeneas was not addressing the god Apollo directly, but rather the god inside the Cumaean Sibyl. She was acting as the mediator for the divine voice, and later she was the guide for the unworldly experience. Likewise Prudentius and Dioscorus described the most important religious experience available to humanity: personal, experiential union with Christ. And martyrs were Dioscorus' guides in that excursion.

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including epic (which was one of Prudentius' genres) and encomium and epithalamium (which were Dioscorus' most frequently used genres). Allusions to pagan Greek and Roman myths and literature were also an assistance to poetic economy. Even during the Byzantine period, the pagan "classics" were a standard part of the education of Christians throughout the Mediterranean world, and remained part of their staple reading. The poets of the Late Antique and early Byzantine periods, because of their contemporaries' similarity in education and reading habits, were able to use pagan literary and mythological allusions extensively to develop their themes and add depth to their poems.

<sup>133</sup>See *Psychomachia* 665-725; cf. *Apotheosis* and *Hamartigenia*.

<sup>134</sup>Smith, 168.

The mysticism of the *Psychomachia* actually begins in the *Praefatio*, with an allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament.<sup>135</sup> Prudentius describes four biblical episodes concerning Abraham and then explains their mystical significance. These interpretations show Prudentius' debt to Plato. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son is interpreted by Prudentius as referring to spiritual offspring (verses 10-14):

... suumque suasor exemplum dedit,  
nec ante prolem coniugalem gignere  
Deo placentem, matre uirtute editam,  
quam strage multa bellicosus spiritus  
portenta cordis seruiantis uicerit.

... *And the counselor gave his own example:  
through a union we do not produce offspring  
pleasing to God, born from mother Virtue,  
before the courageous spirit with a great slaughter  
has conquered the monsters of the enslaved heart.*

Prudentius then describes how Abraham freed his nephew Lot, how he entertained the three angels, and how his wife Sarah gave birth miraculously in her old age. For Prudentius, these episodes show the necessity of ascetic practices (verses 53-55) and of knowledge of mysticism (verses 56-68) in order for the mystical union to take place; and the results of the mystical union are described in terms of giving birth:

Mox ipse Christus, qui sacerdos uerus est,  
parente natus alto et ineffabili

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<sup>135</sup>For the significance of the transition from allegorical interpretation to allegorical composition in the same poem, see Lamberton, 144-61, esp. 148.



cibum beatis offerens uictoribus  
 paruam pudici cordis intrabit casam  
 monstrans honorem trinitatis hospitae.  
 Animam deinde Spiritus complexibus  
 pie maritam, prolis expertem diu,  
 faciet perenni fertilem de semine,  
 tunc sera dotem possidens puerpera  
 herede digno patris inplebit domum.

(*Psych. Praefatio* 59-68)

*Soon Christ himself, who is the true priest,  
 born of a father high and ineffable,  
 offering food to the blessed victors  
 will enter the humble cottage of the pure heart  
 and show to his hostess the glory of the Trinity.  
 Then the Spirit by its embraces  
 in a holy way will make the soul a bride—  
 for a long time having been without offspring,  
 now pregnant with an eternal seed;  
 then holding its dowry, finally in labor,  
 the soul will fill the mansion with an heir worthy of its father.*

This concentration on spiritual children reflects the mystical teachings of Plato's Diotima. "There are spiritual people," she instructs the young Socrates, "who prefer to conceive in the soul rather than in the body those things which are proper to conceive in the soul and give birth to. What then is proper? Wisdom and general virtue. To this group belong all poets who are creative and whatever craftsmen are reputed to have found a

better way."<sup>136</sup> Diotima continues: "Perceiving Beauty and joining it, the spiritual man goes into labor-pains and brings forth those things which long ago he conceived."<sup>137</sup> The result is not only that virtuous actions are born, but a love stronger than between natural parents is established, because the children are more beautiful and immortal.<sup>138</sup> Diotima concludes: "And each would prefer that such children rather than human children be born to him—indeed looking at Homer and Hesiod and the other poets and envying their virtues. What offspring the poets leave behind themselves, such bestow upon them eternal glory and fame."<sup>139</sup> The *Praefatio* suggests that the *Psychomachia* is Prudentius' child of virtue.<sup>140</sup>

The main section of the poem opens with an invocation and panegyric of Christ (verses 1-20), who is the kind leader (*bone ductor*) and general (verses 14-17).<sup>141</sup> This is followed by an explanation of the moral

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<sup>136</sup>οἱ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν—εἰσὶ γὰρ οὖν, ἔφη, οἱ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κυοῦσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν, ἃ ψυχῇ προσήκει καὶ κῆσαι καὶ τεκεῖν· τί οὖν προσήκει; φρόνησιν τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν—ὧν δὴ εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ πάντες γεννήτορες καὶ τῶν δημιουργῶν ὅσοι λέγονται εὐρετικοὶ εἶναι (*Symposium* 209a1-5).

<sup>137</sup>ἀπτόμενος γὰρ οἶμαι τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ὁμιλῶν αὐτῷ, ἃ πάλαι ἐκύει τίκτει καὶ γεννᾷ (*Symposium* 209c2-3).

<sup>138</sup>καὶ παρὼν καὶ ἀπὸν μεμνημένος, καὶ τὸ γεννηθὲν συνεκτρέφει κοινῇ μετ' ἐκείνου, ὥστε πολὺ μείζω κοινωνίαν τῆς τῶν παιδῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ τοιοῦτοι ἴσχουσι καὶ φιλίαν βεβαιωτέραν, ἅτε καλλιόνων καὶ ἀθανατωτέρων παιδῶν κεκοινωνηκότες (*Symposium* 209c3-7).

<sup>139</sup>καὶ πᾶς ἂν δέξαιτο ἑαυτῷ τοιοῦτους παῖδας μᾶλλον γεγονέναι ἢ τοὺς ἀνθρώπινους, καὶ εἰς Ὅμηρον ἀποβλέψας καὶ Ἡσίοδον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιητὰς τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς ζηλῶν, οἷα ἔκγονα ἑαυτῶν καταλείπουσιν, ἃ ἐκείνοις ἀθάνατον κλέος καὶ μνήμην παρέχεται αὐτὰ τοιαῦτα ὄντα. (*Symposium* 209a1-d4)

<sup>140</sup>The same motif—in union with the Absolute giving birth to spiritual, eternal offspring—is evident in the New Testament. Christ said: ὁ μένων ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ οὗτος φέρει καρπὸν πολὺν . . . καὶ ἔθηκα ὑμᾶς ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑπάγητε καὶ καρπὸν φέρητε καὶ ὁ καρπὸς ὑμῶν μένη. (Jo. 15:5-16). The images in the final verses of Prudentius' *Preface*, however, show a closer relationship to Plato than to Scripture.

<sup>141</sup>It should be pointed out that although the body of the poem is composed in

significance of the coming battle. Then Prudentius launches into an epic and often brutally graphic description of the defeat of seven vices.<sup>142</sup> Prudentius' first six vices are:<sup>143</sup> *Veterum Cultura Deorum, Libido, Ira, Superbia, Luxuria, Avaritia*. They are matched and defeated by the corresponding virtues: *Fides, Pudicitia, Patientia, Mens Humilis* and *Spes, Sobrietas, and Ratio*. After the initial victory, psalms and mystic songs are sung. Calm peace reigns, and the soul's work of preparing for Christ's advent begins.<sup>144</sup> The peace, however, is momentarily disturbed by a seventh, disguised vice,<sup>145</sup> who is quickly discovered.<sup>146</sup> It was Heresy (the

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dactylic hexameters, the *Praefatio* consists of iambic trimeters. This is the same two-fold design of many Dioscorian encomia. The most direct influence upon Dioscorus, however, was the encomiastic tradition, in which it was common to have an iambic prologue.

<sup>142</sup>It is difficult not to see this battle in light of Evagrian spirituality; and direct influence of Evagrius on Prudentius is a possibility. Within two years of Evagrius' death (399), Rufinus published Latin translations of Evagrius' works (Bamberger, xxviii). John Cassian, another disciple of Evagrius, also brought his master's doctrines to the West (*ibid.*, li). Prudentius and Evagrius, however, may have shared the same source. Evagrius' own classification of eight passions was probably derived from Origen, who had a significant influence on this epic; see P. Beatrice, "L'allegoria nella Psychomachia di Prudenzio," *Studia Patavina* 18 (1971): 25-73. Rufinus translated Origen's works into Latin.

<sup>143</sup>Prudentius' vices may have been influenced by Servius' interpretation of Book 6, verse 714, of Vergil's *Aeneid*. See A. and C. Guillaumont, *Traité pratique*, vol. 1, p. 80 and note 3.

<sup>144</sup>The two-fold progression which distinguishes between defeating the vices and preparing for contemplation is similar to Evagrius' distinction between the active (ascetic) life and the contemplative life. See, for example, *De oratione* 83 (M.79.1185B): Ἡ μὲν ψαλμωδία τὰ πάθη κατευνάζει, καὶ τὴν ακρασίαν τοῦ σώματος ἡρεμεῖν ἀπεργάζεται. Ἡ δὲ προσευχὴ ἐνεργεῖν παρασκευάζει τὸν νοῦν τὴν ἰδίαν ἐνέργειαν. *Psalm-singing calms the passions, and causes the incontinence of the body to be still. Prayer accustoms the soul to energizing its own energy.*

<sup>145</sup>The situation again recalls Evagrian spirituality, in which the contemplative stage is distinguished but intimately connected with the ascetic; and even the monk who has received the gift of pure prayer can be deceived by temptation (*cf. De oratione* 69, 72).

<sup>146</sup>Here again, the correspondence with Evagrian spirituality is close. Discernment of evil is a spiritual gift which comes near the end of ascetic refinement. Bamberger, xlv and note 88; *cf. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 26.*

alias of Discord) who attacked and wounded the mystic as soon as he had entered into the contemplative phase:<sup>147</sup>

Ventum erat ad fauces portae castrensis, ubi artum  
liminis introitum bifori dant cardine claustra.

.....

Inter confertos cuneos Concordia forte,  
dum stipata pedem iam tutis moenibus infert,  
excipit occultum uitii latitantis ab ictu  
mucronem laeuo in latere. (*Psych.* 665-73)

*They had reached the opening of the camp entrance, where  
the barring gate with two hinged doors provides narrow access.*

.....

*In the midst of the squadrons, which were pressed together,  
Concordia by chance,*

*although she was surrounded, as soon as she places her foot  
inside the safe walls,*

*receives from the thrust of a hiding vice*

*a concealed dagger in her left side.*

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<sup>147</sup>Evagrius was famous for his battles against heretics. Bamberger observed in Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*: "Evagrius was considered to possess discretion (which at that time meant especially the discernment of spirits) to a remarkable degree. Stories were told about his verbal battles with the demons in which he came off victorious. In particular he was once assaulted by the demons representing the most destructive heresies of his time: the demon of Arianism, that of Eunomianism and that of Apollinarianism. His gifts were enough to bring him off the victor. He made occasional trips to Alexandria where he engaged heretics in disputation with an equal display of the powers that he received from the Lord."

This is not the place to try to determine if the similarities between Prudentius and Evagrius were due to direct influence or shared sources; there are too many correspondences, however, to ignore them. Smith (p. 21) argued that there was no monastic influence upon Prudentius.

Once *Fides* and *Concordia* have again established internal harmony, the dominating mood is peace:

*Pax plenum uirtutis opus, pax summa laborum,  
pax belli exacti pretium est pretiumque pericli,  
sidera pace uigent, consistunt terrea pace.*

*Nil placitum sine pace deo.*<sup>148</sup> (*Psych.* 769-72)

*Peace is the final achievement of virtue; peace, the end of its work;  
peace is the reward for the waged war; and the reward for the peril;  
the stars flourish in peace; the lands stand firm in peace.*

*Without peace, nothing is pleasing to God.*

Prudentius' emphasis on peace here and in the following verses is significant because he may be the only early Byzantine poet to match Dioscorus' emphasis on peace. For example, Dioscorus' poem H.9 begins:

Θήβη πᾶσα χόρευσον, εἰρήνην δέχου·  
οὐ γὰρ θεωρήσεις κακουργικὴν ἔτι,  
οὐ βαρβάρων δέος, φιλοπραγμόνων κρίσιν.  
πάντη γὰρ εἰρήνη θεόπνευστος ῥέει. (H.9.1-4)

*All of Thebes dance! receive peace!*

*For no longer will you see evil deeds,*

*nor fear of barbarians, nor judgement of scoundrels.*

*For everywhere flows divinely inspired peace!*

Θήβη πᾶσα χόρευσον, εἰρήνην δέχου is one of the most frequently occurring verses in Dioscorus' poetry (see H.3.9, 5.53, 10.1, 11.1, al.). It is often the first

<sup>148</sup>Prudentius continues: "Non munus ad aram / cum cupias offerre probat, si turbida fratrem / mens inpacati sub pectoris oderit antro." Compare Evagrius' *De oratione* 21 (cf. 22, 24, 27, 145, 147, etc.). Evagrius' and Prudentius' imagery is derived from Mt. 5:24.

verse of a poem (H.9.1, 10.1, 11.1). And even when Dioscorus wrote *EIPHNH* on the papyrus sheet, he sometimes gave it special emphasis with a cross or extra spacing.

In the *Psychomachia*, the mystic now builds a New Jerusalem in his soul (*mens* = νοῦς).<sup>149</sup> The building of the New Jerusalem in the soul of the mystic is symbolized by the building of a temple modeled on the city plan of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypsis Joannis (Apoc. 21:1-22:5).<sup>150</sup> Like the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypsis, the temple in Prudentius is refulgent with precious stones and metals. Each of the twelve doors (each inscribed in gold with the name of an apostle) is cut from a single gem. There are twelve gems set into the walls in order to reflect the light from the doors; these gems consist of chrysolite, sapphire, beryl, amethyst, jasper, and topaz. Between these gems are set emeralds, shining like green grass in the spring. This emphasis on precious stones and metals corresponds not only to the Apocalypsis, but also to the imagery in Dioscorus' poem *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F. This Dioscorian allegory (which is discussed in detail in chapter 2) is also closely related to the Apocalypsis.

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<sup>149</sup>See Christian Gnülka's thorough discussion of Prudentius' allegory in *Studien zur Psychomachie des Prudentius* (Wiesbaden, 1963); see especially chapter 4, "Der Tempelbau," 83-128 (a discussion and commentary of verses 823-87).

<sup>150</sup>In the Apocalypsis, there is no temple; God and the Lamb are the temple, and their throne is placed in the city. The variation allowed Prudentius to tap the rich literary and biblical traditions of the temple, including the temple of Wisdom, and the temple of Solomon; for example, as the temple of Solomon was built to receive the Ark of the Covenant, so the temple in the soul is constructed for the advent of the *Logos* (verses 811-15). For the literary and biblical sources behind Prudentius' depiction of the temple, see Gnülka, 83-84; Smith, 200-06. Gnülka sees here (and in other Prudentian poems) a definite statement supporting Christian spirituality in contrast to temples, statues, and icons; see pp. 84-91. Whether his *templum pectoris* is condemning Christian as well as pagan and Hebraic materialism is not clear, because the *Psychomachia* is "in erster Linie ein allegorisches Gedicht, kein polemisches" (p. 89).

The purpose of the battle against the vices and the construction of the temple was to prepare for the mystical union with the *Logos*. This is not the first time that the mystic has had a mystical encounter with Christ. The concept of repeated mystical visions is suggested by the following statement of *Fides*:

Surgat et in nostris templum uenerabile castris,  
omnipotens cuius sanctorum sancta reuisat!  
Nam quid terrigenas ferro pepulisse falangas  
culparum prodest, hominis si filius arce  
aetheris inlapsus purgati corporis urbem  
intret inornatam templi splendentis egenus? (*Psych.* 814-19)

*Let a sacred temple rise up in our camp too,  
so that the Almighty might come back to his holy of holies!*

*What is the use of having repulsed with the sword  
the titanic battalions*

*of sins, if the Son of Man*

*having glided from the vault of heaven enters  
into the city of a body purified*

*but unadorned, and he in need of a splendid temple?*

The concept of *the return of Christ (reuisat)* is developed at the end of the poem, where Prudentius discusses the ups and downs of the mystical life; the mystical union is followed by a fall into imperfection, and then again by union:

O quotiens animam uitiorum peste repulsa  
sensimus incaluisse deo, quotiens tepefactum  
caeleste ingenium post gaudia candida taetro

cessisse stomacho! Feruent bella horrida, feruent ... (*Psych.* 899-903).

*Oh how often did we sense our soul, once the fever of the vices  
was beaten,*

*become inflamed by God; how often after these brilliant joys  
from heaven, did we feel that our nature, grown cool, had sunk  
to base anger. The frightful battles are vehement, vehement ...*

Prudentius' concept of repeated mystical encounters corresponds to Porphyry's report on Plotinus, who had four such encounters while Porphyry knew him. The same concept can explain why Dioscorus wrote a series of poems describing what seems to be several mystical encounters.

The encounter with Christ is sudden and unexpected. Prudentius describes the sanctuary and the pillars which uphold it; suddenly in the next verse, *Sapientia* is sitting upon the throne in the sanctuary:

Hoc residet solio pollens Sapientia et omne  
consilium regni celsa disponit ab aula  
tutandique hominis leges sub corde retractat. (*Psych.* 875-79)

*Here powerful Wisdom sits down upon the throne; and  
from her high court she dispenses every measure to the kingdom  
and considers in her heart laws to protect man.*

Prudentius makes clear that *Sapientia* is to be identified with the *Logos*.<sup>151</sup>

There are three facets of this final mystical union which relate to the poetry of Dioscorus. 1) The *Logos* as *Sapientia* corresponds to Dioscorus'

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<sup>151</sup>For an examination of the evidence that *Sapientia* is here equated with the *Logos*, see Smith, 194-99. That Christ comes to the mystic as *Sapientia* adheres to Evagrian ascetic-mystical theology (which follows the tradition of Origen and Clement of Alexandria), in which the mystical union is depicted as γῶσις. In contrast, John Climacus depicts the union as Ἀγάπη (Step 30).



frequent epithet for his addressee: *μητις ἀνάκτων the wisdom of kings*

(H.2.1, 5.13, 6.16, 13.7).<sup>152</sup> 2) That *Sapientia* is represented as a ruler relates to the imagery in Dioscorus' poems, such as in H.1.10-12:

[ἤλυθεν] οὐ κατὰ [κ]όσμον ἀληθέα πάντα ν[ο]μεύει[ν].

[κλεινότη]ατον δ' ἀτίταλλε θ[εοφρ]αδέεσσιν βουλαῖς

[σώφρον]ος εὐσεβίης θεοδοσίου πάνσοφον ἄσθμα ...

*He came not in a worldly way to govern all true things.*

*He tended*<sup>153</sup> *with his divinely spoken counsels*

*the all-wise flower of temperate god-given piety.*<sup>154</sup>

3) The Prudentian image of *Sapientia* as law maker ("tutandique hominis leges sub corde retractat") relates to a frequent metaphor in the Dioscorian encomia, which likens the addressee to a νέος Σόλων (H.3.12, 5.59, 11.5).

This discussion of the *Psychomachia* has pointed out several important similarities to Dioscorus' poetry. When one considers the popularity of the *Psychomachia* in the sixth century, it seems possible that Dioscorus (who had a working knowledge of Latin) was influenced by this mystical allegory.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>The *kings* here could represent the martyrs, who traditionally receive crowns from Christ.

<sup>153</sup>Dioscorus' ν[ο]μεύει[ν], which means literally *to act as a shepherd*, recalls the symbol of Christ as shepherd (see Nonnus *Paraphrasis in Joannis evangelium* 10.38-40); and as lamb (see Apoc. 5:6 and passim).

<sup>154</sup>Εὐσεβία, like *Fides* in the *Psychomachia*, can mean *correct belief* in contrast to heresy; see Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomium* 12. If θεοδοσίου is a proper name (as it is printed by Heitsch), the translation is: "of the temperate piety of Theodosius."

<sup>155</sup>It is likely that Dioscorus was familiar with Latin as both a spoken and written language; how extensive that familiarity was, however, cannot be determined from the surviving archive. He may have been the owner of a Latin-Greek-Coptic glossary, in which the Latin words were written in Greek characters according to their sound. J. Kramer, *Glossaria Bilinguia in Papyris et Membranis Reperta* (Bonn, 1983), 97-108; see also H. I. Bell and W. E. Crum, "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," *Aegyptus* 6 (Milan, 1925): 181. Among Dioscorus'

*Concealed Allegory: Proclus and Musaeus*

What Prudentius in his *Praefatio* did with the story of Abraham reflects a hermeneutical practice common in the late Antique - early Byzantine period. Interpreters attempted to show that mystical experiences had been described on a recondite level of meaning in ancient pagan and Christian literature. Among Jewish and Christian exegetes, this critical practice can be traced at least as far back as Philo of Alexandria, and was extensively developed by Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. Origen's writings were fundamental in establishing the viability and reward in searching for mystical significance in *every* part of Scripture. According to Origen, every episode in the Bible had three levels of meaning: literal, moral, and

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papers were also found, according to Bell, "drafts of what may be translations from the Latin of Imperial rescripts. If this theory of their nature (which is in dispute) is correct, they bespeak in Dioscorus a knowledge of Latin which is natural enough in view of his education and profession." H. I. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian, *JHS* 62 (1942): 27. For a possible loan word from Vergil in Dioscorus' Greek-Coptic glossary, see Bell-Crum, 181.

Latin poetry had a noticeable affect on Greek poetry in Egypt during the early Byzantine Period. For the popularity of Latin in Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries, see Alan Cameron, "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," *Historia* 14 (1965): 494-96. Cameron is admittedly uncertain in his estimate of Dioscorus' Latin abilities. Nonnus in his *Dionysiaca* borrowed from Ovid and from Claudian's Latin poetry. See F. Vian, ed. and trans., *Nonnos de Panopolis: Les Dionysiaques*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1976), xlvi-xlvii and notes; Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 20 and the bibliography in note 7. The effect of Latin on Greek poetry was also felt in Asia Minor; Quintus of Smyrna borrowed from Vergil, Ovid, and possibly from Livy, Seneca, and Cicero; see R. Keydell, "Seneca und Cicero bei Quintus von Smyrna," *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 4 (1949-50): 81-88. Claudian wrote fluent poetry in both Latin and Greek. For a discussion of his Greek poetry, see Cameron, *Claudian*, 7ff. His Greek and Latin poems have been edited by J. Hall, *Claudii Claudiani Carmina* (Leipzig, 1985). For Claudian's own allegories, see Cameron, *Claudian*, 276-79.

For the mobility of poets in the early Byzantine period, see Cameron, "Wandering Poets," 484-509; for the mobility of poetry, see *ibid.*, 502-03. Cameron noted (p. 503): "Copies of Claudian's *In Rufinum* and *In Eutropium* reached St. Jerome's cell in Bethlehem within months of their first performance in Milan."

mystical;<sup>156</sup> the mystical level, however, was meant only for Christians who were spiritually advanced. The reward for exegesis was that the critical process of searching for the mystical meaning, when guided by the Holy Spirit, could turn into a mystical experience.<sup>157</sup> Gregory of Nyssa developed the art of allegorical interpretation to a high degree; his commentaries on both the Song of Songs and Moses' experiences on Mount Sinai are classic examples of using allegorical interpretations to describe the mystical union.<sup>158</sup> The critical efforts by Jewish and Christian exegetes paralleled similar efforts made by Neoplatonists. These two traditions were far from mutually exclusive;<sup>159</sup> while Christians made use of exegetic techniques developed by a long tradition of Greek hermeneutics, Neoplatonists were often prompted (sometimes in a competitive-type spirit) by Christian spirituality.<sup>160</sup> The most common pieces of pagan literature to undergo allegorical interpretation were, of course, the Homeric epics.<sup>161</sup> The

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<sup>156</sup>Hanson, 235-58.

<sup>157</sup>Louth observed (p. 64): "It seems to me that a large part of the content of *enoptike* [contemplation of God] is the discovery of 'spiritual', 'theological' meanings in Scripture through allegory. In this engagement with Scripture, Origen enters more and more deeply into communion with God—and leads others into this communion (something we learn from Gregory Thaumaturgus' *Address to Origen*)."

<sup>158</sup>The bibliography on Gregory of Nyssa has become extensive; see M. Altenburger and F. Mann, *Bibliographie zu Gregor von Nyssa* (Leiden, 1988), esp. 319 (*Allegorie*). Völker offers the best analysis of the mystical aspects of Gregory's exegeses; *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 171ff. See also J. Daniélou, ed., *Grégoire de Nysse: Contemplation sur la vie de Moïse*, (Paris, 1942), 9-46; idem, *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1954); idem, "Mystique de la Ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (1953): 1872-1885.

<sup>159</sup>Lamberton, 44-82.

<sup>160</sup>Wallis, 155.

<sup>161</sup>Allegorical interpretations of the Homeric epics may have begun as early as the sixth century B.C. (Lamberton, 31-43). The Derveni papyrus of Macedonia shows that as

allegorical interpretations of Homer fell primarily into three classes: physical,<sup>162</sup> moral,<sup>163</sup> and mystical. There survive mystical interpretations of the Homeric epics by the pagan philosophers Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus, and also by Clement of Alexandria. Mystical interpretations of pagan and Christian literature which does not obviously contain an allegory inspired a new genre of creative literature: concealed allegory.<sup>164</sup> It is to this genre that Musaeus and Dioscorus belong. The interpretations by Proclus are particularly important for this study, because they seem to have influenced Dioscorus' creation of three distinct kinds of verses: literal, moral, and mystical.<sup>165</sup> Proclus may also have influenced Dioscorus' image of himself as inspired poet; he provided crucial information about the quality of the mystical experience of inspired poets.

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early as the middle of the fourth century B.C., allegorical interpretations were being made of Orphic hexameter poems (*ibid.*, ix). See L. Alderink, *Creation and Salvation in Ancient Orphism* (Chico, California, 1981), *passim*; M. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), 68-115.

<sup>162</sup> The divinities represented natural phenomenon. Such an interpretation can be seen in the Porphyrian scholion on the *Theomachy* at *Iliad* XX. See Lamberton, 32.

<sup>163</sup> See the interpretation of the *Odyssey* by Heraclitus.

<sup>164</sup> For the differencess between concealed allegory, explicated allegory, and transparent allegory, see Pépin, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie*, 131-53.

<sup>165</sup> Unlike Origen's attitude toward Scripture, Proclus did not believe that every verse in the Homeric epics had a deeper mystical meaning. The epics' depiction of the Greeks' attack on Troy and their ultimate return was, when viewed generally, a representation of souls' attraction to the fragmented sphere of corporal reality and their return to spiritual unity (*In Rep.* 1.175.15-21). Plotinus suggested a similar interpretation of the allegorical meaning of the Homeric epics (see Lamberton, 199-200). The majority of the epics' verses, however, did not have a deeper mystical meaning; they simply reflected (in an accurate or distorted fashion) the corporal world, or explained laws of nature, or prescribed ways of behaving. Only those episodes which demanded it were interpreted by Proclus as mystical allegory. It is Proclus' theory which more closely resembles Dioscorus' practice.

**Proclus.** Proclus (412 - 485)<sup>166</sup> was a late Neoplatonist, and his interpretations of the Homeric epics embody a long tradition of pagan allegorical interpretations.<sup>167</sup> What distinguishes Proclus is that he was very systematic in organizing his predecessors' and his own interpretations, and in showing their relationship to a larger structure of meaning: the mystical theology and cosmology of late Neoplatonism.<sup>168</sup> Proclus' theory of the three kinds of poetry is directly related to his mystical cosmology,<sup>169</sup> which is a development of that presented by Plotinus. His cosmology presents a structure of the universe which is analogous to a diamond (two triangles placed bottom to bottom) of decreasing and then increasing simplicity.<sup>170</sup> Quite generally, the structure is as follows. Transcendent above all and not partaking in Being is The One. Below The One is a Monad (μονάς, μονάδος, *unit*), which does partake in Being, and a Dyad (δύαξ, δυάδος, *the number two, a double*), which together with the Monad is the source of all creation. Below these two are many henads (ἑνάξ, ἐνάδος, *unit*), which are associated with the Olympian gods of Greek mythology. All of the above are noetic; that is, they have no corporal bodies. Each henad, however, has a long procession of angels and demons, who have increasing corporeality and decreasing spirituality. Any member of the entire procession of an

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<sup>166</sup>For the dates of his life, see Wallis, 138.

<sup>167</sup>Proclus was presenting many of the ideas of Syrianus, who himself was dependent upon the allegorical traditions before him: Neoplatonic, Platonic, Stoic, and Pythagorean. The most complete analysis of Proclus' dependence upon Syrianus is by Sheppard, esp. 39-103.

<sup>168</sup>Lamberton, 164.

<sup>169</sup>Lamberton, 188-97; Sheppard, 201-02.

<sup>170</sup>Lamberton, 163; Wallis, 152; L. Rosán, "Proclus," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 6 (New York, 1967), 481.

Olympian god can be called by the name of that Olympian god. Thus when Diomedes wounded the hand of Aphrodite (*Iliad* 5.334-417), he attacked the lowest manifestation of that deity, which was not far above human nature. Each human belongs to the procession of a particular henad (Proclus belonged to the procession of Hermes); and each human soul has three facets or *lives* available to it. At its highest development (τὸ ἕν), according to Plotinus, the soul can live in union with The One; according to later Neoplatonists, mystical union was becoming more and more limited to the Monad. On the next level (νοῦς), the soul can live on the noetic plane with the henads. On the next level (ψυχή), the soul lives on the lowest plane of existence: that of imagination, passions, and matter. Below the human soul, matter becomes more and more simplified (which accounts for the second [upside-down] triangle).

Proclus observed that in accordance with the three *lives* available to the human soul, poets produce three kinds of verse, depending on which level of existence they are experiencing. Homer in his epics composed all three kinds of poetry. The lowest level of poetry is basically mimetic (*In Rep.* 179.15-32);<sup>171</sup> it reproduces with greater or less accuracy the world of the senses or imagination, and one of its principle effects is to stir emotions. Examples of this kind of poetry in the *Iliad* are the scenes when the heroes are fighting, debating, or speaking according to their individual personalities (*In Rep.* 192.28-193.4). The second level of poetry reflects a spiritual life dominated by the νοῦς (*In Rep.* 179.3-15). The poet's soul has freed itself

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<sup>171</sup>All citations regarding Proclus' discussions of Homer and the three lives of the soul are to W. Kroll, ed., *Proclus Diadochus: In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1899; repr. Amsterdam, 1965). Cf. the French translation and commentary by A. Festugière, *Proclus: Commentaire sur la République*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1970).

from the physical senses, passions, concepts, and images, but it is not yet in union with The One (or Monad). Poetry which reflects this stage of spiritual development is didactic and instructional; it speaks of intelligent moderation (νοερᾶς εὐμετρίας), prudence, and other virtues (φρονήσεώς τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς προτείνοντα τὴν μετουσίαν τοῖς εἰ πεφυκόσιν). It speaks with wisdom, knowing the essence of things (τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων). This type of poetry can be found in Homer where the poet explains the nature of the spirit of Heracles (*Od.* 11.601-26), whom Odysseus met among the dead (*In Rep.* 172.10-21; 193.4-9). Proclus said that Phemius, the singer in the home of Odysseus, is an example of this kind of poet, because Phemius had knowledge of divine and human things (κατὰ τὴν γνῶσιν μάλιστα τῶν τε θείων καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων *In Rep.* 194.12-13).<sup>172</sup>

The kind of poetry which relates to the highest life of the soul (*In Rep.* 177.15-23) was the most important for Proclus, and in several places he went into extensive detail describing it.<sup>173</sup> Proclus wrote:

ἢ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀκροτάτη καὶ πλήρης τῶν θείων ἀγαθῶν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐνιδρύουσα τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς αἰτίοις τῶν ὄντων, κατὰ τινὰ τε ἔνωσιν ἄρρητον εἰς ταῦτον ἄγουσα τῷ πληροῦντι τὸ πληρούμενον, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀύλωσ καὶ ἀναφῶς ὑποστρωννύουσα πρὸς τὴν ἔλλαμψιν, τὸ δὲ προκαλουμένη πρὸς τὴν μετάδοσιν τοῦ φωτός, «μιγνυμένων δ' ὀχετῶν πυρὸς ἀφθίτου ἔργα τελοῦσα» κατὰ τὸ λόγιον. ἓνα δὲ σύνδεσμον θεῖον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ μετεχομένου καὶ μετέχοντος καὶ σύγκρασιν ἐνοποιόν, ὅλον μὲν τὸ καταδεέστερον ἐδράζουσα ἐν τῷ κρείττονι, τὸ δὲ θειότερον μόνον ἐνεργεῖν ὑπεσταλμένου

<sup>172</sup>Proclus' reference here is to *Od.* 1.337-38; correct Kroll 194.17 and Lambertson, 191.

<sup>173</sup>Sheppard, 182. My discussion of Proclus' theory of poetic inspiration and the poetry it produced follows Sheppard's analysis of the topic; see esp. pp. 171-82.

τοῦ καταδεεστέρου καὶ ἀποκρύπτοντος ἐν τῷ κρείττονι τὴν σφετέραν  
 ιδιότητα παρασκευάζουσα. αὕτη δὴ οὖν μανία μὲν ἐστὶν σωφροσύνης  
 κρείττων ὡς συνελόντι φάναι, κατ' αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ θεῖον μέτρον ἀφορίζεται. (*In  
 Rep.* 1.178.11-26)

*This [poetry] is the highest and full of good things, and it instills into the  
 soul the very causes of things; and through some ineffable unity it leads  
 that which is filled to that which fills it. [This poetry] subjects the former,  
 which is immaterial and without light, to the illumination; and it calls  
 upon the latter to share its light. According to the oracle [Chaldaean  
 Oracles 66 (Des Places)]: "It accomplishes the work of channels  
 connecting imperishable fire." [This poetry] produces one divine  
 connection between that which is sharing and that which is being shared  
 and produces one unifying mixture. It completely establishes that which  
 is inferior in that which is superior; and it brings about that only the  
 more divine is functioning, while the inferior is obscured and hides its  
 identity in the greater. This mania is superior to self-control—to say in  
 conclusion—and is defined only by the divine measure itself.<sup>174</sup>*

The above passage is unclear as to whether the poetry leads the *poet* or the *audience* to the mystical union. Sheppard (pp. 171-72), in her examination of Proclus and his Platonic sources (especially *Phaedrus*), argued that *both* were intended: "[Proclus] is, however, interested in the effect of poetry on the audience, again following Plato, and although his types of poetry are primarily distinguished by the nature of their subject-matter, the effect on the audience affords a secondary means of distinction."

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<sup>174</sup>Cf. Festugière, 198.



With regard to the experience of the poet, Proclus indicated a distinction of grade, not quality, between the mystical experiences of an inspired poet such as Homer, a mystic such as Plotinus, and an exegete. Sheppard observed (p. 82):

He considers inspiration a type of supra-rational cognition, of the same order as mystical experience, although at a lower level than true mystical union.... Proclus' theory of mysticism involves the belief that there are grades of mystical cognition. The ecstasy of the mystic is the highest of these grades and differs in degree rather than in kind from the lower grades such as poetic inspiration and the inspiration of the exegete. In mystical union and poetic inspiration alike both personal effort and divine assistance are involved: inspiration is not thought of as total possession, nor is mystical union possible without the help of the gods.

The soul of the true mystic is not completely absorbed in The One (or the Monad), because the mystical union requires the cooperation of his soul. Likewise, the inspired poet is not completely possessed; he needs to maintain the ability to compose allegory. It is this latter type which best describes the mystical experiences which have been proposed for Dioscorus of Aphrodito. Each encomium as a whole and in part reveals a union with Christ and a "supra-rational cognition"; but the level of the experience was probably not as high for Dioscorus as, for example, Evagrius.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Proclus' description (as interpreted by Sheppard) of the mystical experience of the poet corresponds to Evelyn Underhill's description of the mystical stage she called "Illumination of the Self"; *Mysticism*, 232-65. It is this stage of mysticism which is responsible for great poetry (p. 233): "The mystic has now a veritable foothold in that transcendental world into which they penetrate now and again: enjoys a certain fellowship—not yet union—with the 'great life of the All,' and thence draws strength and peace. Really and actually, as one whose novitiate is finished, he has 'entered the Inner Choir, where the Soul joineth hands and danceth with Sophia, the Divine Wisdom': and, keeping time with the great rhythms of the spiritual universe, feels that he has found his place. . . . Many a great painter, philosopher, or poet, perhaps every inspired musician, has known this indescribable inebriation of Reality in those moments of transcendence in which his masterpieces were conceived." Underhill (p. 239) believes that only artists can give a sense of the simultaneity of this mystical experience: "When essential goodness, truth, and beauty—Light, Life, and Love—are apprehended by the heart, whether the heart be that of poet, painter, lover, or saint, that apprehension can only be communicated in a living, that is to

According to Proclus, what the inspired poet writes is mystical allegory; and he gives many examples from the Homeric epics and interpreted their mystical meaning. A review of Proclus' discussion of the Homeric episodes is beyond the scope of this study.<sup>176</sup> It needs to be pointed out, however, that the allegorical interpretations are from the literal sense.<sup>177</sup> This distance can be explained by three facets of the early Byzantine theory of allegory adopted by both pagan and Christian interpreters. First, according to Proclus, the literal meaning of a mystical allegory is a screen, a *παραπέτασμα*,<sup>178</sup> meant to conceal metaphysical truths from the profane. This concept was later developed by Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>179</sup> Second, according to Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, symbols which have no conceptual connection with what they represent are the best for depicting

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say, an artistic form. The natural mind is conscious only of succession: the special *differentia* of the mystic is the power of apprehending simultaneity. In the peculiarities of the illuminated consciousness we recognize the effort of the mind to bridge the gap between Simultaneity and Succession." Underhill's list of three characteristics (pp. 240-41) distinguishes this mystical experience from the highest union: 1) There is a heightened awareness of the spiritual senses, giving rise to such phenomena as visions. 2) There is a convergence of the physical and spiritual senses; "the self perceives an added significance and reality in all natural things." 3) There is "a joyous apprehension of the Absolute." Yet the self remains distinct; the soul contemplates God rather than is immersed in God. As such, it is "the 'betrothal' rather than the 'marriage' of the soul." See also pp. 279-93 ("Vision").

<sup>176</sup>See especially Proclus' extended commentary on Demodocus' song of Ares and Aphrodite (*In Rep.* 141.1-143.16). Proclus believed that Demodocus, the Phaeacian bard, was a self-portrait of the artist in his mystic phase. See Lamberton's (pp.197-232) and Sheppard's (pp. 48-78) surveys of Proclus' interpretations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

<sup>177</sup>For the rôle of symbols, icons, and analogy in Proclus' interpretations, see J. Dillon, "Image, Symbol and Analogy: Three Basic Concepts of Neoplatonic Allegorical Exegesis," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Harris (Norfolk, Virginia, 1976), 247-62. See also Sheppard, 196-202; Lamberton, 214-15.

<sup>178</sup>For Proclus' use of this term, see Lamberton, 185 note 78. See the discussion by Sheppard (pp. 145-61) of the relationship between Proclus' hermeneutics and theurgy.

<sup>179</sup>See R. Roques, G. Heil, M. Gandillac, *Denys l'Aréopagite: La hiérarchie céleste*, 2nd ed., (Paris, 1970), 77 notes 1-2.

metaphysical truths.<sup>180</sup> This literary theory of dissimilar symbols is closely connected to apophatic (negative) mysticism, which connection is stated clearly by Pseudo-Dionysius in his essay *Celestial Hierarchy*:

ὥς ἡ κρυφία καὶ ἱερατικὴ παράδοσις ὑφηγήσατο, τὸ μὲν οὐκ εἶναι κατὰ τι τῶν ὄντων αὐτὴν ἀληθεύομεν, ἀγνοοῦμεν δὲ τὴν ὑπερούσιον αὐτῆς καὶ ἀνόητον καὶ ἄρρητον ἀοριστίαν. Εἰ τοίνυν αἱ μὲν ἀποφάσεις ἐπὶ τῶν θείων ἀληθεῖς, αἱ δὲ καταφάσεις ἀνάρμοστοι τῇ κρυφίῳ τῶν ἀπορρήτων, οἰκειότερα μᾶλλον ἐστὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀοράτων ἢ διὰ τῶν ἀνομοίων ἀναπλάσεων ἐκφαντορία.<sup>181</sup>

*As the secret and hieratic tradition indicated, we know accurately that God [ἡ θεαρχία] is not like something which exists, but we are ignorant of his transcendent, incomprehensible, and ineffable infinity. If then negations are true with respect to divine things, but affirmations are not suited to the secrecy of the mysteries, a manifestation through dissimilar images is much more appropriate for invisible things.*

A third reason for the distance between the literal and the mystical level of meaning is aesthetics. The distance between the two levels, the lack of a close correspondence or a tight cohesion—this creates tension and suspense. What's more, the reader, by slowly formulating the meaning and the structure of the deeper level, partakes in the creative process of the

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<sup>180</sup>Sheppard, 196-201; Roques-Heil-Gandillac, 79. It must be kept in mind here that for Proclus, unlike more recent literary critics, allegory was not differentiated from symbolism; in fact, symbolism (and analogy) were the tools of mystical allegory. For a review and bibliography of critical theories which distinguish between symbolism and allegory, see Dawson, 11-17; see also Pépin, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie*, 15-50.

<sup>181</sup>Roques-Heil-Gandillac 141.3-7.

allegory.<sup>182</sup> Even more important, through the effort of trying to figure out the meaning of the symbols, the reader is drawn into the anagogic return to the transcendent One. It is in this way that the highest level of poetry acts as a channel of the imperishable fire not only for the inspired poet but for his audience as well.

Proclus and Hermias were both pupils of Syrianus (d. c. 437) in Alexandria. Proclus eventually became head of the Academy in Athens, Hermias, head of the university in Alexandria. Hermias' successor, also a student of Proclus, was Ammonius (c. 435 - c. 526); and a student of Ammonius was John Philoponus (c. 490 - c. 570).<sup>183</sup> According to MacCoull, John Philoponus might have been Dioscorus' teacher.<sup>184</sup> Thus if Proclus' critical methodology (at least in part) was transmitted through the teachers of the Alexandrian university, which seems likely,<sup>185</sup> Dioscorus may have written his mystical allegories under the direct influence of late Neoplatonic allegorical interpretations of Homer.

This same late Neoplatonic tradition influenced Musaeus. Thomas

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<sup>182</sup>"This surface, which is a *παραπέτασμα*, simultaneously revealing and masking its truths, is an invitation to participation in the creation of the meaning of the work—the challenge of an esthetic experience that goes far beyond the passive mode of perception of the senses, and involves us actively as spectators and participants in the articulation of meaning." Lamberton, 186.

<sup>183</sup>See L. Westerink, ed. and trans., *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962), ix-xiii; C. Wildberg, trans., *Philoponus: Against Aristotle, on the Eternity of the World* (Ithaca, New York, 1987), 5.

<sup>184</sup>MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," 163-68. Philoponus was a Neoplatonic *γραμματικός* (*professor of philology*), who may have had a semi-official position in the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria as editor of Ammonius' lectures. Philoponus was a Christian.

<sup>185</sup>The allegorical interpretations of Homer by Hermias correspond closely to those of Proclus; Sheppard, 72 and *passim*.

Gelzer argued that Musaeus was writing in Alexandria in the beginning of the sixth century, and his epyllion shows an acquaintance with the hymns of Proclus.<sup>186</sup> It is possible that Musaeus, a γραμματικός who was befriended and respected by Procopius, had personal contact with Ammonius.

**Musaeus.** The short romantic epic *Hero and Leander* (343 verses)<sup>187</sup> was composed by Musaeus sometime between the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century,<sup>188</sup> and it was interpreted by Lamberton as possibly the "last phase of the interaction of interpretation and literature that our model predicts."<sup>189</sup> Lamberton was looking for a literary composition "in a fully allegorical mode" which embodied the principles of allegory established by Proclus' interpretations of Homer. Prudentius' *Psychomachia* shows the close relationship between allegorical interpretation and allegorical composition, but it isn't the kind of allegory that exegetes found in the Homeric epics and the Old Testament. *Hero and Leander* may be that "last phase" because it seems to have a concealed mystical level of meaning based upon allegorical readings of Homer and

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<sup>186</sup>T. Gelzer, ed., *Musaeus: Hero and Leander*, in the *Loeb* series (Cambridge, 1978), 299-302.

<sup>187</sup>A detailed bibliography of editions and commentaries can be found in H. Livrea, *Musaeus: Hero et Leander* (Leipzig, 1982), xvi-xxiii.

<sup>188</sup> It is probable that Musaeus composed his epyllion in Alexandria during the reign of Anastasius I (491-518). Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 297-302; idem, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 137-39; cf. *MH* 25 (1968): 21. The Egyptians Colluthus and Christodorus of Coptus quoted Musaeus; and during the reign of Justinian (527 - 565), Musaeus was quoted by John of Gaza, Paul the Silentiary, and Agathias. See Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 301-02 (which includes specific citations); idem, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 139. It is likely that the epyllion was familiar also to Dioscorus of Aphrodito; cf. MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 87 comment to verse 3, 109 comment to verse 8.

<sup>189</sup>Lamberton, 157.

Plato; it seems to show the soul's progression into creation and its return to the spiritual realm of νοῦς. In addition, the specifics of this mystical journey reflect the Christian tradition of the "inspired philosopher"<sup>190</sup> as described by Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Neilus of Ancyra, and others.<sup>191</sup> Because of its recondite quality, however, the mystical level of meaning in *Hero and Leander* remains for modern philologists a good probability but not an absolute certainty.

The surface level of the epyllion is charming.<sup>192</sup> The story opens with Hero as a young, virgin priestess of Aphrodite. Her beauty is exceptional; but even more exceptional are her modesty and goodness. She shuns the crowds and lives secluded in a high tower. When the festival of Aphrodite brings the men from the neighboring islands to the temple, the handsome Leander not only desires Hero (as do all the men young and old) but is determined to have her. And indeed, cornering her in the temple, he wins her love. She cannot marry him, however, because he is a ξεῖνος πολύφοιτος *wandering foreigner* (verse 181). They therefore decide to meet nightly in the tower. To avoid the suspicions which would arise if he remained in the city, Leander promises that he will swim every night from his town, Abydos, across the narrow strait of the Hellespont to her town, Sestos. She

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<sup>190</sup>Musaeus seems to have been a Christian Neoplatonist; Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 299-302; idem, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 136. For more details on Musaeus' borrowings from Christian sources, see K. Kost, *Musaeus: Hero und Leander. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Bonn, 1971), passim. For more information on the Christian Neoplatonists in Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries, see Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 301; Westerink, xiii, xx; Wallis, 139-40; MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," 163-68; eadem, "μονοειδής in Dioscorus of Aphrodito: An Addendum," 61-64.

<sup>191</sup>Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 320.

<sup>192</sup>The myth is alluded to by both Vergil and Horace and recounted in detail by Ovid. Vergil *Georgics* 3.258ff; Horace *Epistulae* 1.3.3ff; Ovid *Heroides* 18 and 19.

will light the way with a lamp.

The second part of the epyllion (verses 232-88) shows him making his first crossing, fired by love. Hero receives him in the tower, cleans and anoints him, and lies with him in secret union (κρυφίοισι γάμοις verse 221). By the light of dawn, however, he must leave.

The nocturnal meetings continue for the rest of the summer. In part 3 (verses 289-343), winter comes, making the channel treacherous. Leander is undaunted, but the waves are too powerful. And after swallowing a mouthful of brine, after a gust extinguishes the lamp, he goes under. At dawn, Hero spies the corpse on the beach and she plunges down from the tower to her death. Ἀλλήλων δ' ἀπόναντο καὶ ἐν πυμάτω περ ὀλέθρω. *And they enjoyed one another in the last death* (verse 343).

Both internal and external evidence guided Gelzer to his theory of a Neoplatonic level of meaning. Regarding the first category, Gelzer observed: 1) unlike the descriptions in other Hellenistic epyllia and unlike Nonnus' detailed descriptions,<sup>193</sup> Musaeus' show a remarkable "lack of vividness and clarity"; 2) unlike other presentations of the myth, Musaeus arranged the material into a logical scheme which, on the literal level, appears disproportionate; and 3) scattered throughout the epyllion are Neoplatonic terms, which (in Lamberton's words, p. 159) "do indeed seem an invitation to the reader to see in the broad outline of the action of the poem an imitation of the progress of the soul from its original abode beyond the physical universe, through the sea of matter, and back to its true home."

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<sup>193</sup>Musaeus in his phraseology and metrics belonged to the Nonnian school of poets. Gelzer, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 133-37, 141ff.; *MH* 25 (1968): 11-30. For Musaeus' dependence on Homer for vocabulary and the creation of certain scenes, see *ibid.*, 30-38

Gelzer described the mystical level as follows:

On this level, the three sections of the poem represent the life of a philosophical soul—Leander—according to the pattern which the Neoplatonists found in the *Phaedrus*. The first part (28-231) represents the soul's life in heaven before birth, in which it is by its original vision of its own god chosen and called to follow him in the heavenly procession; the second part (232-288) is its life on earth, where recollection effected through love leads it to exaltation and mystic union with its god; the third part (289-343) is its release from the chains of the body and the foreshadowing of its reward in the afterlife in the highest and culminating union with God.<sup>194</sup>

The structure of the Christian meaning, which progresses by way of a more complicated system of symbols and allusions, is the following: "The call (42 sq.), the choosing (84 sq.), the instruction (123 sq.), the illumination (234 sq.), baptism with fire and water (244 sq.), consecration (256 sq.), mystic exaltation (268 sq.) and redemption (293 sq.)."<sup>195</sup> There is, however, no specific mention of Christ or other biblical characters.

The external evidence consists of: 1) two letters from Procopius to a certain Musaeus and 2) the expectations of sixth-century readers. Concerning the former, it is possible that the letters concern the author of this epyllion<sup>196</sup> and that they show Procopius having interpreted the epyllion as Neoplatonic allegory.<sup>197</sup> Yet the letters are too ambiguous in their wording for them to be considered unmistakable evidence of an

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<sup>194</sup>Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 319. Cf. idem, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 136.

<sup>195</sup>Gelzer, *Musaeus*, 320.

<sup>196</sup>*Ibid.*, 301-02.

<sup>197</sup>Lamberton, 160; Gelzer, "Zu Sprache und Text des Epikers Musaios," *MH* 24 (1967): 138-39.



allegory in *Hero and Leander*.<sup>198</sup> Concerning the second piece of external evidence, Lamberton states that the time was right for writing a concealed allegory containing Neoplatonic and Christian concepts. Even if an allegory was not consciously intended, the mystical meanings described above would have been recognized by a sixth-century reader, who was accustomed to make different demands upon literature than a reader today.<sup>199</sup>

For Lamberton, conclusive proof of a concealed mystical allegory in *Hero and Leander* would be other literature of this sort: "One would want *comparanda*. If these in turn are not to be found, a definitive conclusion seems a remote goal." Dioscorus' encomia, in fact, may provide the necessary *comparanda*. Their literal level employs Hellenistic mythology and motifs.<sup>200</sup> The deeper level is often obtrusive, but does not dominate the literal. Finally, the deeper level offers a synthesis of Neoplatonic and Christian concepts derived from Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Gregory of Nyssa.

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<sup>198</sup>The letters have been edited by A. Garzya and R.-J. Loenertz, *Procopii Gazaei Epistolae et Declamationes* (Ettal, 1963), 72, 80.

<sup>199</sup>"One can, however, say that the time was right for such deliberate allegory, that the visual arts had exploited it for centuries, and that a pervasive interpretive tradition, known to Musaeus, had accustomed readers to make upon literature—at least upon certain literature—the sort of demands *Hero and Leander* seems to invite." Lamberton, 159.

<sup>200</sup>Prudentius, Musaeus, and Dioscorus were not the only Christian writers to make pointed, meaningful use of Greek myth (in contrast to Greek and Roman myths used simply as literary adornments); see H. Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, 2nd ed. (Zürich, 1957; reprint, 1966), passim. For the pagan culture's general influence on Christianity during the early Byzantine period, see Bowersock, esp. 63ff.; Cameron, *Claudian*, 189-227, 305-48. Cf. Bregman, 125. See also the pagan and Christian motifs in the Coptic tapestries of the fourth through seventh centuries (and the discussions of these tapestries) in M.-H. Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics* (Paris, 1990), 82-145. Of particular interest in these tapestries is the mixing of motifs, such as a cross which Daphne hands to Apollo (see the opening page and pp. 94-95).

## CHAPTER 1

### DIOSCORUS OF APHRODITO: HIS LIFE AND ARCHIVE

#### Discovery and Dispersal

In July of 1905, when Gustave Lefebvre had been Inspector in Chief of the Antiquities Service of Egypt for barely six months, a man from Tema informed him of a new find of papyrus at Kom Ishqâw.<sup>1</sup> Part of an old wall of a house had collapsed and revealed a chasm below; at the bottom of this crevice were seen numerous rolls of papyrus. By the time Lefebvre arrived, however, the rolls were gone. What fragments remained were torn apart and mutilated; the rest had probably been distributed among the villagers and concealed. Yet when the remaining fragments, filled with Coptic and Greek writing, were removed from the crevice, Lefebvre noticed what seemed to be verses of a Greek comedy. These verses later proved to be a fragment of a fourth- or fifth-century A.D. codex of the comedy  $\Delta\eta\mu\omicron\iota$  by Eupolis, an Athenian writer from the fifth century B.C., of whose works

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<sup>1</sup>The following description of the 1905-7 discoveries is based primarily upon G. Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Ménandre* (Cairo, 1907), viii-xi. For a previous important find of papyri at Kom Ishqâw (1901), see J. Quibell, "Kom Ishgau," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 3 (1902): 85-88. He and Lefebvre both reported that the 1901 discovery was made while natives were constructing a tomb. Quibell, "Kom Ishgau," 85; Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Ménandre*, viii-ix. H. I. Bell, however, wrote: "The discovery was made in 1901 by some of the villagers who were digging a well"; "The Aphrodito Papyri," *JHS* 28 (1908): 97. Bell (who had never been in the village) does not explain the variant report; he may have been taking the term *fasguyeh* (used by Quibell in addition to *tomb*) to mean *well*. Whatever the reason for the variant, it was Bell's version which was later repeated by scholars writing about the 1901 discovery. For the distribution and first publications of the 1901 find, see Bell, "The Aphrodito Papyri," 97-98; Nabia Abbott, *The Kurrah Papyri from Aphrodito in the Oriental Institute* (Chicago, 1938).

scarcely anything had survived to the modern era.<sup>2</sup> This gave Lefebvre hope of still being able to find something valuable here. The houses were too close together to excavate between; so he asked the village headman to inform him as soon as anyone in the neighborhood made plans to demolish a house. By the end of the same year the owner of the collapsed wall had decided to tear down and rebuild his home. Gaston Maspero, Director of the Antiquities Service of Egypt, gave Lefebvre the authorization; and for a few pounds the owner of the house gave permission to excavate his property all the way to the street.

Lefebvre began immediately. After only one meter of digging, he uncovered ancient walls of unbaked brick. The walls continued down for another two meters and demarcated three rooms. It was a medium-sized house, which had been built during the Roman Period. The ancient roof had collapsed, but the first few courses were still visible. In the corner of one small room, which had an area of no more than one and a half square meters, stood a large jar which had been shattered down to its neck. It was now about .90 meter tall. Spread out around the jar in the rich soil (*sebakh*, often found around ancient sites) lay papyrus rolls and fragments which had escaped from the container. The jar itself was filled with more papyrus, on top of which lay eleven leaves (twenty-two pages) of a fifth-century A.D. codex of Menandrian comedies.<sup>3</sup> In the *sebakh* were found six more leaves

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<sup>2</sup>For the fragment of Eupolis, see G. Lefebvre, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire*, No. 43227: *Papyrus de Ménandre* (Cairo, 1911), xxi-xxiii; more recently, C. Austin, *Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta in Papyris Reperta* (Berlin, 1973), 84-92.

<sup>3</sup>For the date, see Lefebvre, *Catalogue général*, i note 1. For the text, *ibid.*, iv-xvi. For a photoreproduction, see L. Koenen, et al., *The Cairo Codex of Menander* (London, 1978). For a discussion of the editing of this codex, see A. Gomme and F. Sandbach, *Menander: A Commentary* (Oxford, 1973), 3, 42-46.

of the same codex, thus making a total of thirty-four pages containing more than 1300 verses—from an author whose works had virtually disappeared during the Middle Ages. This fourth-century B.C. author, Menander (Comicus), had been esteemed during the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods as second only to Homer in poetic excellence.<sup>4</sup> Yet during the fourteenth century, his comedies were condemned by the monks of Constantinople and his manuscripts burned. From the Renaissance to the beginning of the twentieth century all that remained were his astounding reputation and a few excerpted *sententiae*.<sup>5</sup> The discoveries by Nicole, Jouguet, and Grenfell and Hunt of papyrus fragments of his comedies had increased somewhat the size of his surviving *oeuvre*; but the leaves of the codex which Lefebvre now held in his hands were—in his own words—*"sans contredit les plus importants qui aient été découverts jusqu' à ce jour."*

Beneath this codex had been stored about one hundred and fifty papyrus rolls, containing primarily personal, legal, and government documents. Many of these documents, as though they had been considered scrap paper, had poems written on their versos.<sup>6</sup> These poems were in Greek; and because of the corrections and revisions, they appeared to be

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<sup>4</sup>Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Ménandre*, viii; cf. IG xiv 1183c. See also the chapter on Menander by E. Handley in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, eds. P. Easterling and B. Knox (Cambridge, 1985), 414-25.

<sup>5</sup>Most recently edited by S. Jaekel, *Menandri Sententiae* (Leipzig, 1964).

<sup>6</sup>The inside of the papyrus roll is called the recto; it was usually the smoother side and used first for writing. The outside of the roll is called the verso; it was often left rough and used to label the roll. See E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction*, paperback edition with supplementary notes (Oxford, 1980), 4-5, 181 note 19, 199.

original compositions.<sup>7</sup> Lefebvre noted that the Menandrian codex had been used as a sort of cork to close the jar and protect the papyri beneath, as though for the owner they had been "plus précieux à ses yeux."<sup>8</sup>

Gustave Lefebvre returned to excavate at the same site in 1906 and 1907, but found little more of value;<sup>9</sup> and he brought what he had found to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. There Jean Maspero, son of the Director of the Antiquities Service, edited the Greek papyri in three volumes, which are now referred to as *P.Cair.Masp.* I, II, and III.<sup>10</sup> The first two volumes were published in 1911 and 1913; the third volume was published posthumously in 1916 by Jean's father, Gaston, after his son's tragic death in battle at the age of twenty-nine. Jean Maspero had found that the literary and the documentary papyri of the 1905-7 discoveries at Kom Ishqâw had belonged to a certain Flavius Dioscorus, who had lived during the sixth century A.D. Some of the documents, accounts, and letters concerned his family and their property. Others concerned Aphrodito (Kom Ishqâw's ancient name) and its neighborhood, and had been composed or acquired by Dioscorus during his

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<sup>7</sup>Lefebvre does not mention the original compositions in his early description (1907) of the find. Although Lefebvre unrolled several documents, the initial inventory seems to have been made by Maspero; see Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Ménandre*, x note 1. Jean Maspero wrote that it was apparent that the poetry written on the verso of many of the documents were original compositions; "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte: Dioscore, fils d'Apollôs," *REG* 24 (1911): 456.

<sup>8</sup>Lefebvre, *Fragments d'un manuscrit de Ménandre*, x.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>10</sup>*Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire: Papyrus grecs d'époque byzantine*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1973; reprint of the 1911-1916 editions). These volumes also include some papyri obtained from M. Beaugé, chief engineer of Egyptian railroads at Assiut, and from others; see Gaston Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* III, p. viii. The fate of many Coptic documents brought to the Egyptian Museum by Lefebvre is unknown; L. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988), 20; eadem, "The Coptic Archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *Chronique d'Égypte* 56 (1981): 185-93.

career as lawyer and headman (πρωτοκομήτης) of Aphrodito.<sup>11</sup> Still others had been brought back from the principal city of the Thebaid, Antinoopolis, where Dioscorus had done legal work.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the papyri from the Dioscorian archive, however, had apparently been removed and concealed before Lefebvre's arrival. A large number of these (some threescore papyri) were purchased by the British Museum in 1906 and 1907, and edited by Harold Idris Bell in a single volume, *P.Lond.* V (1917). The University of Florence purchased still another score of the papyri between 1905 and 1907; many of these were edited by Girolamo Vitelli in *P.Flor.* III (1915). In fact, the first publication of a document from the Dioscorian archive was a divorce contract purchased by Vitelli and published in 1906 as *P.Flor.* I 93.<sup>13</sup> In addition, clandestine excavations at Lefebvre's site were made and their discoveries privately sold.<sup>14</sup> The end result was that papyri which once had belonged—in Bell's words—"to a single 'muniment room,' that of the poet Dioscorus,"<sup>15</sup> became dispersed throughout the Western Hemisphere and can now be

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<sup>11</sup>The papyri of 1905-7 (dating from the sixth century A.D.) refer to the village as Ἀφροδίτης κόμη. Yet, because the 1901 find (letters and accounts composed after the Arab conquest) referred to the village as Ἀφροδιτώ, the earlier appellation continued to be used by most scholars. Maspero, *P.Cair.Masp.* I, p. ii note 1; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 3 note 7.

<sup>12</sup>For biographies of Dioscorus see: Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 454-69; H. I. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," *JHS* 64 (1944): 21-36; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 9-14.

<sup>13</sup> = *M.Chr.* 297. *P.Lond.* V 1713 is a copy of this document; but whereas *P.Flor.* I 93 was intended for the husband, *P.Lond.* V 1713 was intended for the wife. Both were probably composed and written by Dioscorus. See Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1713, pp. 145-46.

<sup>14</sup>The most complete discussion of the sales of Aphrodito papyri is by J. Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri and Village Life in Byzantine Egypt," *BSAC* 26 (1984): 52-53 and notes. See also MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 4 note 11.

<sup>15</sup>Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V, p. iii.

found—in James G. Keenan's words—"in Alexandria, Aberdeen, Cologne, Hamburg, Berlin, Erlangen, Heidelberg, Florence, Ghent, Geneva, Paris, Strasbourg, Vienna, Princeton, Michigan, and the Vatican—and even this list may not be exhaustive."<sup>16</sup>

As the archive was spread around the world, parts of what had been a single document or single poem turned up among diverse collections. An example of the capriciousness of the dispersal of the Dioscorian archive is the hexameter panegyric to John, *P.Berol.* 10580. Although first published in 1907 as *BKT* V 3, it was later augmented by the addition of an iambic prologue which was among the papyri published by Maspero in 1916 but was not recognized as part of the panegyric to John until 1936.<sup>17</sup> Another example is the beautifully scripted encomium to Romanus (H.12).<sup>18</sup> The hexameter section with a column of words from the iambic prologue was published with the London collection in 1917 and 1927 (first a description of the papyrus as *P.Lond.* V 1817; later, the text and a photo as *P.Lond.Lit.* 98). The rest of the iambic prologue, however, was not found until 1940, when P. Collart published the papyrus collection of Théodore Reinach (*P.Rein.*

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<sup>16</sup>Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 53. See the list of publications of Dioscorian papyri, arranged by date of publication, in G. Malz, "The Papyri of Dioscorus: Publications and Emendations," In *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni*, vol. 2 (Milan, 1957), 347-48. For a list of the papyri of Aphrodito arranged by the date of the document, see A. Calderini, *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell' Egitto greco-romano*, vol. 1, part 2 (Madrid, 1966), 302-309. For emendations to these lists see Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 58 note 6.

<sup>17</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67317. See F. della Corte, *Rivista di filologia* 64 (1936): 399-404.

<sup>18</sup>Ernst Heitsch collected and edited twenty-eight of Dioscorus' poems in section XLII of *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1963), 127-52. Citations from this edition will be abbreviated H., followed by the poem number and verse number in his collection. For a discussion of Romanus the Melodist as the probable addressee of this poem, see C. Kuehn, "Dioskoros of Aphrodito and Romanos the Melodist," *BASP* 27 (1990): 103-107.

2070).<sup>19</sup> Still another example and "no doubt the most striking single instance of the archive's dispersal," said Keenan, "was revealed in the 1976 publication by the late Rev. J. W. B. Barns of a papyrus owned by Dr. W. M. Fitzhugh of Monterey, California—the upper half of a document whose lower half was among the Cairo Museum papyri published by Maspero in 1911."<sup>20</sup>

In his publication of the Dioscorian archive at the Egyptian Museum, Jean Maspero divided the Greek papyri into five categories: administrative; financial; private documents from Aphrodito and the Antaeopolite nome; private documents from Antinoopolis and other neighboring cities; and literary fragments.<sup>21</sup> Jean Gascou is presently working on a more refined categorization, which divides the documents (both Greek and Coptic) under such headings as—in the public sphere—petitions, depositions before officials, proclamations and edicts, records of court proceedings, and accounts; and—in the private sphere—sales, donations, leases of land, loans, marriage and divorce contracts, wills, and letters.<sup>22</sup> Most of these documents were composed during the reigns of Justin I, Justinian, and Justin II.<sup>23</sup> Some of the more interesting literary and other non-documentary items include—in addition to the Menandrian codex—the

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<sup>19</sup>See P. Collart, ed., "Poème de Dioscoros d'Aphroditô," *BIAO* 39 (1940): 19-22.

<sup>20</sup>Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 53 (referring to *P.Coll.Youtie* 92).

<sup>21</sup>Intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* I, pp. ii-iii.

<sup>22</sup>As reported by MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 4. For another early effort at categorization, see Malz, "The Papyri of Dioscorus: Publications and Emendations," 348-49.

<sup>23</sup>J. Maspero, "Études sur les papyrus d'Aphrodité," *BIAO* 6 (1908): 75; see also Malz, "The Papyri of Dioscorus: Publications and Emendations," 345.



remains of a codex of Homer's *Iliad* and fragments of (possibly) an Aristophanic comedy (or comedies),<sup>24</sup> a biography of the Athenian orator Isocrates, a Greek-Coptic glossary, a letter from the sixth-century A.D. philosopher Horapollon, metrological charts, and conjugations of Greek verbs. A Latin-Greek-Coptic glossary may also have belonged to Dioscorus.<sup>25</sup> It is without a doubt one of the richest and most important papyrological finds ever. "If the still scanty band of papyrologists," Bell wrote in 1925, "should ever compile a calendar of their own, it would be necessary to assign a red letter day to the memory of Dioscorus."<sup>26</sup>

### Publications of the Poetry

Among the literary remains mentioned above were found verses composed by Dioscorus himself and written in his own hand.<sup>27</sup> They are the oldest autograph manuscripts from a known poet.<sup>28</sup> Yet to scholars of the twentieth century, the poetry of Dioscorus had been unknown: there is no mention of him in surviving ancient anthologies, no transmitted

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<sup>24</sup>For the text of the *Iliad*, see *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67172-67174. For the text of these comedy fragments, see Lefebvre, *Catalogue général*, xxi-xxv; cf. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 27.

<sup>25</sup>Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 27. For a brief discussion of the above items, see H. I. Bell and W. Crum, "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," *Aegyptus* 6 (Milan, 1925): 177-81. For a translation and discussion of the philosopher's letter, see Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 29-30. For a text of the Latin-Greek-Coptic glossary and a commentary, see J. Kramer, *Glossaria Bilinguia in Papyris et Membranis Reperta* (Bonn, 1983), 97-108.

<sup>26</sup>Bell-Crum, "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," 177.

<sup>27</sup>For the evidence which led to the conclusion that these poems were composed and written by Dioscorus, see Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 454-56; see also the discussion below.

<sup>28</sup>For a survey of autograph literature discovered on ancient papyri, see M. Parca, *Ptocheia or Odysseus in Disguise at Troy* (*P. Köln VI 245*) (Atlanta, 1991), 3-4 note 7.

manuscript, and no papyrus from another site containing any of his verses. The first appearance of his verses in the modern era was in 1907, when a collection of literary papyri purchased by the Berlin Museum was published in *Berliner Klassikertexte V, Griechische Dichterfragmente I: Epische und elegische Fragmente* (BKT V). In this edition, among papyrus fragments of Homer, Hesiod, Theocritus, and Nonnus, appeared three panegyric poems in trimeters and hexameters. The author of the first panegyric poem (*P.Berol.* 5003) could not in 1907 be identified. Later, Toivo Viljamaa suggested that "the poem relates a battle against the Blemyes during the reign of Theodosius II, and its probable writer is Cyrus of Panopolis."<sup>29</sup> The second panegyric poem (*P.Berol.* 10580) was addressed to John, the νέος ἡγεμών. W. Schubart, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, and Paul Friedländer were the first to study the poem, and they suggested that this John was a *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis*.<sup>30</sup> They further surmised that the third panegyric poem (*P.Berol.* 9799) was addressed to a Duke of the Thebaid.<sup>31</sup> The identities of the authors of the latter two poems were unknown; that a single author had composed both was not suggested. Three years later (1910), Jean Maspero published a poem which he was certain was by the same author as the panegyric to John;<sup>32</sup> and in an essay

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<sup>29</sup>T. Viljamaa, *Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry of the Early Byzantine Period*, vol. 42 of *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* (Helsinki, 1968), 49.

<sup>30</sup>BKT V, pp. 117-26. This poem, joined with *P.Cair. Masp.* III 67317, has been included by Heitsch in his edition as H.3. Maspero suggested that John was a Duke of the Thebaid; see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 140-41.

<sup>31</sup>BKT V, pp. 114-17 (= Heitsch, vol. 2, S 10).

<sup>32</sup>J. Maspero, "Un papyrus littéraire d'Aφροδίτης κόμη," *ByzZ* 19 (1910): 1-6. The poem is *P.Cair.Masp.* 67055 verso (=H.2).

published in 1911, Maspero identified this author as Dioscorus of Aphrodito.<sup>33</sup> What led to the identification was the observation that the handwriting of some hexameter verses on the verso of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 matched the handwriting of a receipt signed by Dioscorus, which was written immediately above on the same page.<sup>34</sup> Dioscorus had obviously used this papyrus with the receipt (and the sale of land on the recto) as scrap paper on which to write several poems; furthermore, verses of the poem below the receipt corresponded to verses in poems on other papyri from the Dioscorian archive, which poems had verses that corresponded to those in the panegyric to John. These repeated verses acted "comme une signature qui nous permet de reconnaître son inspiration, quand le caprice de sa main a fait naître des doutes."<sup>35</sup> That Dioscorus had not merely copied, but had composed the poems was indicated by the revisions squeezed between verses and into the margins. The panegyric to John was augmented in 1936 by the addition of an iambic prologue, which had been published with the Cairo papyri in 1916 but had not been recognized as part of the panegyric to

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<sup>33</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 454-56.

<sup>34</sup>No analysis of Dioscorus' handwriting has been published—outside of brief scattered remarks by several editors—and thus no standard classifications for Dioscorus' several handwriting styles exist. Two of the most comprehensive statements are by Bell and Maspero. Bell said (intro. to *P.Lond.* V, p. iv note 2): "Dioscorus wrote sometimes in uncials and sometimes in cursive, but the general character of both is the same, and not infrequently he mixed the two styles." Maspero said ("Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 454): "L'écriture des différentes pièces n'est pas absolument identique; on y distingue deux types: une onciale légèrement penchée en avant, et une écriture droite, moins régulière, comportant quelques ligatures." L. MacCoull in her articles and monograph on Dioscorus has made several casual comments. For an example of the elegant uncial hand of some of the poetry, see *P.Lond.Lit.* 98, plate VII.

<sup>35</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 454.

John.<sup>36</sup> The author of the panegyric to the Duke of the Thebaid (*P.Berol.* 9799) was not identified until 1927, when H. J. M. Milne stated that it too was composed by Dioscorus;<sup>37</sup> this suggestion was confirmed by L. MacCoull in 1988 on the basis of an examination of a photograph of the papyrus.<sup>38</sup>

In his article of 1911, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte: Dioscore, fils d'Apollôs," Jean Maspero published thirteen poems by Dioscorus, French translations,<sup>39</sup> and an examination of their style.<sup>40</sup> Twelve of the poems made use of the popular genres of encomium (praise for a distinguished

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<sup>36</sup>See note 17 above.

<sup>37</sup>H. J. M. Milne, intro. to *P.Lond.Lit.* 98-101, p. 68. Neither Denys Page nor Toivo Viljamaa attributed the poem's authorship to Dioscorus; Viljamaa, in fact, denied that it was Dioscorian. Viljamaa, 51-54, esp. 52; D. Page, *Sel.Pap.* III, 588-89.

<sup>38</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 131-34. Here MacCoull reprints Heitsch's text, but inexplicably omits the informative apparatus.

<sup>39</sup>At the time of writing his essay, Maspero had identified 26 separate Dioscorian poems among the Cairo papyri (p. 471). The Heitsch numbers of the thirteen poems Maspero published in his article are: 1=H.4; 2=H.4b; 3=H.9; 4=H.6; 5=H.10; 6=H.14; 7=H.15; 8=H.16; 9=H.13; 10=H.17; 11=H.28; 12=H.21; 13=H.5.

<sup>40</sup>Maspero (pp. 456-69) also attempted to reconstruct the life of the poet by means of information from the poems and documents in the Cairo Museum. Most of Maspero's speculations, however, about the life of Dioscorus and the social situation in Aphrodito have since been challenged. The chronology of events (especially the many flights as fugitive) in Maspero's biography was refined by Bell, *P.Lond.* V, pp. iv, 57-58; idem, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," *passim*. Although Bell's chronology was an improvement over Maspero's, Bell's evaluation of the social situation in Aphrodito has been greatly revised by subsequent historians. For more recent evaluations of the social situation in Aphrodito, see esp. J. Keenan's articles: "The Aphrodite Papyri," 53-57; "Aurelius Phoibammon, Son of Triadelphus: A Byzantine Egyptian Land Entrepreneur," *BASP* 17 (1980): 145-54; "Aurelius Apollon and the Aphrodite Village Élite," in *Atti del XVII congresso internazionale di papirologia*, vol. 3 (Naples, 1984): 957-63; "Village Shepherds and Social Tension in Byzantine Egypt," *YCS* 28 (1985): 245-59; "Notes on Absentee Landlordism at Aphrodito," *BASP* 22 (1985): 137-69; "On Languages and Literacy in Byzantine Aphrodito," in *Proceedings of the XVIII International Congress of Papyrology*, ed. B. G. Mandilaras, vol. 2 (Athens, 1988): 161-67. See also MacCoull's biography of Dioscorus; *Dioscorus*, 5-15.

Maspero republished the thirteen poems, this time including line-by-line textual and interpretive commentaries, and joined them with the other poems and documents from Dioscorus' archive in *P.Cair.Masp.* I, II, and III.

man or woman) and epithalamium (celebration of a marriage); poem eleven combined sixteen anacreontic verses (four strophes reflecting the style and ethos of the poetry of Anacreon of Teos and his imitators) with a *chairetismos* (a popular hymn form in which a litany of verses begins with the salutation *χαίρε*). The addressees of several of the poems were named by Dioscorus in the verses or in the titles (the poet labeled a few poems): Athanasius (1, 2), Victor (5), Dorotheus (6), Constantine (7), Colluthus (9, 10, 12), and Callinicus (13). The honorees of the other poems were not named by the poet. Dioscorus called one addressee a pagarch (10); Maspero suggested that some of the other poems were addressed to dukes and one to a *praeses* (civil governor) of the Thebaid. Examining the style of the poetry, Maspero (as had Schubart and Wilamowitz) found that the hexameter verses of the encomia and epithalamia were similar to those of Nonnus' poems, whose Homeric vocabulary and strict metrical system had exerted a strong influence among poets of the sixth century.<sup>41</sup> Maspero thought that Nonnus' talent was remarkable. Maspero considered Dioscorus, however, no more than a far disciple of Nonnus, and thought that in contrast to Nonnus "le style de Dioscore fait pauvre figure" (p. 472). Maspero complained that Dioscorus was obscure. There was a tension between, on the one hand, the ideas which Maspero thought Dioscorus was trying to

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<sup>41</sup>For Nonnus' style (especially his metrics), see R. Keydell, ed., *Nonni Panopolitani Dionysiaca*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1959), 9\*-81\*; F. Vian, ed., *Nonnos de Panopolis, Les Dionysiaques*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1976), li-iv; J. Golega, *Studien über die Evangeliendichtung des Nonnos von Panopolis* (Breslau, 1930), 8-62; cf. P. Maas, *Greek Metre*, trans. H. Lloyd-Jones (Oxford, 1962), *passim*. For a detailed examination of Nonnus' metaphorical language and the influence of Neoplatonism, see D. Piccardi, *Metafora e poetica in Nonno di Panopoli* (Florence, 1985). For Nonnus' influence, see A. Wifstrand, *Von Kallimachos zu Nonnos: Metrisch-stilistische Untersuchungen zur späteren griechischen Epik und zu verwandten Gedichtgattungen* (Lund, 1933), *passim*.

convey and, on the other hand, the expressions which Dioscorus was using. Certain phrases were so ambiguous that Maspero wondered if Dioscorus himself had understood what they meant (p. 427). In addition, Dioscorus' grammar was often not correct.<sup>42</sup>

Maspero's evaluation of the quality of the poetry went virtually unchallenged by subsequent historians and literary critics—except Leslie MacCoull.<sup>43</sup> MacCoull began already in her earlier articles (1976 - ) to challenge these traditional condemnations. Yet it wasn't until her 1988 monograph that she offered a comprehensive view of her position: the obscurity in his poetry is due largely to the influence of the Coptic language and culture. Although she is correct in her belief that the poetry is of high quality, and although she was certainly qualified to examine the Coptic influences, her discussions never really showed any significant interference in the logic of the poetry due to Dioscorus' Coptic heritage. So Maspero's argument of obscurity has basically remained unchallenged.

In 1917 H. I. Bell briefly described the Dioscorian poems that had been

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<sup>42</sup>It may be significant that the grammatical mistakes in the biblical letters by Paul are interpreted by the editors of *The Jerusalem Bible* as indications 1) that Paul was sincere ("so that his audience would be convinced not by the form but by the content of his message of faith") and 2) "that he sometimes thought too fast or too emotionally"; and the editors concluded that Paul "is not easy to read . . . ; profound thoughts expressed by an urgent writer never are." A. Jones, *The Jerusalem Bible: The New Testament* (Garden City, New York, 1966), 254. The letters written by Paul and the account of his experiences in Acts were important for the development of Christian mysticism; see L. Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery: From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, trans. I. Trethowan (Edinburgh, 1990), 5-18. That Dioscorus was influenced by the Bible is obvious; that he was influenced specifically by the letters of Paul has not been established.

<sup>43</sup>An example of the cliché condemnations of Dioscorus' poetry is the remark by D. Parker in his review of Heitsch's collection: "Finally, the panegyric, BKT 5.1.114-117 . . . should have been included. If not by Dioscorus, it is important; if by him, it shows that even he had his good days." Review of *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, ed. by Ernst Heitsch, CW 56 (1962): 50.

found among the papyri purchased by the British Museum (*P.Lond.* V 1817-1820). In 1927 H. J. M. Milne published the texts and his commentaries on the eleven poem fragments. Milne's opinion of the talent of the poet was even more negative than Maspero's: "At no moment has he any real control of thought, diction, grammar, metre, or meaning."<sup>44</sup> Later, more Dioscorian poems and poem fragments found in other collections were published; and they continue to be published.<sup>45</sup> Cairo, London, and Berlin now hold the majority of verses composed by Dioscorus.

Often a single poem had been torn apart (either by accident or with the intention of earning a greater profit) and sold to different collectors—as described above; this created a significant obstacle to literary critics attempting to study the poetry of Dioscorus. Thus a valuable contribution was made by Ernst Heitsch when he gathered most of the fragments attributed to Dioscorus into one volume: *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, second edition 1963), section XLII. For each of the twenty-eight poems in his edition, Heitsch identified the collection (or collections) holding the papyrus, gave a brief bibliography, and appended a critical apparatus. This has remained to the present time the definitive edition of the poetry of Dioscorus, and has been used in the present study.<sup>46</sup> Although usually

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<sup>44</sup>*P.Lond.Lit.*, p. 68.

<sup>45</sup>Important subsequent publications of Dioscorian poetry have been by R. Keydell, "Ein jambischer Brief des Dioskoros von Aphrodito," *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher* 10 (1933): 341-45; G. Maltz, "Three Papyri of Dioscorus at the Walters Art Gallery," *AJP* 60 (1939): 170-177; and P. Collart, "Poème de Dioscoros d'Aphroditô," *BIAO* 39 (1940): 19-22. C. Kuehn, "A New Papyrus of a Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract: P.Berol. Inv. No. 21334," *ZPE* (forthcoming).

<sup>46</sup>Ernst Heitsch did not include all the Dioscorian verse fragments with which he was familiar; and since his publication, more verses have been identified as Dioscorian.

avoiding literary comments, even Heitsch notes in his introduction (p. 16 note 1): "So ist doch selbst dort, wo der Text heil zu sein scheint, der Gedankengang nicht immer verständlich."

### A Brief Biography

#### *Village, Father, and the Faith*

"The village of Aphrodite," Keenan concluded, "was more than an ordinary Byzantine Egyptian village."<sup>47</sup> In the mid-sixth century A.D., Aphrodito was enjoying the special patronage of the empress Theodora.<sup>48</sup> Directly across the river was Antaeopolis, the capital city of the nome (a *nome* was a governmental district similar to a state in the United States). During dynastic times and into the early Roman Period, Dioscorus' village had been the capital city of its own nome, the tenth of Upper Egypt. Perhaps at the beginning of the Byzantine period, however, and certainly before the sixth century, the tenth nome was merged with the Antaeopolite nome and

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Jean-Luc Fournet, under the guidance of J. Gascou, is currently preparing a new edition of the Dioscorian literary fragments. For some of the poems excluded by Heitsch, see Viljamaa, 33 note 55.

Heitsch's collection (including one Dioscorian poem [S 10] from volume 2) contains twenty-nine poems (716 verses), twenty-one of which are encomia. The encomia are written in dactylic hexameter and iambic trimeter. This collection also includes epithalamia, ethopoeiae, and an anacreontic. If one adds Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, the isopsephistic encomium to St. Senas, and the poem to the new monk, the verses total about 737.

<sup>47</sup>"The Aphrodite Papyri," 54. For a description of the village, see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 6-7; for the papyrological sources of her description, see Calderini, 323-25. Kom Ishqâw had been called by the Greeks Ἀφροδίτης πόλις *the city of Aphrodite*, because the Egyptian deity worshipped here was Hathor, identified by the Greeks with the goddess of love, Aphrodite. Its ancient Egyptian name was ⲬⲔⲱⲐ, which suggests that the village had a reputation as the district's emporium (MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 6).

<sup>48</sup>Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 31; Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 54.



Aphroditopolis lost its status as capital and its designation as *polis*.<sup>49</sup> In addition, during the fifth century, the administrative structure of Upper Egypt underwent a transition. The areas of a nome outside of the capital city were divided into *pagi* and placed under the jurisdiction of a pagarch. The pagarch, usually a member of the provincial nobility and residing in the capital of the nome, had the responsibility of collecting the δημόσια (public taxes) from the villages under his or her jurisdiction.<sup>50</sup> Aphrodito, however, received the privilege of *autopragia*, which meant that the village had been given by the emperor the right to collect its own public taxes and deliver them directly to the provincial treasury. Thus Aphrodito was outside the jurisdiction of the pagarch with respect to public taxes. The surviving documents do not disclose exactly when Aphrodito had received this special privilege, but for several generations it had faithfully met its public tax requirements.<sup>51</sup> The pagarchs living in Antaeopolis, now the capital city of the merged nome, seem to have resented the village's

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<sup>49</sup>The city was usually called Ἀφροδίτης πόλις; by Pliny, however, it was called *Veneris oppidum*, and during Ptolemaic times it was referred to as a μητρόπολις. In Dioscorus' archive it is usually referred to as Ἀφροδίτης κώμη or simply Ἀφροδίτη. Common epithets were: ἀθλία κώμη, πανταθλία κώμη, Παφίη, and Ἀφρογενέη. For references, see Calderini, 310-11.

<sup>50</sup>Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 22-23. For the pagarch, pagarch-by-delegation, and the pagarch's assistants, see Bell's intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1660, pp. 21-22.

With respect to the one documented female pagarch, Patricia (*P.Lond.* V 1660.7), Bell writes (intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1660, p. 22): "As it is not very likely that a woman would be specially appointed pagarch it may well be the case that she held the office by succession to her father. . . . Patricia, though called pagarch, does not herself exercise the functions of the office, but deposes them."

<sup>51</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67019 suggests that under Emperor Leo (r. A.D. 457 - 474) the present pagarchy system had been created, and at the same time Aphrodito had been given exemption from the pagarch's jurisdiction. See Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 24.

*autopragia*; and the surviving papyri show that the pagarchs often violated Aphrodito's special tax-status.<sup>52</sup> So when *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67126 reveals that on the seventh of January 541 Dioscorus' father was in Constantinople,<sup>53</sup> "it is usual to speculate," says Keenan, "that Apollos' presence in 'the queen of cities' had to do with his village's pressing its claims to special tax status, *autopragia*, at the imperial court."<sup>54</sup>

Apollos was a landowner and entrepreneur.<sup>55</sup> The papyri preserved by his son Dioscorus make it clear that:

he began with some inherited property, both from his father's and from his mother's side: a walled area in the village proper, leased out for use by a coppersmith; at least two plots of land in Aphrodite's *pedion*. He in turn bequeathed to his own heirs property not readily identifiable with what he himself inherited: a vineyard and some pastures in the village's southern plain, and an *epaulis* located south of the village.<sup>56</sup>

Acquiring land also by lease, Apollos managed and contracted out both his own and his leased plots; and the property under his control extended beyond Aphrodito to the neighboring villages of Phthla and Thmonach-

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<sup>52</sup>See especially *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67019 v and III 67283 (petitions to the emperor Justinian and to the empress Theodora); *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 (a rescript from the emperor Justinian to the Duke of the Thebaid); and *P.Lond.* V 1677 and *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 ("two of his grandest pieces of prose centering round this theme"; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 24).

<sup>53</sup>The actual circumstance of the surviving document is Apollos' borrowing twenty solidi of gold from Anastasius, an imperial courtier and banker, for (probably) his return home. For the details of this loan, see J. Keenan, "A Constantinople Loan, A.D. 541," *BASP* 29 (1992): 175-82.

<sup>54</sup>Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 958. See Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 31: "There was constant friction between village and pagarch and a tendency on the part of the latter to ignore the rights of the former. It was very likely one of these disputes which took Apollos to Constantinople in the autumn of 540." Cf. Keenan, "A Constantinople Loan," 176-77.

<sup>55</sup>The most complete biography of Apollos is by Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 957-63.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 960; cf. *P.Lond.* V 1691, 1692, 1697; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67325; *P.Michael.* 40.

the.<sup>57</sup> He was not one of the largest landowners in Egypt—like the Apions at Oxyrhynchus and Count Ammonius at Aphrodito—but Apollos appears to have been financially secure.<sup>58</sup> In addition to being a proprietor, Apollos engaged in local politics. The village's important decisions were made by a board of directors (ἡ κοινότης) consisting of property owners (κῆτορες), contributors (συντελεσταί), and the village headmen (πρωτοκωμηῆται).<sup>59</sup> This board was responsible for the village's corporate taxes, defense, and order. The three groups above may have represented a *cursus honorum*,<sup>60</sup> and Apollos is shown by the papyri to have climbed these titular rungs.<sup>61</sup> Around A.D. 541, Apollos was awarded the status designation *Flavius*.<sup>62</sup> It seems then that if Aphrodito were sending a representative to Constantinople to seek a solution to its tax conflicts with the pagarch, the father of Dioscorus was the right man to send.

Apollos was accompanied to Constantinople by a Christian priest, his nephew Victor; and they may have gone to Constantinople indirectly, by

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<sup>57</sup>For an examination of the evidence, see Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 960 note 15.

<sup>58</sup>For the Apions, see Alan Cameron, "The House of Anastasius," *GRBS* 19 (1978): 268-69. For Count Ammonius, see Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 55 and note 31. For the financial well-being of Dioscorus' family, see Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 456-57; see also MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 8.

<sup>59</sup>For a discussion of this *collegium*, see Keenan, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 55-56.

<sup>60</sup>Keenan, "Village Shepherds and Social Tension in Byzantine Egypt," 253 note 16; cf. idem, "The Aphrodite Papyri," 55.

<sup>61</sup>Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 959.

<sup>62</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67126; but see the questions raised by Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 958-59. For a discussion of the status designations *Aurelius* and *Flavius*, see J. Keenan, "The Names Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt," *ZPE* 11 (1973): 33-63; and *ZPE* 13 (1974): 283-304.

way of religious pilgrimage.<sup>63</sup> The speculation of a pilgrimage is supported by several considerations, not the least of which is the intensely religious atmosphere in which Apollos and Victor lived. One of the most visible features of Aphrodito in the papyri is its pervasive religious life. "Near the village were many monasteries," says Keenan, "and in the village proper the buildings most frequently named in the papyri are the churches."<sup>64</sup> The village and its surrounding countryside had over thirty churches and nearly forty monasteries; dozens of nearby farms had names which suggest original religious or monastic settlers or owners.<sup>65</sup> MacCoull imagined the visual impact:

None remain standing; but in the sixth century this one Byzantine Egyptian city must have gleamed with white limestone and the columns and arches of basilicas along every vista. . . . Aphrodito was a city of churches.<sup>66</sup>

Not far from the village were the now renowned monastic sites of Bawit, Der Bala'izah, and Wadi Sarga.<sup>67</sup> A little north of Aphrodito, on the way to Assiut, was Hypselis, where in the sixth century Rufus wrote his extensive

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<sup>63</sup>Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 958.

<sup>64</sup>"The Aphrodite Papyri," 55, and see note 29.

<sup>65</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 7; citing S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, vol. 3 (Wiesbaden, 1985), 1438-1461. For the names of the churches and monasteries and the papyrological sources, see Calderini, 325-40. Concerning the doctrinal beliefs (Chalcedonian or Monophysite) of the churches and monasteries around Aphrodito, MacCoull remarks: "It is interesting that, for a period that later historians construe as one in which the confessional lines were so painfully sharply drawn, evidence for this situation does not appear in the documentary sources" (*Dioscorus*, 7 note 22).

<sup>66</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 7.

<sup>67</sup>Alexander Badawy offers a good, concise study of the monastery at Bawit in *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1978), 258-60.

Bible commentaries. Assiut itself (the ancient Lycopolis) was the hometown of Plotinus, whose extensive Neoplatonic writings were crucial to the development of Christian mystic thought. In the other direction, forty-five miles south of Aphrodito at Sohag lay the famous White Monastery, founded in A.D. 440 by Shenute, a vigorous and powerful abbot. Across the river from the White Monastery lay Panopolis, home town of Nonnus, the author of the two most influential epics in the early Byzantine period: the *Dionysiaca* and a verse paraphrase of the gospel of Saint John.<sup>68</sup> South of Panopolis and up the river's bend was the Pachomian headquarters of Pbow, whose monastic library included the mystic *Vision of Dorotheos*, the epics of Homer, and the comedies of Menander. Not far from this monastery were found the famous Nag Hammadi gnostic codices.<sup>69</sup> It is evident, therefore, that Aphrodito and its neighborhood were an important early Byzantine center of Christian living, Christian writing, and Christian thought.<sup>70</sup>

Apparently many of Apollos' business transactions involved monasteries and churches.<sup>71</sup> Then Apollos himself, just before his trip to

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<sup>68</sup>Ausilia Saija is in the process of publishing a study of the influence of this paraphrase on Dioscorus' poetry.

<sup>69</sup>These Coptic documents, not all of which are gnostic, were buried around A.D. 400. For a discussion of their ties to the Pachomian monasteries in that area, see A. Veilleux, "Monasticism and Gnosis in Egypt," in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity*, ed. B. Pearson and J. Goehring (Philadelphia, 1986; reprinted in paperback, 1992), 271-306.

<sup>70</sup>The above excursus follows basically MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 5-6. For more on monasticism in Egypt during the early Byzantine period, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602, A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Norman, 1964), 929-33. For the beginnings of *coenobium* monasticism, see P. Rousseau *Pachomius: The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1985).

<sup>71</sup>See *P.Lond.* V 1690; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67307 (re-edited by Malz, "The Papyri of Dioscorus: Publications and Emendations," 353-54). The surviving papyri show that also his brother Besarion and his cousin-in-law Phoibammon leased church land. Besarion: *P.Lond.* V

Constantinople or soon after his return, renounced his seemingly successful career and entered the monastic life.<sup>72</sup> He entered a monastery which he himself had founded, the Monastery of the Holy and Christ-Bearing Apostles (later called less formally after the name of its founder, Apa Apollos). He gave responsibility for the monastery's legal affairs to his eldest son, the poet and lawyer Flavius Dioscorus.<sup>73</sup> Apollos remained a monk until his death in A.D. 546/7.<sup>74</sup>

### *The Poet's Early Years*

The generally accepted date for the birth of Flavius Dioscorus is circa A.D. 520.<sup>75</sup> Unlike his father who had to earn the status designation *Flavius*, in the surviving papyri Dioscorus appears always in possession of that title (that is, whenever its appearance is expected). Like sons in other well-to-do families in the early Byzantine period, Dioscorus was probably sent away to study law.<sup>76</sup> Although there is no evidence, Alexandria is the

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1705; cf. 1694 and *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67107 (where Besarion leases land privately owned by a priest). Phoibammon: see the list of transactions in Keenan, "Aurelius Phoibammon," 151.

<sup>72</sup>For a discussion of the date of Apollos' entrance into monastic life, see Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 958; idem, "A Constantinople Loan," 176.

<sup>73</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096; cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67064. Dioscorus may have had a younger brother, Menas, with whom he was on bad terms, and two sisters; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 26-27. T. Gagos and P. van Minnen have suggested only one sibling for Dioscorus, Senuthes; "All in the Family: Private and Public Settlements in Late Antique Egypt," presented at the 18th Annual U.S. Byzantine Studies Conference, 10 October 1992; cf. the handout: "Expanded Family Tree of Dioscorus of Aphrodito."

<sup>74</sup>See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67108.

<sup>75</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 457; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 9.

<sup>76</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 460; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 27.

most likely place for him to have gone;<sup>77</sup> MacCoull has suggested that John Philoponus was his teacher there.<sup>78</sup>

Back home in Aphrodito, Dioscorus married—the name of his wife has not survived—and had children; the documents show clearly that his family's well-being was a constant concern. And like his father, Apollos, he embarked on a busy career of "involvement in local 'politics,' acquisition, leasing and management of agricultural land (his own and others'), defending his own property rights and his village's claim to rightful collection of its own taxes, free of the pagarch's interference (*autopragia*)."<sup>79</sup> Dioscorus' first dated appearance in the papyri is in the year 543 (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67087), when he had the assistant of the *defensor civitatis* of Antaeopolis personally examine the damage done to a field of crops which was under his care but owned by the Monastery of Apa Sourous. Then during the years 543 to 547, the papyri show Dioscorus purchasing wool, making a loan to two Aphroditan farmers, leasing land to a priest and his

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<sup>77</sup>See L. MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes: An Aspect of Coptic Hellenism in the Sixth Century," *Byzantine Studies* 13 (1986): 32. Agathias, the prolific poet of Constantinople and about ten years Dioscorus' junior, studied law in Alexandria. For the academic life in Alexandria from the teacher's point of view, see the letter from Horapollon found in Dioscorus' archive: *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67295.

<sup>78</sup>L. MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," *Studia Patristica* 18 (Kalamazoo, 1987): 163–68. Philoponus was a Neoplatonic γραμματικός (*professor of philology*), who may have had a semi-official position in the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria as editor of Ammonius' lectures. Philoponus was a Christian; and there is a probable connection between the closing of the Neoplatonic school in Athens in 529 by Justinian and the publication of *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World* by Philoponus, who may have been renouncing thereby his former allegiance to the Alexandrian school. Westerink, xiii. See also A. Sanda, *Opuscula Monophysitica Ioannis Philoponi* (Beirut, 1930).

<sup>79</sup>J. Keenan, review of *Dioscorus of Aphrodito, His Work and His World*, by L. MacCoull, in *BASP* 25 (1988): 173.

brother, and having land ceded to him from another priest, Jeremiah.<sup>80</sup> In August of 547, Dioscorus leased one aroura of land to the deacon Psais; this document (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67128) shows that Dioscorus had by then attained the office of πρωτοκωμήτης of Aphrodito.<sup>81</sup>

### *Problems with the Pagarchs*

After his father's death in the 546/7 indictional year,<sup>82</sup> problems with the pagarchs intensified, and Dioscorus was forced to write a petition to the emperor Justinian (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67019 v) and a διδασκαλία to the empress Theodora, Aphrodito's special patron. The former, which has survived in poor condition, discusses Aphrodito's *autopragia* status and mentions the pagarch Julian (l. 17).<sup>83</sup> The latter, *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283, paints a gloomy but generally unspecific picture of the tax conflict.<sup>84</sup> The petitioners,

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<sup>80</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67127; *P.Eg.Mus.inv.S.R.* 3733 A6r; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67108; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67118.

<sup>81</sup>Keenan, "Village Shepherds," 253.

<sup>82</sup>Keenan, "Aurelius Apollos and the Aphrodite Village Élite," 957 note 1; for a discussion of Maspero's mistaken date of 542, see Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 27 note 21.

The indictional year is one of the standard chronological systems in the Dioscorian documents. It is based on fiscal concerns and commonly began on May 1. Indictional years were calculated in cycles of fifteen years. Thus a document could carry a date of the first to the fifteenth indictional year. Without any other chronological evidence (such as the number of years from Justinian's first regnal year, the *dies imperii*), it is often difficult to determine in which cycle of fifteen years a document was written. The months were calculated according to the Egyptian calendar of twelve months of thirty days each (with five additional days at year end) and began on Thoth 1 (August 29). See R. Bagnall and K. Worp, *The Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Zutphen, 1978), 46.

<sup>83</sup>See note 50 above. This and the following document are drafts of the original, as are many of the documents from the Dioscorian archive.

<sup>84</sup>The first page of this three page document is incomplete, and the ink everywhere was effaced by mold; thus there remains no date, no empress' name, and no pagarch's name. It was Maspero who first speculated that the *terminus ante quem* was 548, that the empress was Theodora and not Sophia, and that the pagarch was Julian and not Menas. For his evidence



representing the entire village and including eleven priests from different churches in Aphrodito,<sup>85</sup> begin with the complaint that: "A *clarissimus* called Julian has overstepped his powers by threatening to bring them, the petitioners, before the pagarch of Antaeopolis in the matter of the yearly assessment."<sup>86</sup> Since, however, Aphrodito has the right of *autopragia*, the correct authority in their case would be the duke of the Thebaid (who had civil and military authority over Upper Egypt), resident in Antinoopolis. Dioscorus then depicts the state of affairs at home. After the raids by barbarians,<sup>87</sup> the villagers were trying to lead a quiet and good life; but like a plague, the pagarch and his cohorts attacked. Dioscorus then mentions "all the unspeakable injuries and injustices," which "the papyrus has not been able to contain except to describe in an unbroken wail."<sup>88</sup> Dioscorus then declares that "the one, only, sole thing we have left is hope" (cf. Hesiod *Works and Days* 96). And the petitioners conclude by invoking the healing hand of the empress and the ecclesiastical authorities.

Although carefully and artistically composed,<sup>89</sup> the petition to the

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and reasoning, see *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283, pp. 16-17; cf. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 31. Maspero's restorations and interpretations, which are highly speculative, were accepted without discussion by MacCoull (*Dioscorus*, 19-22); with reservations they are presented here.

<sup>85</sup>For a list of the secular and ecclesiastical offices and the number of representatives from each (as determined by the signatures), see Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 21.

<sup>87</sup>The Blemmyes, a nomad tribe, posed a constant threat against Upper Egypt. Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 469 note 1; Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 656-57.

<sup>88</sup>This sentence (page 1, line 10) has been partially restored by Maspero.

<sup>89</sup>"In it we can already see many of the elements that are to be characteristic of his developed prose style: ornamental and emotionally expressive nouns, declamatory

empress as well as the petition to the emperor seem to have had no effect. So in 551, three years after the death of Theodora, and ten years after his father Apollos' trip, Dioscorus was compelled to go personally to the capital of the empire. He traveled there with a contingent of at least three Aphroditans.<sup>90</sup> The fact that Aphrodito sent a group of representatives all the way to Constantinople to negotiate their grievances makes at least two points clear: 1) Aphrodito must have been affluent; and 2) the grievances must have been serious. Dioscorus may have spent three years negotiating their problems in the "queen of cities."<sup>91</sup> Concerning the object of the trip, the delegation from Aphrodito finally obtained an imperial rescript, a draft of which has survived among Dioscorus' papers.<sup>92</sup> In it, Dioscorus states that while his father had been in Constantinople because of grievous injustices, a certain Theodosius took advantage of his absence and collected the taxes. Theodosius turned nothing over to the provincial treasury, and the village was still being held responsible for the taxes. It seems that Dioscorus had gone once already to Constantinople and had obtained a

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flourishes, biblical and classical reminiscences effectively interwoven. It builds in a crescendo from a simple opening . . . to an elaborate rhetorical close." MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 21.

<sup>90</sup>See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67032.

<sup>91</sup>Maspero ("Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 464) dates his return to 553; to which MacCoull agrees (*Dioscorus*, 11). See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67094. For such drawn out cases, see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 494-99.

<sup>92</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024; see Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 31-32. On the verso is a poem by Dioscorus to Saint Senas, followed by a carefully written copy of a portion of the recto. The recto was again copied on another papyrus, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67025, in a fine cursive hand which does not resemble Dioscorus'. Dioscorus may have written a draft of the kind of rescript he was looking for, and presented this to the Chancery with or without a verbal description of the grievances. The draft would have served as a model for the imperial scribe, and may have been returned to Dioscorus with the actual signed rescript and a copy of it. This, of course, does not explain the carefully written portion below the poem. See the bibliography on these papyri in MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 11 note 35.

rescript, which was then ignored by Theodosius. Now in the rescript of 551, Dioscorus requests that the matter of the first rescript be brought to completion. And finally, he claims that Julian, the pagarch of Antaeopolis, has been trying to bring Aphrodito under control of his own pagarchy. The emperor replies to the charges by instructing the Duke of the Thebaid to examine the issues and, if justified, to stop the pagarch's aggression.

A closer examination of this and the other documents surrounding the visit to the capital reveals Dioscorus' tact as a lawyer and the persistence of the tax-crimes against Aphrodito. Several documents dealing with the confiscation of tax money by Theodosius have been found among the Dioscorian papers; and although the nature of their relationship to one another cannot be established with absolute certainty, Richard Salomon has offered a good examination of the evidence and a tentative chronology.<sup>93</sup> According to Salomon, around 548 Dioscorus obtained in Constantinople an imperial rescript against Theodosius for having stolen money under the pretext of collecting taxes (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67029). The exact office of Theodosius is not known; the surviving papyri call him simply Θεοδόσιον τὸν μεγαλοπρεπέστατον *the most magnificent Theodosius*.<sup>94</sup> Whatever his official role, he was able to evade the imperial orders and kept the money; in 551 Dioscorus returned to Constantinople and obtained a second, more

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<sup>93</sup>R. Salomon, "A Papyrus from Constantinople (Hamburg Inv. No. 410)," *JEA* 34 (1948): 98-108. "In contrast to the Hamburg papyrus neither of the two documents [*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 and 67029] is an original written in Constantinople. What they and some other pieces from the same group really are has been the subject of an unfinished controversy. . . . The present study cannot aim at a definitive solution of this complex problem" (*ibid.*, 104-05). See also Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 407-08.

<sup>94</sup>*P.Hamburg Inv. No. 410*, line 9; the letter cautions against harming Theodosius' reputation, and suggests that Theodosius himself had power to restrain the pagarch.

strongly worded rescript (described above) addressed to the Duke of the Thebaid and requesting him to take care of the previous imperial command.<sup>95</sup> None of the above imperial documents is an original; but Dioscorus' archive contained two letters which stem from the imperial palace and which are originals. Salomon suggests that Dioscorus, a shrewd lawyer, during his first visit took two routes simultaneously. He first pleaded his case to the curator of the θεῖος οἶκος, and elicited a letter to the Duke of the Thebaid to settle the difficulty (P.Hamburg Inv. No. 410). Later, Dioscorus was able to obtain a rescript from the imperial cabinet (67029). The lawyer's intention was to try first a gentle persuasion of the duke and of Theodosius (which the curator's letter prescribed); and if the attempt should fail, Dioscorus had the emperor's order in reserve. Both attempts obviously failed.<sup>96</sup> So in 551, Dioscorus returned to Constantinople and obtained the second letter containing a personal recommendation to the duke (P.Geneva Inv. No. 210)<sup>97</sup> from one of the highest officials of the empire (perhaps the *Praefectus Praetorio Orientis*) and a second imperial rescript (67024) reiterating the first. Whether or not the matter with Theodosius was ever settled cannot be determined from the surviving papyri. The second letter (P.Geneva Inv. No. 210) and the second imperial rescript (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024), however, may have had a temporary effect on

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<sup>95</sup>Of which there are three surviving copies, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 recto, 67024 verso, and 67025; see Maspero, intro. and comments to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 and 67025, pp. 53-58; and note 89 above.

<sup>96</sup>For the problems involved in enforcing imperial rescripts, see J. Keenan, "On Law and Society in Late Roman Egypt," *ZPE* 17 (1975): 243ff.; cf. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 407ff.

<sup>97</sup>This letter has been reprinted as *SB* IV 7438; *Sel. Pap.* II no. 431; P. Pestman, *The New Papyrological Primer*, 5th ed. (Leiden, 1990), no. 78 (with a brief bibliography).

the pagarch; among the surviving papyri there is no more heard about aggression by a pagarch against Aphrodito until shortly after the death of Justinian.<sup>98</sup>

### *Early Poems*

It is possible that while in Constantinople, Dioscorus wrote the first of his surviving poems, a carefully crafted encomium to Saint Senas. It is an isopsephistic poem: if the numerical equivalence for each letter is added up, the total amount for each verse is equal.<sup>99</sup> It is also possible that while in the capital or soon after his return to Aphrodito in 553, Dioscorus composed his first hexameter poems.<sup>100</sup> It would be surprising if the intense cultural life in Constantinople had not spurred Dioscorus' creativity. During the fourth, fifth, and early sixth centuries A.D., the Thebaid was the home of a group of poets who stimulated a renaissance in Greek poetry; during the mid-sixth century, due partially to the patronage of Justinian, Constantinople became the center of this new poetry.<sup>101</sup> By 551, Agathias

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<sup>98</sup>Aside from the village's problems, three other surviving papyri show that Dioscorus received some help with problems concerning his inheritance: *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67026, 67027, 67028. Bell ("An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 26 note 24) finds *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67027-8 very problematic and offers three possible solutions: 1) they are practice translations of Latin imperial rescripts; 2) they concern a different Dioscorus; or 3) they are fictional. MacCoull (*Dioscorus*, 11) says without a discussion that they deal with Dioscorus' inheritance.

<sup>99</sup>As mentioned in note 92 above, the encomium is written on the verso of the draft of an imperial rescript, and on the same side of the papyrus is a partial copy of the draft. For a discussion of the poem and the saint, see L. MacCoull, "An Isopsephistic Encomium on Saint Senas by Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *ZPE* 62 (1986): 51-53.

<sup>100</sup>H.6 and H.8; the chronology here is based upon Malz, "Three Papyri of Dioscorus at the Walters Art Gallery," 174-75. In *Dioscorus*, MacCoull's dating of the poems is very speculative and often confusing. For example, it is confusing when on page 11 she dates the poem H.6 to 553, but then inexplicably to 551-3 on page 63.

<sup>101</sup>See Alan Cameron, "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," *Historia* 14 (1965): 470-71.

(ten years Dioscorus' junior) had returned from Alexandria to Constantinople to practice law and write poetry. Agathias already had composed at a very early age a collection of poetry which was published under the title *Daphniaca*; later, as a successful lawyer and important member of the Constantinopolitan circle of poets, he would publish an anthology of epigrams from some twenty-three contemporary poets. Called ὁ κύκλος (*the circle*), the collection of epigrams has come to be known as *The Cycle*. Much of it later became incorporated into the extensive and well-known collection of Greek epigrams, the *Anthologia Graeca*.<sup>102</sup> There is no evidence that Dioscorus ever met Agathias or his literary friends, including Paul the Silentiary; yet Agathias, Paul, and the other Constantinopolitan authors are an indication of the teeming poetic activity in the capital at the time of Dioscorus' visit.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the Church of the Blessed Virgin (built by the empress Verina) was now resounding with the innovative and powerful hymns of Romanus the Melodist, "the greatest poet of the Greek middle ages, indeed . . . the greatest poet of the Christian church."<sup>104</sup> Dioscorus' poem H.12 was probably addressed to Romanus the Melodist;<sup>105</sup> and among the surviving manuscripts of Dioscorus, this piece

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<sup>102</sup>It is likely that the *Cycle*, which survives in part in the Palatine and Planudean anthologies, was published between 567 - 568 and dedicated to Justin II; see Averil and Alan Cameron, "The *Cycle* of Agathias," *JHS* 86 (1966): 6-25. For biographies of Agathias, see *ibid.*, 8-10; Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), 1-11. For a discussion of Agathias' education, see Cameron, *Agathias*, 140-41.

<sup>103</sup>For a list and biographical information on the authors of the surviving portions of *The Cycle*, see Averil and Alan Cameron, "The *Cycle* of Agathias," 8ff. Many of the twenty-three poets were also lawyers.

<sup>104</sup>P. Maas as quoted by C. Trypanis, "The Metres of Romanos," *Byzantion* 36 (1966): 621 note 2.

<sup>105</sup>Kuehn, "Dioskoros of Aphrodito and Romanos the Melodist," 103-07.

is both one of the most splendid in poetic achievement and one of the most elegant in its calligraphy.<sup>106</sup>

*More Problems with the Pagarchs*

Back in Aphrodito, besides writing poetry Dioscorus continued managing his estate and, as πρωτοκομήτης, ministering to the needs of the village.<sup>107</sup> *P.Lond.* V 1661 shows him, in his position as one of the πρωτοκομήται, receiving on behalf of the pagarchs Julian and Menas an agreement concerning taxes written by two ἀπαιτηταὶ τῶν λειτουργῶν of Aphrodito;<sup>108</sup> the ἀπαιτηταί acknowledge a debt of twelve solidi. Bell explains:

The 12 solidi represent, therefore, the amount at which the village (or the subdivision of it for which these persons were responsible) was assessed for the tax in question, and the document is simply an undertaking by the ἀπαιτηταί to collect and pay over this amount. . . . The ἀπαιτηταί pledge their whole property as security for the payment, [which shows] that the collectors were themselves held responsible for the tax they were called upon to collect, and that in case of a deficit distraint would be levied upon them.<sup>109</sup>

It appears to have been a statutory institution in Aphrodito that the *protokometai* acted as intermediaries between the pagarchs and tax collectors; and it seems evident from this and other documents that only if Aphrodito defaulted on its payments could the pagarchs take over direct

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<sup>106</sup>H. J. M. Milne has included a photo (plate VII) in his edition of the hexameter portion of the poem, *P.Lond.Lit.* 98.

<sup>107</sup>For Dioscorus as village headman in 553, see *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67332.

<sup>108</sup>The handwriting of the document belongs to a notary, Pilatus, or one of his assistants.

<sup>109</sup>Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1661, p. 25.

control of tax-collecting in Aphrodito.<sup>110</sup> Concerning Dioscorus' personal affairs in the 550's, the papyri show that in 553 he rented out a wagon for harvest transport; and in 555 and 556 he leased pasture land to a shepherd, George from Psinabla in the Panopolite nome; and in 557 he made a loan to the deacon Musaeus, son of Callinicus.<sup>111</sup> Then a silence lasting for seven years interrupts the dated documents (557 to 564/5). This gap is probably the result of the capricious nature of the surviving papyri. Then in 564/5 Dioscorus wrote a contract for the Monastery of Zminos in the Panopolite nome, by which the monks leased in an orchard (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67170 and 67171).<sup>112</sup> And on 7 November 565, Dioscorus sold to the same monastery three arouras of land (*P.Lond.* V 1686) in consideration of their payment of his taxes on his land at Phthla; the payment of these taxes was particularly galling for Dioscorus, as will be seen in the document below.

In 566 Dioscorus left Aphrodito, not to return for about seven years. Two petitions which Dioscorus drafted later in Antinoopolis suggest a reason: the threat of violence from the pagarch Menas.<sup>113</sup> One petition is addressed to the Duke of the Thebaid (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002); the other (*P.Lond.* V 1677) is addressed to an unidentified μαγίστηρ.<sup>114</sup> The former will be reviewed here, because although the pagarch's violence is vivid in both, the picture in the petition to the duke is more detailed and

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<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 25; and see *idem*, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 58.

<sup>111</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67303; *P.Lond.* V 1692 a + b; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67130.

<sup>112</sup>For the date of 564/5, see R. Bagnall and K. Worp, "Chronological Notes on Byzantine Documents, V," *BASP* 17 (1980): 19-22.

<sup>113</sup>For the dating of these two documents, see Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1677, p. 69.

<sup>114</sup>See the discussion of this papyrus below.



comprehensive.<sup>115</sup> This petition, written by Dioscorus' hand, was composed almost certainly in 567/8, shortly after Dioscorus' arrival at Antinoopolis.<sup>116</sup> It was written on behalf of the property owners and inhabitants of Aphrodito. After an introduction praising the justice of the duke, Dioscorus goes immediately to the heart of the problem: the unspeakable and uncountable sufferings inflicted by Menas ever since taking over the pagarchy of Antaeopolis in 566/7.<sup>117</sup> Menas had confiscated Dioscorus' property (probably not all of it, but at least his estates near Phthla) and allowed an assistant (βοηθός) and the shepherds of Phthla to use the land free of rent; as an additional outrage, Dioscorus was being forced to pay the taxes on the seized property. Dioscorus then describes the atrocities committed against some other Aphroditans. On their annual visit to the great cattle market at This, a group of Aphroditans for no just cause were seized by order of Menas and thrown into a local prison. From there they were transferred to a prison in Antinoopolis, and finally to a prison in Antaeopolis. In all the prisons they were tortured; at Antaeopolis they were

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<sup>115</sup>Maspero first identified the duke as Flavius Marianus and dated the document to 522 or 537; intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002, p. 6; idem, "Études sur les papyrus d'Aphrodité," *BIFAO* 6 (1908): 75-120; *BIAO* 7 (1910): 97-119. Later he identified the duke as Athanasius ("Les Papyrus Beaugé," *BIAO* 10 [1912]: 138), and revised the date to 566/7 (Bell, *P.Lond.* V 1663, comment to line 1). A chronology of the dukes of the Thebaid during Dioscorus' lifetime has not been established with any certainty. An early attempt was made by Maspero in "Les Papyrus Beaugé," 143 (a revision of *BIAO* 7 [1910]: 107-109). A summary of Bell's conclusions can be found in *P.Lond.* V, "INDEX OF OFFICIALS," s.v. δούξ. The most recent attempt was by MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 30-40.

<sup>116</sup>Bell wrote that: "[P.Cair.Masp. 67002] must have been written in the latter part of 567 or the beginning of 568." Intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1677, p. 69; cf. idem, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 57; *P.Lond.* V 1663, comment to line 1.

<sup>117</sup>On 24 July 553 Menas was sharing the pagarchy with Julian (*P.Lond.* V 1661); but until 566/7 Menas was serving only as deputy pagarch for the actual office holder, Patricia. Maspero, "Les papyrus Beaugé," 142; Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1661, p. 25; idem, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1660, p.22.

subjected to outrages and tortures for six months, until Menas extorted 117 solidi from them.<sup>118</sup> Although they were able to procure from the Duke of the Thebaid an order of release, Menas ignored this order and kept them in prison for another four months. (The surviving document does not clarify whether the total time of incarceration was six or ten months.) Meanwhile, their cattle had been sequestered; and the animals which were not outright confiscated, they later had to purchase back at auction on very unfavorable terms. Furthermore, although Aphrodito under eight pagarchs had never been in arrears with its public taxes, Menas now took the most unjust and cruel measures against the entire village. At the time of the Nile's inundation, he blocked the canal and prevented the irrigation of the fields. After the village had been made desperate by this measure, Menas attacked with a force of pirates, local recruits (the shepherds of Phthla?), and soldiers. Seven hundred gold solidi were stolen—in the name of public taxes, although none of the amount was later credited to Aphrodito's account. Magnificent old mansions were burned down; nuns were violated. Menas ravaged the village worse than the barbarians would have done. Instead of irrigation from the Nile, "human blood ran like water over the land." Although only the Aphroditans' side of the story has survived, Bell is "confident that grave abuses occurred."<sup>119</sup> Although it cannot be determined precisely when these events occurred,<sup>120</sup> they almost certainly

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<sup>118</sup>As a result of the currency reform by Diocletian, the standard coin was the gold *solidus*, weighing four grams.

<sup>119</sup>"An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 34.

<sup>120</sup>The only date which is given in the surviving papyrus 67002 is the fifteenth indiction, when Menas took over the pagarchy. The events described in the petition took place after his having taken control of the office.

took place immediately before or after Dioscorus' departure from his village.

One man in Aphrodito had already been secretly murdered and his corpse cremated upon written orders, allegedly, from a soldier called Menas. The soldier Menas had planned the murder (again allegedly) in conjunction with an unidentified μεγαλοπρεπέστατος Σαραπάμμων (*most magnificent Sarapammon*). *P.Mich.* XIII 660 and 661, found among Dioscorus' papers, are records of the court-proceedings. Although Sarapammon's political office cannot be established, one can speculate that he did not reside in Aphrodito—the orders for the murder were sent by letter—and yet he had some jurisdiction over the village. He later fined the village three pounds of gold (which he allegedly kept for himself) for conspiring to commit the murder (which he and the soldier Menas allegedly had ordered). One can also speculate that the soldier Menas, who was already under indictment for brutally murdering a priest, had more clout than a normal soldier; the villagers (allegedly) had obeyed his along with Sarapammon's written instructions. Menas the soldier had possibly committed the one murder and instigated the other before A.D. 542.<sup>121</sup> Although there appears a similarity in character, there is no evidence to link this Menas with Menas the pagarch.<sup>122</sup> The latter Menas' climb to the pagarchy, however, had been gradual. The surviving papyri suggest that between A.D. 553 (or perhaps

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<sup>121</sup>L. MacCoull, "The Aphrodito Murder Mystery," *JJP* 20 (1990): 103. The interpretation by MacCoull differs from that by P. Sijpesteijn, the original editor of the papyri. MacCoull believes that the murders were a result of the Chalcedonian-Nonchalcedonian conflict in Upper Egypt; and Dioscorus' father, already a monk, was testifying on behalf of the prosecution against the Chalcedonians. See *ibid.*, 103-07.

<sup>122</sup>Bell suggested that Dioscorus had a younger brother also named Menas, with whom he was on bad terms; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 26 note 22. (It seems that Dioscorus also had a brother named Senuthes; *P.Mich.* XIII 669.)

already earlier) and 566, Menas was only deputy-pagarch. This Menas, a σκρινιάρσιος (*secretary*), was delegated to perform the functions of the pagarchy for the actual office-holder, Patricia. In 566/7 he obtained full control of the office of pagarch.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps it was his increase in power and Aphrodito's loss of an imperial patron (with the death of Justinian in 565) that emboldened Menas the pagarch to commit the violent outrages described in the petition above.<sup>124</sup>

Perhaps it was the pagarch's unbridled ruthlessness or the imminent threat of such ruthlessness that compelled Dioscorus in 566 to leave his village (perhaps with his wife and children) and go into self-imposed exile at Antinoopolis, capital city of the Thebaid.<sup>125</sup> Dioscorus' motivation for his move to Antinoopolis, however, cannot be established with certainty.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup>Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1660, p.22.

<sup>124</sup>In addition to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 and *P.Lond.* V 1677, documents which deal with the misdeeds of the pagarch Menas are *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67021 and possibly 67003; see also *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283 and the discussion of this document above. For letters sent by the pagarch Menas to Dioscorus, see *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67060, 67061; cf. *P.Lond.* V 1682, 1683.

<sup>125</sup>In "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," Maspero, who admitted that his chronology was tentative (p. 462 note 1), has Dioscorus go into exile three times: to Antinoopolis (551), to Pentapolis (after his return from Constantinople in 553), and again to Antinoopolis (566); see pp. 463-66. Bell concluded that there was only one stay at Antinoopolis from 566-573 (intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, pp. 56-57; "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 33-35). MacCoull places Dioscorus' only move to Antinoopolis at 565 (*Dioscorus*, 11-12) and at 566 (*Dioscorus*, 23-24, 162); this would mean the fourteenth indiction.

For information about the city, see Calderini, 69-114.

<sup>126</sup>Maspero proposed the following sequence of events: Menas was promoted from deputy to actual office holder during the fifteenth indictional year, 566/7 (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002.10); Dioscorus was persecuted by Menas and left Aphrodito for Antinoopolis ("Dioscore, persécuté par lui, s'enfuit d'Aphrodité et se réfugie à Antinoé"); there Dioscorus composed the petition *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002. "Les Papyrus Beaugé," 142. These suggestions were accepted by Bell, with the addition that the petitions were written not long after the end of the fifteenth indiction; see his introductions to *P.Lond.* V 1660 (pp. 21-22), 1661 (pp. 24-26), and 1674 (pp. 55-58).

The dates of composition of the two petitions *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 and *P.Lond.* V 1677 were almost certainly circa 567/8.<sup>127</sup> Although the petitions concerned events just before or just after Dioscorus' move to Antinoopolis, they do not prove that he *fled* his village. Maspero stated that he fled the persecutions at home; Bell too believed that Dioscorus fled; and McCoull spoke of "elements of unrest leading to his move."<sup>128</sup> Keenan, however, in consideration of the fact that Antinoopolis provided better career opportunities for Dioscorus' legal training than did Aphrodito, suggested that the move was motivated by ambition.<sup>129</sup> It is possible that both these motivations, the dangers at home and the attractions of Antinoopolis, played a rôle in Dioscorus' final decision.<sup>130</sup>

### *Antinoopolis*

It is a commonly accepted belief among Dioscorian scholars that already by the autumn of 567, Dioscorus had become a νομικός, probably on the ducal τάξις.<sup>131</sup> There is no specific evidence, however, that Dioscorus

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<sup>127</sup>With respect to *P.Lond.* V 1677, Bell wrote: "A comparison of ll. 12-15 with *Cair. Masp.* 67002, i, 11-18 makes it quite certain that the occasion was the same as in the latter document; and since that must have been written in the latter part of 567 or the beginning of 568 the date of the present document cannot be much later. It may probably be earlier." Intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1677, p. 69; cf. idem, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 57; idem, *P.Lond.* V 1663, comment to line 1; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 24.

<sup>128</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 463-66; idem, "Les papyrus Beaugé," 142; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 34; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 12 note 41.

<sup>129</sup>"It is sometimes suggested that the Antinoopolis years were years of quasi-exile, with Dioscorus running away from troubled circumstances back home (problems with the pagarch and unruly shepherds); but it is also possible that the capital presented Dioscorus with a 'career opportunity' that he could not turn down." Keenan, review of *Dioscorus*, 173.

<sup>130</sup>MacCoull points also to the social and cultural attractions of Antinoopolis; *Dioscorus*, 24 note 35.

<sup>131</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 24, 31, 77, 79; cf. 12; eadem, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 32;

was a νομικός or that he was on the ducal τάξις. This theory developed, in part, from the request by the persona of poem H.10.31 to be made a νομικός.<sup>132</sup> The rest of the evidence is circumstantial: Dioscorus was engaged in para-legal activities (writing contracts and petitions, arbitrating family disputes, etc.) sometimes for dignitaries. The surviving documents from this period cover a wide variety of legal and contractual business. One interesting personal document is the record of a debt which Dioscorus paid off for his late father Apollos and for his brother Senuthes.<sup>133</sup> Most of his work, however, centered around the concerns of other people. Dioscorus composed at least three marriage contracts in which the bridegroom promised a sum of money to the bride as a wedding present (a *donatio propter nuptias*).<sup>134</sup> Marriage contracts from the early Byzantine period are rare, and Dioscorus' records have considerably boosted historians' understanding of this institution.<sup>135</sup> He also composed divorce contracts (which, unlike marriage contracts, have numerous representatives from

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Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 56; see also his brief discussion of *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67131 v A, in "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 34; Maspero, *Les papyrus Beaugé*, 142; idem, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 466.

<sup>132</sup>Maspero, *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67131 verso A, comment to line 32; idem, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 437 note 2, 466; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 34; idem, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 56; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 77, 79 comment to verse 31.

<sup>133</sup>*P.Hamb.* III 231; cf. *P.Mich.* XIII 669.

<sup>134</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67310, which is a draft of *P.Lond.* V 1711 (which itself is a copy of the original for Dioscorus' reference); *P.Lond.* 1710; *P.Flor.* III 294.

<sup>135</sup>For the rarity of marriage contracts from the early Byzantine period, see Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1710, p. 139; G. Scherillo, "Studi sulla donazione nuziale," *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 2 (1929): 457-506, esp. 473ff. Cf. R. Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, 332 B.C. - 640 A.D., 2nd ed. (Warsaw, 1955), 128-29.

this period).<sup>136</sup> He often worked, as mentioned above, for dignitaries; he composed, for example, contracts for Flavius John (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67309) and Flavius Victor (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67169).<sup>137</sup> And the longest and most elaborate surviving document composed by Dioscorus (307 lines) is a final will and testament for the city's Surgeon General, Flavius Phoebammon.<sup>138</sup>

Dioscorus was also in demand as an arbitrator, especially for family disputes. He arbitrated an inheritance case in which a boot manufacturer, Psates, was being sued by his sisters and brothers-in-law.<sup>139</sup> Dioscorus arbitrated another inheritance case in which a sister and brother, Victorine and Phoebammon, were suing their half-sister Philadelphia and their stepmother Amanias for carrying off movable property (τὰ σκεύη) which should have been evenly distributed among the three children.<sup>140</sup> The parties involved in the latter dispute were Copts, and the arbitration settlement was written by Dioscorus in Coptic. Also during his Antinoopolite years, Dioscorus remained involved in the legal affairs of

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<sup>136</sup>For a list of divorce contracts from Dioscorus' Antinoopolite files, see Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1712, p. 144; updated by Scherillo, 473, 492-97. Cf. Taubenschlag, 122ff.

<sup>137</sup>For the authorship, see Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67309, p. 81; idem, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67169, p. 136. For information on Flavius John and Flavius Victor, see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 12-13.

<sup>138</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151, 67152. For the authorship of these two documents, see Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151, pp. 87-88; idem, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67152, p. 101. For a discussion and bibliography on this document, see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 50-55. The settlement (διόλυσσις) *P.Mich.* XIII 659 is longer (over 360 lines); but although found in Dioscorus' archive, its author has not been established.

<sup>139</sup>*P.Lond.* V 1708. The settlement is Dioscorus' second longest document: 265 lines; for its length, see Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1708, p. 114.

<sup>140</sup>*P.Lond.* V 1709; 1728 and 1745 refer to this same dispute. Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1709, pp. 130-31.

monasteries and of the religious.<sup>141</sup> The deceased father of the three Coptic children in the above dispute had been a deacon, possibly attached to the private chapel of the duke.<sup>142</sup> Dioscorus twice acted as arbitrator in a case involving two half-brothers who were monks, Anoup and Julius; here again he recorded the depositions and his decisions in Coptic. Dioscorus had to decide to what extent these two monks were still the owners of property which had been bequeathed to them by their mother but which, since their entrance into the monastic life, had become associated with the monastery. The monastery involved had been founded by Dioscorus' own father, the Monastery of the Holy and Christ-Bearing Apostles. Dioscorus awarded joint ownership of the disputed property to the two monks and Apa Papnute, who was the monastery's *oeconomus* and legal representative.<sup>143</sup> In her analysis of these latter two documents, MacCoull noted Dioscorus' "gentle tact" and piety; he expressed concern not only for the social, but also for the spiritual well-being of the monastery. As a postscript, Dioscorus added an invocation to the Holy Trinity and the request: "May I receive protection from above through your prayers."

When the same monastery began to have problems relating to the pagarch of Antaeopolis, Dioscorus wrote a petition—as pointless as it may have seemed to him—to the duke.<sup>144</sup> This and the petition discussed above

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<sup>141</sup>In addition to the documents discussed below, see *P.Lond.* V 1686; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67162, 67170, 67171.

<sup>142</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 45.

<sup>143</sup>For a discussion of these two Coptic documents, *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67176 r + *P.Alex. Inv.* 689 and *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353 r (which document is very difficult to read), see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 36-45.

<sup>144</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003. MacCoull states (*Dioscorus*, 31): "One wonders, in view of the known behavior of the pagarch of Antaeopolis, just how much attention he will pay to



(*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002) are two of at least four petitions composed in Antinoopolis which addressed problems relating to the pagarchs of Antaeopolis.<sup>145</sup> In the case involving the monastery, it seems that a certain Ezekiel, κουρεὺς καὶ συκοφάντης καὶ πονηρός, was trying to seize land which had been donated to it as an offering by a widow for her and her late husband's souls. The embassy of monks which had solicited the petition from Dioscorus ended it with the prayer: ὄθεν παρακαλοῦμεν τὸ ὕψος ὑμῶν, ἐνορκοῦντες κατὰ τῆς ἀ[γί]ας Τριάδος εἰ παρασταίη προστάξει τῷ παγάρχη τῆς Ἀνταιο(πολιτῶν) καὶ τῷ τοποτηρητῇ ταύτης ἀφ' ἡμῶν αὐτὸν ἀπότρεφαι, δέσποται ὑπερφυέστατοι (lines 24-25). This request suggests that Ezekiel was not taking the land for personal reasons, but was perhaps acting under the jurisdiction of the pagarch and his assistant tax-collector, and was perhaps employed by them. This petition was made circa 566/7, as was the petition *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 above.

From the same period comes one of Dioscorus' most powerful prose works: a διδασκαλία addressed to an unnamed *magister*.<sup>146</sup> Again it concerns the cruelty of the pagarch Menas; but unlike the petition *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 (discussed above), which was on behalf of all Aphrodito, this petition is on behalf of Dioscorus, his sister's family, and his own son. What first strikes a reader as unusual is that Dioscorus has written his own name centered on a separate line of the recto and enclosed it between

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the duke. But it is very much Dioscorus' job to request that the duke curb the pagarch."

<sup>145</sup>For an examination of the rhetoric, see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 16-56, esp. 31. For an analysis and interpretation of the literary and religious allusions in these petitions, see A. Kovelman, "From Logos to Myth: Egyptian Petitions of the 5th-7th Centuries," *BASP* 28 (1991): 135-52.

<sup>146</sup>*P.Lond.* V 1677.

crosses. The verso side begins with a cross and the Christian abbreviation *χμγ*//.<sup>147</sup> The *magister* is never identified by Dioscorus; but after two lines of praise (τῷ ἀλ[η]θρινῷ ἀγαθῷ δεσπότη μου . . . λαμπροτάτῳ καὶ περ[ιβλ]έπτῳ μαγίστερι lines 1-2), Dioscorus says (lines 5-6):

εὐφήμ[εῖται] καὶ διαβεβόηται ἐν ἅπασι παρὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ἢ  
φιλοκαγαθὸς ὑμῶν [λαμ]πρὰ εὐε[ρ]γασία ἀεὶ σπουδασοῦσα πάντα τὰ  
λυσιτελῆ καὶ ψυχοφελῆ.

The authority's benevolence has a universal reputation (ἐν ἅπασι παρὰ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου), and he is concerned for everyone's spiritual well-being (ἀεὶ σπουδασοῦσα πάντα τὰ λυσιτελῆ καὶ ψυχοφελῆ). In this διδασκαλία, Dioscorus recounts a crime by Menas which was previously described in the petition to the duke: Menas has transferred Dioscorus' lands at Phthla to the βοηθός and shepherds of that village, leaving the tax liability to the poet. Menas also forced Dioscorus' brother-in-law Apollos to take the office of πρωτοκωμήτης of Aphrodito; and then claiming that the village was in arrears in its tax payments, Menas sent a group of men to pillage Apollos' home. The pagarch handed Apollos' land too over to the shepherds of Phthla, and thereby reduced him and his children to poverty. Not content with these crimes, Menas, under the pretext that Dioscorus' own son (an older son who obviously had not gone to Antinoopolis with his father) was now responsible for the missing taxes, had him arrested. At the end of the petition, there is an indication that the taxes had been paid and that the receipts were stolen with the rest of the belongings in Apollos' home. This petition—although dealing with the same evils—is different in several

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<sup>147</sup>For possible meanings of the *χμγ* abbreviation, see A. Gostoli, *Studia Papyrologica* 22 (1983): 9-14; G. Robinson, *Tyche* 1 (1986): 175-77.

respects from Dioscorus' other petitions. Rather than asking a specific magistrate for a specific redress, Dioscorus is simply expressing his personal grief to some unidentified higher power.<sup>148</sup>

Dioscorus' seven years of self-imposed exile in the capital city of Upper Egypt were also productive creatively; the general consensus is that most of his encomia and epithalamia were composed here.<sup>149</sup> Antinoopolis, founded during the reign of Hadrian, was for Egypt second in importance only to Alexandria; and, after the governmental reorganization of Egypt according to Justinian's Thirteenth Edict, it became the administrative center of the duke. Unlike the *praeses* who had only civil authority, the duke had both civil and military jurisdiction over the Thebaid; and as *Augustalis*, he governed independently, free of interference from Lower Egypt.<sup>150</sup> It has been assumed by most scholars that Dioscorus, in order to advance his career and financial situation, wrote his poems in adulation of

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<sup>148</sup>Μαγίστηρ may be a personal name; see Preisigke, *Namenbuch*, s.v. Μαγίστερ, Μαγίστωρ. The term may also refer to a political office, the *Magister*; for the many office-holders who were called *Magister*, see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), index s.v. *magister*. The title was also used for the duke; see Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, section 8, s.v. μαγίστηρ. The salutations, however, show that this document cannot be addressed to a duke; Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1677, p. 69. Bell suggested (*ibid.*) that the μαγίστηρ was an official on the ducal τάξις; cf. *P.Lond.* V 1678, which is addressed to at least two μαγίστηρες, one of which is Callinicus. Cf. S. Daris, *Il lessico latino nel greco d'Egitto*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona, 1991), s.v. *magister*; Lampe, s.v. μάγιστρος. See also LSJ and Lampe, s.v. ῥαββί.

<sup>149</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 466-68, 479-80; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 35; Viljamaa, 32-33; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 13-14.

<sup>150</sup>For the structure of the government in Upper Egypt and the importance of Antinoopolis in the mid sixth century, see Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 281-83, 656-57; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 467; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 34; MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 32.

several dukes and members of their staffs.<sup>151</sup> Maspero stated this assumption already in his critical essay of 1911, and interpreted verses in several poems as undisguised requests for money; this assumption and the interpretations have since gone unchallenged—even by MacCoull.<sup>152</sup> The following two chapters will show that there is much more at work in these poems.

Before leaving Antinoopolis, Dioscorus drafted yet another petition for an embassy of Aphroditans, complaining of new outrages committed by the pagarch.<sup>153</sup> The petition is addressed to an unnamed new duke, and states that the previous tax rate for the village's arable land and vineyards (two carats per aroura and eight carats per aroura, respectively) had been raised by the pagarch Julian; Julian then promised that no further tax increases would be made. This agreement was not kept and the taxes were raised. When owing to the failure of the inundation, the new taxes could not be met, Julian made an agreement that he would be content with payment at the old tax-rate. Yet then with a gang of followers, the pagarch inexplicably attacked the village and committed many outrages, including

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<sup>151</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 466-68; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 28, 34; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 12; eadem, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 32, 36-37.

<sup>152</sup>"Bon nombre de ses ἐγκώμια se terminent par une demande d'argent non déguisée: il faut croire qu'il en obtenait par ce moyen, puisqu'il y persévéra. Les ducs de Thébaïde eux-même estimaient donc que les panégyriques du versificateur valaient bien une gratification: ils y prenaient plaisir. Leur lecture se faisait à cette petite cour lettrée, dans la ville demi-grecque d'Antinoé, la première d'Égypte après Alexandrie." Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 479-80. Cf. MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 36-37; Cameron, "Wandering Poets," 478.

<sup>153</sup>*P. Lond.* V 1674. Bell dates this undated draft of the petition to circa 570; intro. to *P. Lond.* V 1674, pp. 56-57.

violating the women religious.<sup>154</sup> The petition suggests that these activities by the pagarch were in disregard of the duke, who had granted Aphrodito a remission of taxes.<sup>155</sup> To confirm the truth of their statements in the petition, the villagers took an oath in the monastery of Apa Macrobius ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἁγίων *in the presence of the saints* (*P.Lond.* V 1674.73). MacCoull interprets this statement, probably correctly, as meaning that they took their oath before the icons or relics of the saints. The Aphroditans further confirmed the truth of their statements by a written oath to God and Christ, the King of Kings: μάρτυρα γὰρ καλοῦμεν τὸν δεσπό(την) Θε(ε)ὸν καὶ βασιλέα βασιλευόντων Χριστόν (lines 83-84).

#### *Return to Aphrodito*

Before May of 574, Dioscorus had returned to Aphrodito.<sup>156</sup> The reason for his return is nowhere made clear. Bell has suggested that a new duke was finally able to—or wanted to—control the pagarch's aggression.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>For interpretations of this document, which has several lacunae, see Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, pp. 55-58; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 47-50. It has not been established whether this Julian is the same Julian who had been pagarch with Menas in 553 (*P.Lond.* V 1661); who had been named in the imperial rescript of 551 (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024); who, Maspero thought, was pagarch in the διδασκαλία to the empress (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283); and who was named in the petition to the emperor (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67019).

<sup>155</sup>See Bell, intro. to *P.Lond.* V 1674, p. 58, and comment to line 97; idem, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 35.

<sup>156</sup>Maspero dated *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096 to November 573 - May 574; intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096, p. 137. Cf. MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 14, 29, 134.

<sup>157</sup>Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 35. I am reticent to name a particular duke; the names of the dukes during Dioscorus' lifetime and the dates of their tenure remain a puzzle. "The list of the *duces*, in spite of the rich-looking material in the Cairo papyri, still is an unsolved riddle. The tentative lists presented by Maspero and Bell, the two masters in the field, disagree on every date." R. Salomon, "A Papyrus from Constantinople," 107. MacCoull's more recent list ("Dioscorus and the Dukes," 30-40) is too conjectural and, with respect to Romanus, probably wrong.

Perhaps his return is related to events in Constantinople. By November of 573, Justin II had gone completely insane, and Empress Sophia with Tiberius had taken over control of the empire.<sup>158</sup> Tiberius immediately ended Justin's savage persecutions of Monophysites, which had begun in 571.<sup>159</sup> Dioscorus' stay in Antinoopolis, then, corresponds roughly with the effective reign of Justin II, 565-573. Yet whatever the reason for returning to his village, Dioscorus appears to have withdrawn now from legal and political activities.<sup>160</sup> He composed a contract for the monk Psates from the Monastery of Apa Apollon; the monk was donating a house (κέλλιον) and money to enlarge the house in order to provide a residence for visiting monks (α ξενοδοχείον).<sup>161</sup> The rest of the documents from after Dioscorus' return concern mundane rural activities: receipts and disbursements of grain, seed grain, chickpeas, and mud for bricks; a camel driver is paid; etc. Creatively, however, Dioscorus was possibly very productive. His two elaborate encomia to John (H.2 and H.3) have been assigned by MacCoull to the post-Antinoopolite years.<sup>162</sup> Since many of his poems were composed on the backs of documents written in Antinoopolis and brought to

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<sup>158</sup>Tiberius' reign, however, did not become official until 578, after Justin II had died.

<sup>159</sup>Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 306-307. In 571 the Monophysite monk and author of *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, John of Ephesus, also went into exile; he was then put in prison, where he remained (writing his *Ecclesiastical History*) until his death in 589. The persecutions were originated by the patriarch of Constantinople, John Scholasticus. See John of Ephesus' *Ecclesiastical History*, parts 2 and 3; cf. S. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, 1990), 30.

<sup>160</sup>Cf. Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 468; Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 35. Maspero even suggested that Dioscorus, like his father, entered the monastic life; "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 468.

<sup>161</sup>See Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096, p. 137.

<sup>162</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 14.

Aphrodito, more than these two poems may have been composed not in the capital but in the village. His last dated document is a contract entered into an eight-page account book written in his hand:<sup>163</sup> although the accounts seem to come from a few years earlier, a land lease recorded on one of the leaves bears the date of 5 April 585. And here the archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito and all that we know of his life come to a close.

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<sup>163</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67325; the date 585 occurs on page 4 recto, line 5. See the discussions by Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," 35 note 76; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 14.

## CHAPTER 2

### AN ANACREONTIC AND CHAIRETISMOS : PARODY AND ALLEGORY

Our examination for evidence of mystical allegory in the poetry of Dioscorus begins not with a true encomium, but with a poem which can be described only as a white elephant, the poem *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F. Although this poem has encomiastic elements, there is no other poem like it in the surviving oeuvre of Dioscorus. In fact there is no poem like it in the Greek and Latin languages, except for one composed about fifty years later by Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem (633/4 - 639). This poem by Sophronius seems to have been written in reaction to Dioscorus' poem; it thereby not only is evidence of some limited circulation of the Aphroditan's poem, but also offers significant help in interpreting it.

Dioscorus' poem is complex in the interplay between its two parts and between its various levels of meaning. The first part of the poem consists of sixteen anacreontic verses;<sup>1</sup> these four strophes are remarkable among ancient anacreontics because of the inclusion of what seems to be four verses of outright plagiarism. The tradition of the genre gives much allowance in the use of borrowed verses;<sup>2</sup> yet the "borrowing" by Dioscorus

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<sup>1</sup>An *anacreontic* is a poem imitating the meter and usually other stylistic features of the poems of Anacreon of Teos (c. 563 - 478 B.C.). Except for some Christian examples of the genre, most anacreontics also imitate the convivial ethos of the poems of Anacreon.

<sup>2</sup>See Patricia Rosenmeyer's study of this traditional technique; *The Poetics of Imitation: Anacreon and the Anacreontic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992), esp. 74-114, 147-224.



is excessive. It will be demonstrated below, however, that this borrowing is not plagiarism; the author is not trying to conceal the fact that he has taken verses from another poem. Rather, it is like a *cento* which points directly to its literary source, whose fatalism deepens the meaning of Dioscorus' optimism.<sup>3</sup> In both the extent of the borrowing and the inverted use of pagan literature to deepen the meaning of his own poem, Dioscorus is following the practice of Prudentius, who used Vergil in a similar fashion for his mystical allegory, *Psychomachia*.<sup>4</sup>

Dioscorus' anacreontic verses are followed by a second part, a stanza in the form of a *chairetismos*. The *chairetismos* was a standard format used in hymns and prayers among ancient Greeks and Egyptians. Its distinctive feature was a line or verse or, more commonly, a litany of lines or verses beginning with the salutation *χαῖρε, χαίροις, χαίρετε*, or the like. In the Byzantine era, *chairetismoι* were sung in worship of the Mother of God and in adoration of icons of saints and angels. It appears that Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, replete with Aristophanic compound words, is parodying hymns to icons and the Christian cult of icon worship.

The anacreontic verses and the *chairetismos* have also a deeper level of meaning; by use of allusions, they follow the development of the

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<sup>3</sup>The *cento* is a poem or part of a poem which is composed of mixed quotations from a well-known poem; by conspicuous and inappropriate placement of the quotations, the *cento* often ridicules the original poem. Dioscorus' anacreontic is not a *cento*, but is *cento*-like. For a discussion of *centones*, see M. Smith, *Prudentius' "Psychomachia": A Reexamination* (Princeton, 1976), 259-70.

<sup>4</sup>Quotations of pagan poetry were used extensively by Prudentius. Macklin Smith argued (pp. 239-40): "The Christian *cento* in the hands of a good poet can be a sophisticated anti-Vergilian satire. I contend that Prudentius' employment of phrases from Vergil is meant to create the impression of simultaneous relevance and irrelevance, and that the combination of the two involves irony and *cento*-like ridicule. This occurs locally, in the periodic clusters of Vergilian quotations."

Apocalypsis Joannis from the initial appearance of the angel to the celebration in the New Jerusalem. This technique is again very similar to that used by Prudentius in his mystical allegory; through allusions Prudentius traced the development of the entire Bible from Genesis to the Apocalypsis.<sup>5</sup> The deeper level of meaning in Dioscorus' poem gives a balancing response to the disdain apparent in the prayer parody; that is, Dioscorus criticizes by means of a parody of icon hymns the worship of icons, and he shows simultaneously by means of the allegory that true Christian worship should be ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (Jo. 4:23). Correcting corrupt worship in the early Church was also one of the primary motivations behind John's Apocalypsis.<sup>6</sup>

This Dioscorian poem is without question complex in form and content; but its deeper level, which draws primarily on the Apocalypsis, is more accessible to the modern reader than the mystical level in the encomia, which draws upon a broad range of philosophical, poetic, and biblical sources. Because of this accessibility, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F is the best introduction to the mystical allegories of Dioscorus' poetry. Although the mystical level is different in nature from that found in the encomia, it is hoped that this analysis will heighten the reader's sensitivity

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<sup>5</sup>Smith (p. 222) concluded: "Thus the *Psychomachia* progresses from Genesis to Apocalypse, from Old Testament to New Testament, and is in its totality an allegorical imitation of Scripture." See the helpful chart on p. 179.

<sup>6</sup>An analysis of the complex and disputed meaning of the Apocalypsis Joannis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It has been generally agreed, however, that the first part (the letters to the seven cities) is thematically tied to the second part, and that the first part was criticizing, praising, and encouraging the churches in order to prepare them for an imminent crisis. See C. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, Minn., 1991), 10-11; G. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 2nd ed. (1984), 27-28.

toward the subtlety, complexity, and erudition of Dioscorus' other allegories, which will be discussed in the following chapter. Such a disposition in the modern reader may help increase the understanding and enjoyment of the Dioscorian poems in as much as a heightened sensibility toward allegorical meanings seems to have been a characteristic of early Byzantine audiences,<sup>7</sup> and Dioscorus may have been composing his poetry to meet these critical expectations.

This chapter will take the following approach in analyzing the poem.

- 1) There will be a survey of the contents of the large papyrus on which Dioscorus wrote the poem. This will give an indication of the date and of the other literature Dioscorus may have been composing at the time.
- 2) There will be a discussion of the physical evidence that the anacreontic and the *chairetismos* belong together as two parts of one unified poem. This will be followed by an examination of Sophronius' poem, which provides further evidence that the two parts of the Dioscorian poem belong together.
- 3) The *chairetismos* will be analyzed, with a focus on the elements of parody. This analysis will include a survey of the *chairetismos* genre, a discussion of the individual verses of Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, a review of the growth of the cult of icons in the sixth and seventh centuries, and finally a discussion of prayer parodies in the comedies by Aristophanes and Lucian, which may have been Dioscorus' models.
- 4) Several elements of the *chairetismos* itself point to parody; the convivial mood of the preceding anacreontic, however, is one of the best indications. There will be a general discussion of Dioscorus' anacreontic verses, with special emphasis on the

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<sup>7</sup>R. Lambertson, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1986), x, 144-61.

four borrowed verses. 5) Similar to the interplay between the literal and deeper levels of meaning in the Stoic allegory *Anacreontea* 34,<sup>8</sup> the parody of the Dioscorian *chairetismos* is intimately related to the deeper level of meaning. With the help of a chart, this deeper, mystical level of meaning will be examined and described.

### *P.Cair.Masp. I 67097*

There is no internal or external evidence to date the composition of the poem precisely. It is, however, possible to arrive at an approximate date by examining the surrounding documents on the same papyrus. The papyrus on which the poem was written, *P.Cair.Masp. I 67097*, is long and complex. In its entirety, it is about 1.26 meters long and 0.32 meter wide.<sup>9</sup> It is broken into several fragments; the edges of the fragments do not always match, but the contents of the recto and verso are generally a good guide for the fragments' placement. The verso of the papyrus contains two documents, a rhetorical *declamatio*, and three poems. The entire recto of the papyrus is filled by a contract for the sale of land by Hermauos to Isaac, son of George. The hand of the recto, writing *transversa charta*,<sup>10</sup> does not appear to have been Dioscorus'; since line seventy-six mentions a present fifth indiction (A.D. 571/2), it is possible that a clerk penned the document for Dioscorus while he was doing legal work in Antinoopolis.

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<sup>8</sup>A. Dihle, "The Poem on the Cicada," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 71 (Cambridge, 1967): 110-111.

<sup>9</sup>Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp. I 67097*, p. 140.

<sup>10</sup>If a writer chose to write *across* the fibers rather than *along* the fibers on the recto of a papyrus roll, it is said that he was writing *transversa charta*. That is, the writer shifted the roll (or a sheet of it) ninety degrees before beginning to write.

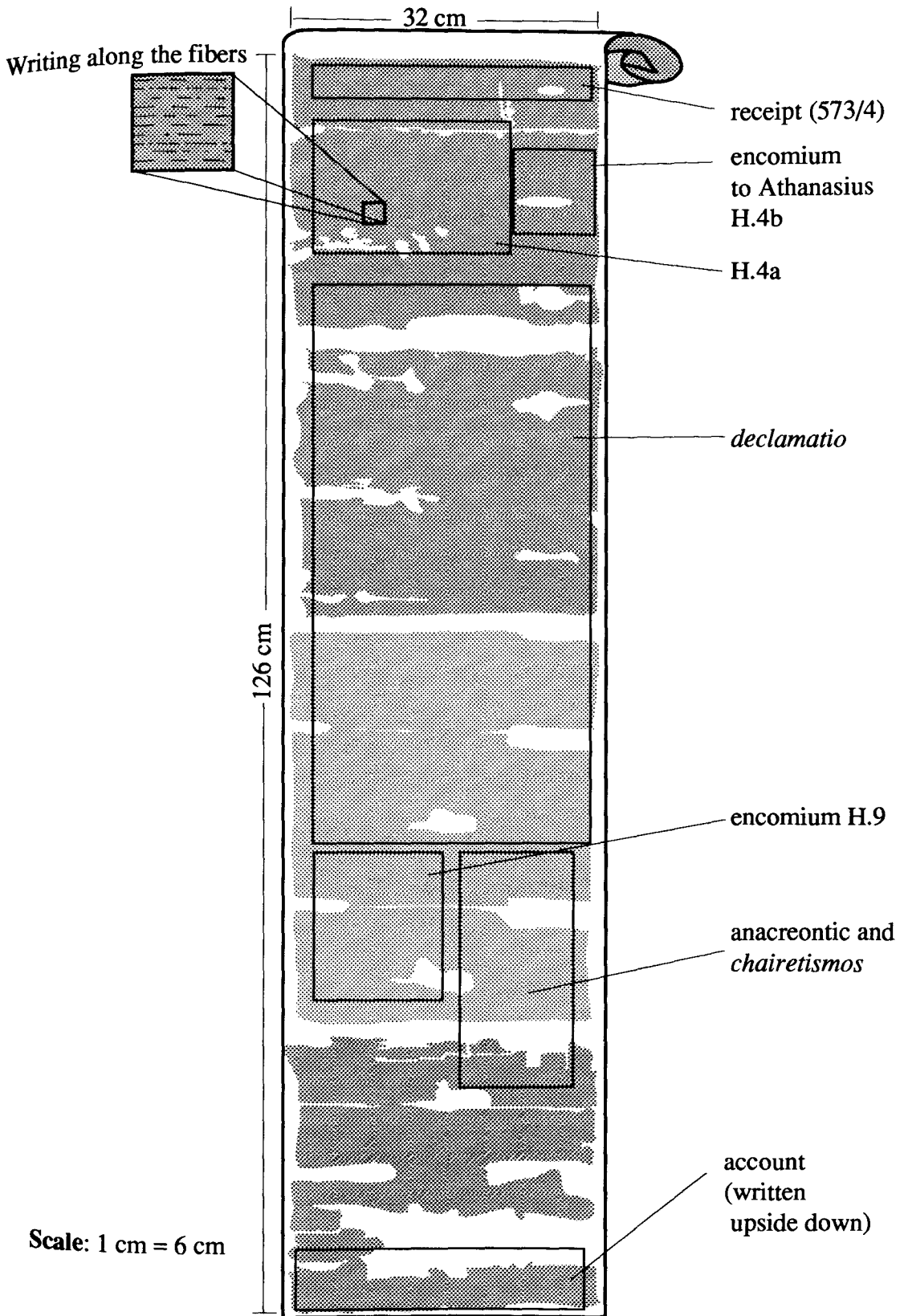


Diagram of *P. Cair. Masp. I 67097 verso*

It seems that after the contract was written but before the verso was used, the papyrus was cut for use as scrap-paper. The bottom of the contract is cut away—the cut is smooth and a line of the contract is sliced in half—and that edge is used to begin a receipt on the verso. The other end of the papyrus is too fragmentary to determine if it too was cut before the verso was used.<sup>11</sup> The writing of the verso is along the fibers and upside-down in relation to the recto (except for the final account, part G). The verso shows basically three handwriting styles, all of which are probably Dioscorus'. One style is slightly inclined to the right and predominantly uncial with few ligatures. The anacreontic and the *chairetismos* were both scripted in this style.<sup>12</sup>

The first document on the verso is a receipt for rent money received from brother Menas (τῷ ἀδελφῷ(ῶ) Μηνῶ) son of Abraham. It was signed by Dioscorus and dated to the seventh indiction (A.D. 573/4). Menas was the lessee of some pasturage called New Pond (Νέος Λάκκος); and Menas was paying not only for the seventh, but also in advance for the eighth indiction. The pasturage was owned by the monastery of Satibes; perhaps Dioscorus was curator for this monastery as he was for that of Apa Apollos. Why the receipt was not given to the lessee has not been determined. This receipt is followed by a three centimeter margin and then an hexameter encomium to Athanasius (H.4 α). Squeezed in the space to the right of this encomium is another poem, whose handwriting is smaller and whose letters are more

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<sup>11</sup>Maspero, however, said: "Le début et la fin ont été coupés par celui qui a utilisé le verso" (intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097, p. 140).

<sup>12</sup>Another is rather straight and predominantly cursive with many ligatures (cf. part D lines 35ff.). The third is rather straight, but predominantly uncial with few ligatures (cf. part B). See Maspero, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso, p. 145 comments to lines 1, 6.

carelessly formed. Labeled by Dioscorus as β, it seems to be a continuation of the poem on the left and was edited that way by Maspero, Heitsch, and MacCoull. In poem β, because of the papyrus' right edge, the ends of verses are written below the lines. This poem is followed by a prose *declamatio* entitled *Story of a Disinheritance* (διήγημα ἀποκηρύξεως). It contains the maledictions of a father against his unworthy daughter. The *declamatio* is addressed, according to Maspero's restoration and interpretation, to those who think that by living a holy life in their marriage they will receive happiness in return.<sup>13</sup> This piece of rhetoric is followed immediately by two poems placed side by side. On the left is a verse encomium to an unidentified addressee (H.9); it is written in iambics and contains a typical Menandrian closing verse (νίκη μεθ' ὑμῶν εὐμενῆς ἔποιτ' αἰεὶ verse 16).<sup>14</sup> On the right is the anacreontic joined to the *chairetismos*. After these poems, there is considerable empty space; then at the bottom of the verso appear five lines, badly preserved, written upside-down in relation to the rest of the verso. They seem to be part of an account and are signed by Dioscorus. No date is visible.

It appears likely, therefore, that Dioscorus wrote the poem under discussion, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F, any time after the receipt of A.D. 573/4 (*terminus post quem*) and before his last dated document of A.D. 585 (*terminus ante quem*).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso, p. 147 comment to line 28. The daughter seems then to be partially pardoned; see *ibid.*, p. 149 comment to line 50.

<sup>14</sup>E. Vogt, "Ein stereotyper Dramenschluß der Νέα," *RhM* 102 (1959): 192.

<sup>15</sup>It is unlikely that they were composed, as MacCoull has said, between 571 and 574; *Dioscorus*, 113.

Transcript of P.Cair.Masp. I 67097 verso F

† Ἄει θέλω χορεύειν,  
 ἀεὶ θέλω λυρίζειν·  
 γεραρὴν λόγοις ἑορτὴν  
 ἀναβάλλομαι λυρίζειν.

5 Θέλγουσίν με αἰ Βάχαι.  
 A ... υ . [ ..... ]  
 [ ..... ]  
 [ ..... ]

10 Ὅταν πίννω τὸν οἶνον  
 εὔδουσιν αἰ μέριμναι.  
 Τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων;  
 Τί μοι μέλει μέριμναι;

Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι,  
 ποθοβλήτην Ἑρακλέα,  
 15 δαμάζοντα τοὺς λέοντας·  
 ἀεὶ τὰς πόλεις σαώσαι.

Χαῖρε, ὀλοκοττινοπερίπατε  
 ἀγγελοπρόσωπε,  
 χαῖρε, κ(ύρι)ε χρυσαργυροπιναροσμαραγ᾽δο΄-  
 μαργα᾽ρι τοβελτίων,  
 χαῖρε, δέσπ(οτα) χρυσολιθοκαχατωνύχιε,



πρα[σ]ινοπάντιμε λαμπρόβιε,

20 [..... traces .....]

χαίρε, δέσ[π(οτα) . . . θαλασσιο]πλοιοχρυσ[ο]-

[γόμου,

χαίρε, κ(ύρι)ε παναξιο[κτη]νοπτηναστρο-

[φωστηροκοσμοποιίας·

χαίρων χορείης εἰς μυριάμορον χρόνον.

1 θέλω written above χαίρω 5 read Βάκχαι 14 read ποθόβλητον (?) Masp

17 ολοκοτ'τινο . . . αγ'γελο . . . Pap 18 κε Pap read πῖννα Masp

δο ρι

μαραγ / μαργατο Pap 19 δεσπ Pap καχατωνυχιε crasis for καὶ ἀχατωνύχιε

21 σσιο seen by Masp [γόμου Pap 22 κε Pap κτη seen by Masp [φως Pap

ποιίας Pap 23 read χορέης

### *Translation*

Forever I want to dance!

Forever I want to sing to the lyre!

I begin to honor with my lyre

and song a solemn celebration.

5 The Bacchants bewitch me!

[.....]

[.....]

[.....]

When I drink the wine,  
 10 my cares fall asleep.  
 What of my pain? what of my tears?  
 what does it matter to me—my cares?

I am in love with the new general,  
 who shoots me with desire, that Heracles,  
 15 devastating the lions.  
 Forever might he save the cities!

Hail, walking about a gold *solidus*!

having the face of an angel!

Hail, lord! finer than gold, silver, mother of pearl,  
 smaragdus, pearl!

Hail, sovereign! made of topaz, agate, and onyx,  
 green and all-honorable, living brilliantly!

20 [.....]

[.....]

Hail, sovereign . . . of the golden cargo in the seagoing vessel!

Hail, lord of the creating of all-worthy beast, bird, star,  
 light, universe!

Rejoicing may you dance for a time ten-thousand amphoras full!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Compare this translation of the compound words with the translations by Maspero, MacCoull, and Saija (discussed below). For the morphology and meaning of compound words in the Greek language, see C. Buck, *Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Chicago, 1933), 352-63.

**External Evidence for Unity: the Manuscript and Sophronius:  
Dioscorus' Audience**

In his *editio princeps* of thirteen Dioscorian poems,<sup>17</sup> Jean Maspero printed Dioscorus' only surviving anacreontic and *chairetismos* together, describing them as one poem with two parts (no. 11 = *P.Cair. Masp.* I 67097 verso F).<sup>18</sup> He stated in regard to the second part: "On the manuscript, nothing separates it from the preceding part."<sup>19</sup> Not only is the writing of the second part continuous with the writing of the first, but also a short horizontal stroke (a *paragraphus*, unusual in Dioscorus' poetry) drawn before the second part reflects the strokes drawn between the four stanzas of the first, as though the second part were simply the fifth stanza.<sup>20</sup> Yet, because of the differences in meter and style, Maspero concluded that the

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<sup>17</sup>This initial collection contained only the best preserved poems owned by the Cairo Museum and M. Beaugé; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte: Dioscore, fils d'Apollôn," *REG* 24 (1911): 427. The edition by Heitsch contains a larger selection of Dioscorian poems from many different sources, including the museums at Cairo, Berlin, and London, and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. (See Toivo Viljamaa's list of Heitsch's omissions, which itself is now incomplete: "Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry of the Early Byzantine Period," *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum Societas Scientiarum Fennica* 42 [Helsinki, 1968]: 33 note 55.) MacCoull in her monograph on Dioscorus reprinted Heitsch's edition and added several other important poems, including one to a young man entering the monastic life. She did not, however, include several other important poems, such as the encomium to St. Senas and the *chairetismos* (which were however described in separate articles). Jean-Luc Fournet is currently working on a complete edition of the Dioscorian poems.

To give some idea of the variety and the amount of poetry, Heitsch's collection (including one Dioscorian poem [S 10] from volume 2) contains twenty-nine poems (716 verses). The most common meters are the dactylic hexameter and the iambic trimeter. This collection includes encomia, epithalamia, ethopoeiae, and the anacreontic. If one adds the *chairetismos*, the isopsephistic encomium to St. Senas, and the poem to the new monk, the total of verses comes to about 737.

<sup>18</sup>"Il [numéro 11] se compose de deux parties." Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471; cf. 444-45, 472.

<sup>19</sup>"Sur le manuscrit rien ne la sépare de la pièce précédente"; *ibid.*, 472.

<sup>20</sup>See the photographs in *P.Cair.Masp.* I, plates 28-29; O. Montevecchi, *La Papirologia*, (Torino, 1973), plate 101.

second part was "without doubt a separate piece";<sup>21</sup> and he discussed each part independently. Subsequent critics have discussed either one or the other, but not both parts together;<sup>22</sup> and aside from physical juxtaposition, they have proposed no correspondence between the two parts. It is hoped that the discussions below will elucidate the thematic ties and demonstrate that these ties are essential to the full understanding of each part.

In addition to the physical juxtaposition described above and the thematic ties which will be discussed below, there is further external evidence that the two parts should be considered one organic whole:

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<sup>21</sup> "Sans doute un morceau distinct"; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472.

<sup>22</sup>The anacreontic: W. Crönert, review of "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," by H. I. Bell and W. E. Crum, in *Gnomon* 2 (1926): 662-66; A. Saija, "La metrica de Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," *Studi in onore de Anthos Ardizzoni*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1978): 844-45; L. MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," *Byzantine Studies* 13 (1986): 38-39; B. Baldwin, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and the Anacreontea," *Museum Philologicum Londiniense* 8 (1987): 13-14; L. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito, His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988), 119-21.

The *chairetismos*: H. I. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," *JHS* 64 (1944): 28; B. Baldwin, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and the Circus Factions," *ZPE* 42 (1981): 285-86; L. MacCoull, "The Imperial *Chairetismos* of Dioscorus of Aphrodito," *JARCE* 18 (1981): 43-46; A. Saija, "Neoformazioni linguistiche in Dioscoro di Aphrodito," *Analecta Papyrologica* 1 (1989): 61-64.

Although the first part begins as a normal anacreontic song and in the third stanza alludes almost verbatim to a familiar drinking song, it ends in verses of praise for an unnamed addressee; see Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471; Crönert, 664-66. The second part inflates the praises of its unnamed addressee to the point of worship (see verse 22 and the discussion below). It was suggested by Maspero that the addressee of the second part was an emperor, specifically Justinian (r. A.D. 527 - 565). The suggestion of an imperial addressee was accepted by subsequent critics, with the exception that they proposed other emperors (MacCoull: Justin II [r. A.D. 565 - 578]; Baldwin: Maurice [r. A.D. 582 - 602]). The suggestion of an imperial addressee, however, requires the isolation of the first part from the second. In the last strophe of the anacreontic, the persona states his passionate love for a general: Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι, / ποθοβλήτην Ἡρακλέα (verses 13-14). If part one is joined to part two, the subject of this last strophe is probably the addressee of the *chairetismos*. It is unlikely, however, that Dioscorus would declare his love for the emperor (as military general) in such passionate terms. Yet the evidence for an imperial addressee is very uncertain; and both the meaning of several verses and the *chairetismos* format make it almost impossible that Dioscorus was indeed praising an emperor. See the discussion of the *chairetismos* below.

*Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20. This poem by Sophronius is essential for understanding many dimensions of Dioscorus' poem.<sup>23</sup> Sophronius was a monk and a younger contemporary of Dioscorus; and his *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 appears to have been written in reaction to Dioscorus' poem. There are parallels in form and technique: not only did Sophronius combine anacreontic verses with a *chairetismos*, but Sophronius was the only other early Byzantine poet who used Aristophanic compounds to the same extreme as Dioscorus. There are, however, several significant differences in mood and theme: Sophronius' anacreontic verses do not have a convivial mood; the word compounds have no humor; and most important, the poem offers sincere adoration to holy sites, relics, and icons. These stark differences may have been intentional, in as much as Sophronius may have been offering a Chalcedonian, iconophile response to Dioscorus' poem.<sup>24</sup>

Sophronius was born in Damascus, where he received his education and later taught rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> Around A.D. 578 he met John Moschus at the Monastery of St. Theodosius (Dêr Dôsi) near Bethlehem; they developed a

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<sup>23</sup>It has been proven by Schönborn that Sophronius the sophist and Sophronius the patriarch of Jerusalem were one and the same person; see H. Chadwick, "John Moschus and His Friend Sophronius the Sophist," *JThS* 25 (1974): 50.

<sup>24</sup>An *iconophile* or *iconodule* was a Christian who supported the representation in art of spiritual beings (such as angels or the Holy Spirit) and sanctified beings not in their historical or biblical settings (such as Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and the saints in their spiritual condition). The term, however, has broader connotations because the same Christians also tended to believe that these artistic representations had spiritual powers and ought to be worshipped. Monophysites tended to oppose all representations of spiritual and sanctified beings (but not symbols or strictly didactic gospel scenes for illiterate Christians). See the discussion below.

<sup>25</sup> The following biography adheres basically to the chronology presented by H. Chadwick, pp. 49-59.

close relationship,<sup>26</sup> and from then on, Sophronius' life was intimately linked with John's.<sup>27</sup> John, already a monk at the cenobium of St. Theodosius, and Sophronius, not yet a monk, joined for an extended trip through Egypt. The trip began at the beginning of the reign of Tiberius (r. 578 - 582); and the pair went as far south as the Great Oasis and the Thebaid,<sup>28</sup> visiting monks and monasteries in what was predominantly Monophysite territory.<sup>29</sup> Sophronius and John Moschus were both zealous supporters of Chalcedonian christology.<sup>30</sup> The two remained for a while in the city of Alexandria, where they befriended the philosopher Theodore and Leontius Apameus (who, originally from Pentapolis, became bishop of Cyrene). When Sophronius and John left Egypt, they apparently travelled through Palestine and returned to St. Theodosius, where Sophronius was solemnly professed a monk. John Moschus then went to Sinai for ten years; it is uncertain what became of Sophronius. After 604, Moschus moved to Syria and then again to Alexandria. In A.D. 614, the Persians under Chosroes II invaded Palestine and devastated many of its sacred buildings.

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<sup>26</sup>Moschus refers to Sophronius as "my lord," "the brother," "my companion," "Abba," and "my holy and faithful son"; Sophronius refers to Moschus as "my spiritual father and teacher." See H. Chadwick, 59.

<sup>27</sup> John of Damascus and others even attributed authorship of the *Pratum spirituale* to Sophronius; H. Chadwick, 49 note 4.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. M.-J. Rouët de Journal, *Jean Moschus: Le pré spirituel* (Paris, 1946), 9. H. Chadwick, 49; N. Baynes, "The *Pratum Spirituale*," in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 270. See Baynes' delightful rendition of the careless monk who lived near Antinoopolis (chapter 44).

<sup>29</sup>H. Chadwick, 54-55; W. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1972), 324-26.

<sup>30</sup>H. Donner, "Die anakreontischen Gedichte Nr. 19 und Nr. 20 des Patriarchen Sophronius von Jerusalem," *SHAW* (1981): 5-6. H. Chadwick, 51 note 1, 68-74.

In this same year, John accompanied by Sophronius left Alexandria for Rome—travelling by way of Cyprus and Samos. At Rome, John Moschus wrote his famous *Pratum spirituale*; and as he approached his death (d. c. 633), he gave Sophronius his book and asked to be buried at the Monastery of St. Theodosius. Sophronius returned to Palestine and there buried his friend, companion, and spiritual advisor. The patriarchal see of Jerusalem at this time was vacant; and Sophronius, probably because of his fervent Chalcedonian stance (in contrast to the many Monothelite bishops in Palestine), was appointed to fill the position.<sup>31</sup> He remained patriarch of Jerusalem until his death in in A.D. 639.

Sophronius left behind many prose pieces, including a *Vita* of the martyr Anastasius and another of John the Almsgiver (written jointly with John Moschus). He also wrote a panegyric to the Egyptian saints Cyrus and John and an account of seventy miracles which had transpired at their shrine at Menuthis,<sup>32</sup> where Sophronius himself had been cured of ophthalmia. Sophronius also left behind twenty-three poems in anacreontic meters. (His authorship of one, *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 23, is very doubtful.) These poems were composed in honor of important feast days (the Annunciation, Christmas, the Epiphany, etc.), saints' days (Paul, John, Stephen, Thecla, etc.), holy sites, and special friends such as Menas, the *oekonomus* at a monastery at Ennaton (nine miles from Alexandria). Donner has suggested that the poems were written at different periods in

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>32</sup>The actual purpose of this collection of miracle stories was to vindicate the Chalcedonian cause; H. Chadwick, 71.

Sophronius' life.<sup>33</sup> It is not known if the poems were published before Sophronius' death.<sup>34</sup>

In *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20, a *chairetismos* creates the hymn's fourth *κουκούλιον* (a two-verse refrain; see the discussion below). Below is the fourth *κουκούλιον* and five of the eight anacreontic strophes preceding it. The text of *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 has survived in only one medieval manuscript, *Cod. Barberinus graec.* 310, written in the thirteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Marcello Gigante, in an attempt to make it follow Classical Greek norms, made no less than 41 changes (in addition to accent corrections) to the transmitted manuscript of this poem, resulting in an edition which Donner called a *Mischtext* of critics' conjectures.<sup>36</sup> Many of what Gigante considered scribal errors, however, may have been accurate renderings of the writing of Sophronius; and these abnormalities may help us better understand (or at least tolerate) the so-called *errors* in the writings of Dioscorus. I have reprinted, therefore, Herbert Donner's edition, which reprints the original transmitted text; beside it is Gigante's *corrected* edition.<sup>37</sup> The major *errors* (according to Gigante) in the transmitted text I have marked in bold.

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<sup>33</sup>Donner, 34.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 5-7, 11; cf. C. Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique* (Paris, 1972).

<sup>35</sup>Donner, 11. Some photographs of this manuscript have been included in Gigante's edition; M. Gigante, ed. and trans., *Sophronii Anacreontica* (Rome, 1957), *passim*.

<sup>36</sup>"Gewiß ist die Handschrift nicht fehlerfrei, aber dennoch sollte man ihr mit Respect gegenüberzutreten und versuchen, mit möglichst wenigen Konjekturen auszukommen—dem Beispiel P. MATRANGAS folgend, dem in Nr. 20 11 Konjekturen genügten"; *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 12-16; see also his textual comments at pp. 11, 17-22. Gigante, 123-27; cf. T. Nissen, *Die byzantinischen Anakreonten* (Munich, 1940), 44-45; W. Christ and M. Paranikas, eds., *Anthologia Graeca Carminum Christianorum* (Leipzig, 1871; repr. Hildesheim, 1963), 45-47.



Donner:

(35) 8Θ Θαλέων **χαρὰ** δ' ἐπέλθω  
 ὄθι προσκυνοῦμεν, ὅσσοι  
 πέλομεν λεῶς θεοῖο,  
 ἀγλαὸν ξύλον τὸ θεῖον.

(40) 9I Ἴνα παμμέδων **τε** χύνη  
**κεχαραγμένω** γραφῆος  
 εἰκόνι σέβας προσοίσω,  
 γόνατα δράμοιμι κάμψαι.

(45) 10K Κατὰ παμφαῆς δὲ βῆμα  
 γεγανυμένος πορευθῶ,  
 ξύλον οὗ τὸ θεῖον εὗρεν  
**ἐλειμεδουσαδεκεδνή.**

.....

(55) 13E Ἐν εμοῖς δρόμοις ποσὶν τε  
 ἐπὶ τὴν Σιών ἀπέλθω,  
 ὄθι γλωσσοπυρσομόρφος  
 κατέβη **χαρὰ** θεοῖο,

.....

Gigante:

Θαλέων **χαρᾶ** δ' ἐπέλθω  
 ὄθι προσκυνοῦμεν, ὅσσοι  
 πέλομεν λεῶς θεοῖο,  
 ἀγλαὸν ξύλον τὸ θεῖον.

Ἴνα παμμέδοντος τέχνη  
 κεχαραγμένου γραφῆος  
 σέβας εἰκόνι προσοίσω,  
 γόνατα δράμοιμι κάμψαι.

Κατὰ παμφαῆς δὲ βῆμα  
 γεγανυμένος πορευθῶ,  
 ξύλον οὗ τὸ θεῖον εὗρεν  
 Ἐλένη μέδουσα κεδνή.

.....

Ἐν ἐμοῖς δρόμοις ποσὶν τε  
 ἐπὶ τὴν Σιών ἀπέλθω,  
 ὄθι γλωσσοπυρσόμορφος  
 κατέβη **χάρις** θεοῖο,

.....

15Π	Ποταμῶν δίκην ἰάσεις ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρης ἐκείνης, (65) θεόπαις ὅπου τανύσθη Μαρίη, βρυούση πᾶσιν.	Ποταμῶν δίκην ἰάσεις ἀπὸ τῆς πέτρης ἐκείνης, θεόπαις ὅπου τανύσθη Μαρίη, βρύουσι πᾶσιν.
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Χαῖρε, Σιών, φαέθων ἥλιε κόσμου, ἦν ποθέων στενάζων νύκτωρ καὶ ἡμαρ.	Χαῖρε, Σιών, φαέθων ἥλιε κόσμου, ἦν ποθέων στενάχω νύκτα καὶ ἡμαρ.
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*Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20, partially quoted above, presents a fantasy pilgrimage around the holy sites in and near Jerusalem. The poet wishes to visit the church of Anastasis, Golgotha, Mount Zion, the praetorium of Pontius Pilate, the tomb of the Blessed Virgin, and finally Gethsemane. The fantasy pilgrimage seems to be continued in the first part of *Carmina Anacreontica* 19, which begins with the Mount of Olives and ends with the Church of the Incarnation in Bethlehem. The order of the descriptions in the two poems may reflect the normal route taken by pilgrims in the Holy Land.<sup>38</sup> Although the places are described in enough detail to indicate that a pre-614 Jerusalem is being envisaged, no precise date for the hymn's composition can be established with certainty. Several possibilities are presented by Donner. 1) The poem was written before 614, while Sophronius was away from Jerusalem; this is the impression which the poem gives. 2) The poem was written after the devastation of Jerusalem; the descriptions represent the way Sophronius remembered the city. 3) The poem was written after 614 and while Sophronius was in Jerusalem; the poem simply expresses a wish for the city as it once was.

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<sup>38</sup>Donner, 7-8, 36.

External evidence for a date is not available; since Sophronius probably wrote the poems in the transmitted *Carmina Anacreontica* over an extended period of time, the dates of composition of the other poems cannot be applied to this poem.<sup>39</sup> On the basis of internal evidence, Donner suggested that the poem was written between A.D. 631 and 633.<sup>40</sup>

No matter if Sophronius wrote this hymn before or after the Persian devastation, *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 is not simply the account of an imagined pilgrimage; more important, it is a hymn in worship of Christian sites, relics, tombs, art, and architecture. This is exactly the kind of religious practice which, it will be argued below, Dioscorus found objectionable. The fervor of Sophronius is evident already in the very first οἶκος of the hymn, where he states: τ' ἐς νῦν / ἐθέλων πύλας παρεῖναι / ἴν' ἀγαλλιῶν εἰσέλθω (Donner 2-4); and the focus of his passion is evident in the first κουκούλιον: Εὐαγέων Σολύμων ἔνθεος οἶστρος / αἰὲν ἡμῖν κραδίην σφόδρα δαμάζει (Donner 5-6).<sup>41</sup> There is no trace of allegory here;<sup>42</sup> the poet makes clear that he wishes to offer adoration to specific and famous sites and objects of the historical Jerusalem, and that this behavior is the right thing for Christians to do.<sup>43</sup> The poet's anticipated acts of worship include prostrating himself

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 7-8, 33-34.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 56, 64.

<sup>41</sup>Salem was a traditional name for Jerusalem; see Donner, 35 comment to verses 5-6.

<sup>42</sup>For early representations of the New Jerusalem in art and literature and a comparison to representations of the historical Jerusalem, see B. Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem, Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Rome, 1987). Cf. Prudentius' representation of the New Jerusalem, built in the soul of the mystic; see my discussion in the introduction.

<sup>43</sup>For an analysis of the appearance of the pre-614 Jerusalem as represented in this hymn and hymn 19, see Donner, 33-64.

and kissing floors and stones: Γλυκερὸν πέδον φιλήσω (Donner 11); γεγωνῶς πέτρην ἐκείνην / μάλα προσκυνῶν φιλήσω (Donner 17-18); πέτραν ἐκταθεὶς φιλήσω (Donner 30); Τόπον . . . χαμᾶδις πεσῶν φιλήσω (Donner 77-80). The Church of Anastasis held the reputed tomb of Christ; in the rotunda of this church, the poet desires to kiss the pillars and to dance (verses 19-22).<sup>44</sup> It is a reputed piece of the original cross which the poet adores as divine (ἀγλαὸν ξύλον τὸ θεῖον Donner 38) and which all God's people are expected to worship (verses 36-38). The materialistic focus of the poet becomes especially clear in the referents of his various metaphors. For example, in κ. 2 the poet says: Ὠκεανὸς βιοτῆς αἰὲν εὐούσης / ἀτρεκέως τελέθεις, φωσφόρε τύμβε (Gigante 27-28);<sup>45</sup> the ocean of eternal life is not Christ but the reputed *tomb* of Christ. And in κ. 3 the poet says: Ὠς μέγα σεῖο κλέος, φαίδιμε πέτρα, / σταυρὸς ὅπη μερόπων λύτρον ἐπήχθη (Gigante 33-34); the ransom for mankind is not Christ, but the reputed *cross*; and it is the *rock* upon which it was erected that has such great glory (contrast Mk. 10:45). Also in κ. 7, it is the *mountain* which is preeminent and sweetest of all: ὦ γλυκὸν πλεῖστα πέλεις, ἔξοχον οὐρός, / Χριστὸς ὅθεν μεδέων οὐρανὸν ἴδεν (Donner 101-02). A reader must consider, of course, the symbolic significance of these objects (such as the tomb = the death of Christ). Any symbolism, however, is weakened by the realism of the detailed descriptions of the sites, objects, and acts of worship; the precious objects seem to be more valuable to Sophronius than their spiritual significance.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 36-41.

<sup>45</sup>In the various *κουκούλια*, the poet (in actual practice—if this hymn was ever performed—the chorus or congregation) addresses and venerates sites and relics as though he were actually standing in front of them.

The idolatrous ethos of Sophronius' hymn becomes clearer when it is compared to Romanus' *Akathistos*, which must have been written before Sophronius' anacreontic (see the discussion below). In the *Akathistos*, the *Theotokos* is the rock that satisfies those who thirst for eternal life (χαίρει πέτρα ἢ ποτίσασα / τοὺς διψῶντας τὴν ζωὴν *Akathistos* 11.14-15). Sophronius, in strophe fifteen, also turns his attention to the *Theotokos*. For him, however, the rock where Mary supposedly laid down the Christ Child has become a source of miraculous cures which flow forth like rivers (verses 63-66); and in the brief *chairetismos* which follows, it is this *site* which Sophronius desires night and day (verses 67-68). In Romanus, Christ is adored as the Savior who destroyed image-worship in Egypt (τὰ γὰρ εἴδωλα ταύτης, Σωτήρ, / μὴ ἐνέγκαντά σου τὴν ἰσχὺν πέπτωκαν· / <οἱ> τούτων δὲ ῥυσθέντες / ἀνεβόησαν πρὸς τὴν θεοτόκον *Akathistos* 11.4-7). In Sophronius' ninth οἶκος, it is an image of Christ before which the poet hurries to prostrate himself (Gigante 39-42):

Ἴνα παμμέδοντος τέχνη  
κεχαραγμένου γραφῆος  
σέβας εἰκόνι προσοίσω,  
γόνατα δράμοιμι κάμψαι.

So that I might offer worship  
to an icon of the All-Ruler  
drawn by the skill of an artist,  
I want to hurry and kneel.<sup>46</sup>

Nowhere does one sense in Sophronius a hesitant or apologetic tone reminiscent of the epigrams by Neilus and Agathias and the ecphrasis by

<sup>46</sup>For a discussion of the text and of the meaning of this difficult strophe, see Donner, 45. Gigante incorporated five changes to the transmitted οἶκος (cf. Donner's text above) and translated it as follows (p. 180): "Per venerare l'immagine del signore del mondo, effigiata dall'arte del pittore, correrò a piegare le ginocchia."

John of Gaza of the allegorical painting of the cosmos at Gaza, which poems sometimes express discomfort with artistic representations of spiritual beings.<sup>47</sup>

There are several significant stylistic similarities between *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 and Dioscorus' poem. One similarity is that both poets used the anacreontic meter.<sup>48</sup> This similarity, however, is not too significant, because the anacreontic meter had already been used for Christian themes by Synesius of Cyrene and Gregory of Nazianzus. A more

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<sup>47</sup>McCail, "Erotic and Ascetic Poetry," 241-45; cf. E. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," *DOP* 8 (1954): 138-39. McCail may be correct in insisting against Kitzinger that Agathias' epigram AG 1.35 does not state explicitly that the archangel's abode is in the icon; yet Agathias expresses this belief elsewhere. The fusion of spiritual and material identities is evident in Agathias' epigram about the icon of Theodorus the *Illustris* (AG 1.36), which was located in Ephesus. Theodorus was perhaps the consul to whom Agathias dedicated his *Cycle*. (See Beckby, vol. 1, p. 640 comment to poem 97.) The painting depicts the archangel Michael honoring Theodorus with a ζωστήρ μαγίστρου. Agathias recognizes that the icon is an image of a spiritual reality, and that the two entities are distinct: σὴ γὰρ ὀπωπὴ / ἄσκοπος, ἀλλὰ βροτῶν δῶρα πέλουσι τάδε. Yet the poet wants the icon to be infused with the spirit of the real angel; in the very first phrase, Agathias invokes the angel to enter the icon: Ἴλαθι μορφωθεῖς, ἀρχάγγελε. The summons for a spiritual being to enter an image is only a small step from the belief that the image itself has spiritual powers and is thus worthy of awe and worship.

<sup>48</sup>For Sophronius' metrics, see *ibid.*, 9; Gigante, 18-21. As in most of Sophronius' hymns, this one carries an acrostic of the first letters of the Greek alphabet; êta and ômega were not included because they would not fit his anacreontic meter. Dioscorus' anacreontic strophes, as in many of his poems, may also carry an acrostic. The first letter of each strophe spells out: Α Θ Ο Σ. Dioscorus may have had in mind Ἄθως; but omicron was used to begin *Anacreontea* 45, from which he borrowed the third strophe. (It may be significant that Sophronius, for metrical reasons, did not use Ω or Η in his acrostics.) Mount Athos, which was mentioned already by Homer, was proverbial for someone whose influence is felt far away—as the shadow of the mountain extends far (cf. Sophocles *Fr.* 776.). In the tenth century A.D., Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain, was already the center for Greek Christian monasticism, a rôle which it still has today. The oldest surviving evidence of this mountain as a center for monks living according to the old traditions comes from the beginning of the ninth century; numerous legends, however, move its monastic significance ahead several centuries. For the early history of Christian monasticism on Mount Athos, see H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), 218-22. If indeed an acrostic was intended, it is possible that Dioscorus was using Mount Athos as a metaphor for Mount Zion. The section of Sophronius' hymn which contains the *chairetismos* is also the section which describes his ascent up Mount Zion, the addressee of his *chairetismos*.

significant similarity is that both Sophronius' and Dioscorus' poems have a *charetismos* following anacreontic strophes. Both poems also show a similar and—at that period—unique strophic arrangement. Sophronius' most frequent arrangement was four anacreontic οἴκοι (strophes), each four verses long, followed by a κουκούλιον;<sup>49</sup> often the κουκούλιον was followed by a three-verse *terzetto*. The κουκούλιον is a distich which has a different meter than the οἴκοι and serves as a refrain. In a single poem, the words of the κουκούλια change but their meter remains generally the same.<sup>50</sup> The anacreontic strophes expressed the feelings of the poet and (if ever performed) were sung by a soloist; the κουκούλια were meant to be sung as a response by the chorus or parish.<sup>51</sup> Also Dioscorus has four four-verse anacreontic strophes, followed by a *charetismos* in a different meter; the anacreontic verses express the personal feelings of the poet (Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι), while the *charetismos* reflects the litanies sung by congregations.

The uniqueness of Sophronius' and Dioscorus' arrangement can be appreciated best by a comparison with other anacreontic poems. The Christian anacreontics of Gregory of Nazianzus (329 - 389) and Synesius (c. 365 - c. 414) do not show any strophic arrangement of the verses.<sup>52</sup> In the pagan *Anacreontea* 50, the verses are clearly arranged into strophes four

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<sup>49</sup>Donner, 9-10; Nissen, 28-29, 30, 32-33.

<sup>50</sup>For the two meters consistently used in the κουκούλια of Sophronius, see Nissen, 32-33.

<sup>51</sup>Donner, 9-10; Gigante, 13-14; Nissen, 5, 28-35.

<sup>52</sup>Nissen, 6-13, 19. The Greek texts can be found in Christ-Paranikas, *Anthologia Graeca Carminum Christianorum*, 3-6, 23-28; cf. the texts and discussions of Synesius' anacreontics in Lacombrade, 77-83, 97-105. See also the brief discussion by Rosenmeyer, 226-27.

verses long; the seven strophes, however, are not arranged into groups.<sup>53</sup> The anacreontics of John of Gaza and George the Grammarian (both older contemporaries of Dioscorus) are of a secular nature; and it has been suggested that they are school exercises.<sup>54</sup> Both John and George have stanzas which are four verses long; and George reveals an οἴκοι-κουκούλιον arrangement.<sup>55</sup> It was Sophronius, however, who first made extensive use of the arrangement of four four-verse anacreontic strophes followed by a κουκούλιον. This arrangement is found throughout *Carmina Anacreontica* 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 17.<sup>56</sup> In his other hymns, this arrangement is varied: the οἴκοι are always four verses long, but followed at varying intervals by the κουκούλιον.<sup>57</sup> Although in *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 the placement of the κουκούλια is varied,<sup>58</sup> Sophronius' most common arrangement does mirror Dioscorus' arrangement.

*Anacreontica* No. 20 also contains Aristophanes-like compounds.

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<sup>53</sup>The strophes are created by repeating a verse every four lines; this is the only anacreontic which Campbell divided into strophes. This anacreontic also has several parallels with Dioscorus' borrowed third strophe: ὄτ' ἐγὼ πῖω τὸν οἶνον, / ἀπορίπτονται μέριμναι / πολυφρόντιδές τε βουλαὶ . . . Martin West, however, divided each of the following pagan anacreontics into strophes: 4, 9, 12, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29, 30, 32, 36, 38, 42, 44, 47, 49, 50, 52; among which, poems 22 and 42 were divided into four four-verse strophes.

<sup>54</sup>Nissen, 13-26; cf. Viljamaa, 32; Rosenmeyer, 227-28. The Greek texts can be found in T. Bergk, ed., *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, 4th ed., vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1882), 342-48, 362-75.

<sup>55</sup>The arrangement may have had Syrian origins. Nissen, 19-20, 29. Cf. Viljamaa, 63.

<sup>56</sup>Gigante, 18; Donner, 10.

<sup>57</sup>See Nissen, 27.

<sup>58</sup>The fourth κουκούλιον contains the only *chairetismos* among Sophronius' poems. *Carmina Anacreontica* 18, which is addressed to the Holy Cross, consists of 22 anacreontic οἴκοι followed by a single κουκούλιον: Σταυρὸς ἐς εὐσεβέων γαίαν ἀφίκεται, / εὐσεβέων μερόπων χαίρετε φύτλαι. This distich perhaps should not be called a true *chairetismos*, because the χαίρετε is not at the beginning of the verse.



There is no other poet from the early Byzantine period who used Aristophanes-like compounds to the same extent as Sophronius—except Dioscorus. Consider, for example, in *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 alone: ἀκροκρινοχρυσόμορφον (Donner 21);<sup>59</sup> ὀλομαργαρογυρόχρουν (Donner 24);<sup>60</sup> ἐλειμεδουσαδεκεδνη (Donner 46);<sup>61</sup> ὄθι γλωσσοπυρσομόρφος (Donner 57).<sup>62</sup> Sophronius used such compounds throughout his collection of anacreontic poems, and placed his compounds both in the anacreontic verses and in the refrains. Dioscorus placed his compounds exclusively in the *chairetismos*.

The tone, however, of Sophronius' compound words presents a problem. It will be argued below that Dioscorus was not presenting earnest praise of an icon; this argument is partially supported by Dioscorus' use of exaggerated compounds. The traditional genre for such extended compound words was comedy and related poetry, such as the comedies of Aristophanes, the satires of Lucian, and later the satires of Constantine the Rhodian (first half of the tenth century).<sup>63</sup> Sophronius, however, used such

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<sup>59</sup>See the attempted translation by Donner (p. 41): "'oben goldlilienförmig', d.h. mit goldüberzogenen Lilienkapitälen: ein schwer erträgliches Kunstwort aus ἄκρος, τὸ κρίνον, ὁ χρυσός und ἡ μορφή." Cf. the attempt by Gigante (p. 179): "le volte—a guisa di conchiglie—ornate in alto di aurei gigli." Sophronius is describing the ornate rotunda of the Church of Anastasis.

<sup>60</sup>Donner (p. 42): "'ganz mit Perlen rundverziert' oder 'ganz mit Perlen und Silber (Silberperlen?) verziert'"; Gigante (p. 179): "tutto colorato di argentee perle." Sophronius is describing the ornate yard between the Church of Anastasis and the Martyrium; Donner, 41-42.

<sup>61</sup>Donner (p. 24): "die teure Herrscherin Helena"; Gigante (p. 180): "Elena, nobile imperatrice [Ἑλένη μέδουσα κεδνή]."

<sup>62</sup>Donner (p. 24): "wo feuerzungenförmig"; Gigante (p. 180): "dove a guisa di lingue di fuoco."

<sup>63</sup>The similarity here between Dioscorus and Constantine was noted already by Maspero; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472 note 1. For the poetry of

compound words with no obvious intent of parody. The entire Sophronian hymn seems to be an earnest and passionate wish to be in the historical Jerusalem and to worship its holy sites and objects. How is it then that Sophronius, writing about fifty years after Dioscorus, thought it appropriate for a serious poem to use exaggeratedly compounded words? Compound words were certainly used by other serious poets of the fifth and sixth centuries; but these words do not equal Dioscorus' or Sophronius' in size or frequency. For example, Viljamaa (p. 89) pointed out what he called an Aristophanic compound in Paul the Silentiary's ephrasis of Hagia Sophia: παρακεκινδυνευμένον (*Soph.* 107). This is simply the perfect participle of παρακινδυνεύω, which is created by joining a prefix to a verb. In length and complexity it is not equal to the compounds characteristic of Aristophanes, Lucian, Dioscorus, Sophronius, and Constantine. One is left with only two possible solutions to Sophronius' problematic tone. 1) If Sophronius read Dioscorus' poem, he did not see the parody, thought it was earnest worship of an icon, and simply borrowed Dioscorus' technique. 2) Sophronius did see the parody and wrote *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 as a Chalcedonian, iconodule response,<sup>64</sup> using the enemy's own weapons—so to speak—against him. The latter suggestion seems more probable because Sophronius responds to both levels of meaning in the Dioscorian poem. On

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Constantine, see C. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis* (Chicago, 1981), 480-81;

<sup>64</sup>It was clearly recognized in the Second Council of Nicaea that "at its foundation iconoclasm is linked to monophysite Christology." H. Chadwick, 67 note 3. Ronald McCail also concluded that with respect to "dissapproval of pictorial representation" of spiritual beings: "it may be that this was above all characteristic of monophysitism." "The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus," *Byzantion* 41 (1971): 244. For ancient sources concerning Monophysite iconoclasm, see Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 120, 131; L. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman And Oriental Background of the Iconoclast Controversy* (Leiden, 1974), 61.

the one hand, Dioscorus was not only parodying icon worship, but on a deeper level of meaning he was saying that the proper object of worship is Christ in the New Jerusalem (as presented in the *Apocalypsis Joannis*). These two levels of meaning correspond to one another in the sense of a criticism and solution. On the other hand, the objects of worship for Sophronius are in the historical Jerusalem; these two subjects—venerable materials and a real city—strongly suggest that Sophronius was aware of both the Dioscorian parody and its answer in the allegory.

Sophronius, in addition to suggesting that the two parts of the Dioscorian poem belong together and pointing toward its parody and allegory, provides other valuable information about the Aphroditan's poetry. Most important, it seems probable that Sophronius read Dioscorus' poem; this means that the poem had some, if limited, circulation. It is possible that Sophronius was shown the poem by Dioscorus during the former's visit to the Thebaid. Sophronius was well-educated and familiar with poetry, especially anacreontic poetry;<sup>65</sup> he and his travelling companion, John Moschus, were also very much interested in monks, the monastic life, visions, and miracles. Despite probable differences in their christology, it is not unreasonable to imagine that Sophronius visited Dioscorus in Aphrodito. After all, the Thebaid had been the fatherland of many famous poets during the early Byzantine period.<sup>66</sup> Another way in which Sophronius could have become familiar with Dioscorus' poem is

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<sup>65</sup>Chadwick (p. 59) has labelled him a "highly educated sophist"; and the sources used for his poetry are extensive.

<sup>66</sup>Alan Cameron, "Wandering Poets: A Literary Movement in Byzantine Egypt," *Historia* 14 (1965): 472; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 59-61.

that a manuscript was in circulation at the time of Sophronius' writing. This is the more likely alternative because if Sophronius' audience had not been aware of Dioscorus' poem, the whole aspect of a Chalcedonian response would have been lost. What's more, Sophronius' audience, if it was not aware of Dioscorus' poem, would have had trouble interpreting the exaggerated compound words, since there is no other element of parody to bring the Sophronian poem into the genre of comedy. The compound words would have made the relationship between Sophronius' poem and the original Dioscorian poem almost unmistakable, and would have shown that Sophronius was offering a sincere iconophile and Chalcedonian response. Thus the similarities between the two poems suggest not only that Sophronius had probably read Dioscorus' poem, but also that Sophronius' audience had read it.

Sophronius is the only audience for Dioscorus that can in some ways be attested. Because this evidence is based primarily upon the Sophronian poem discussed above, it would be worthwhile to look ahead to the conclusions of this chapter and point out here the similarities and differences between Dioscorus' poem and *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20:

A. Dioscorus wrote an anacreontic divided into strophes four verses long. There are four strophes. These are followed by a *chairetismos* seven verses long (probably).

Sophronius wrote an anacreontic divided into strophes four verses long. There are more than four strophes; but Dioscorus' arrangement became Sophronius' most common arrangement (4 x 4). Sophronius' *chairetismos* is two verses long and contains only one *χαῖρε*.

B. Dioscorus used exaggerated compound words. These

compounds together with other elements suggest that Dioscorus was writing a parody.

Sophronius used exaggerated compound words. There is no other indication that Sophronius was writing a parody; thus these compounds were probably part of a sincere poem.

C. Dioscorus was writing about an image. This image was probably an icon of Christ (and perhaps of an angel).

Sophronius was writing about holy images, including an icon of Christ.

D. Dioscorus was probably parodying icon worship. This may have been a reflection of Monophysite leanings.

Sophronius showed icon worship. This was a reflection of his Chalcedonian leanings.

E. Dioscorus' poem may have a deeper level of meaning, which corresponds to the Apocalypsis Joannis and its presentation of the New Jerusalem.

Sophronius' poem has no deeper level of meaning; he was offering praise and worship to the historical Jerusalem.

Finally, the external evidence supports the possibility that Sophronius was aware of Dioscorus' poem. Sophronius was traveling in the Thebaid when Dioscorus was in Aphrodito. He and Dioscorus had shared interests; both were interested in, among other things, monasticism and anacreontic poetry. Sophronius and his traveling companion and spiritual master, John Moschus, were interested in visions of saints and angels. It will be argued in chapter 3 that Dioscorus' encomia were describing visions of saints and angels.

It thus seems likely that Sophronius was aware of Dioscorus' poem and was writing a poem in response to it, one whose similarities to the original would be recognizable. Sophronius' poems were published and

one thirteenth-century manuscript of *Anacreontica* 20 has survived. No transmitted manuscript of Dioscorus' poem has survived.

### The Dioscorian Chairetismos and Prayer Parodies

The following discussions will attempt to demonstrate that Dioscorus' *chairetismos* is a parody of a prayer made to a holy icon of Christ, and that Dioscorus' parody techniques were borrowed from pagan models. Dioscorus may have been parodying icon prayers in general, as Aristophanes often parodied the tragic genre in general (paratragedy) and cult initiation prayers in general.<sup>67</sup> Another possibility is that Dioscorus was parodying a specific icon prayer. Sixth-century prayers to holy icons, although attested, have not survived. Later examples are the *chairetismoï* in the Coptic *Difnar* (see below).

#### *The Christian "Chairetismos"*

The Christian *chairetismos*, in its most common form during the Byzantine period, was a hymn or part of a hymn addressed to the Mother of God, a saint, an angel, or the Holy Cross. The hymn could be in prose or verse; its distinctive feature was a line or verse or, more commonly, a litany of lines or verses beginning with the salutation *χαῖρε, χαίροις, χαίρετε*, or the like. The Christian *chairetismos* seems to have had two independent origins: one was the brief *chairetismos* in pagan Greek hymns.<sup>68</sup> This form

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<sup>67</sup>For a comparison of these two techniques—specific parody and general parody—in Aristophanes, see P. Rau, *Paratragodia, Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes* (Munich, 1967); cf. B. Zimmerman, *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramatischen Technik der Aristophanischen Komödien*, vols. 1 (2nd ed.), 2, 3 (Königstein/Ts., 1985-7).

<sup>68</sup>A. Baumstark, "Chairetismos," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1954), 993-97.

was quite common and many examples can be found among the *Homeric Hymns*.<sup>69</sup> One example of a *Homeric Hymn* with a *chairetismos* is of particular interest because it venerates Heracles, who is also used as a metaphor for the addressee of the Dioscorian anacreontic: ποθοβλήτην Ἡρακλέα, / δαμάζοντα τοὺς λέοντας. The beginning and closing sections of the *Homeric Hymn to Heracles the Lion-Hearted* (15) are as follows:

1 Ἡρακλέα Διὸς υἱὸν αἰείσομαι, ὃν μέγ' ἄριστον

γείνατ' ἐπιχθονίων Θήβης ἔνι καλλιχόροισιν

3 Ἀλκμήνη μιχθεῖσα κελαινεφεῖ Κρονίωνι·

.....

7 νῦν δ' ἤδη κατὰ καλὸν ἔδος νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου

ναίει τερπόμενος καὶ ἔχει καλλίσφυρον Ἥβην.

9 Χαῖρε ἄναξ Διὸς υἱέ· δίδου δ' ἀρετὴν τε καὶ ὄλβον.

Homeric hymns end with a brief *chairetismos*; Christian hymns, however, usually contain a litany of them. *Chairetismos*-type matins sung to various gods in Egypt during the Old Kingdom Period seem to have been the source of the litany-type structure of the Christian *chairetismos*.<sup>70</sup>

The *chairetismos* flourished in the early Christian Church, especially

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<sup>69</sup>See 5.292, 6.19, 7.58, 10.4, 11.5, 13.3, 15.9, 17.5, 18.12, 22.6, 25.6, 27.22, 29.13, 31.17, 32.17, and 33.18.

Cf. Dioscorus' encomium H.20: [Χαῖρ]ε πέπον, προφέριστε, τεὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται (verse 1). The restoration is based partially on evidence of the acrostic.

<sup>70</sup>Baumstark, 1000. A. Erman suggested that these matins derived from a morning greeting sung by women to the king; *The Ancient Egyptians. A Sourcebook of their Writings*, trans. A. Blackman (New York, 1966), 12. Erman presented no evidence; Baumstark (p. 994) believed the inverse to be true, and offered several examples of songs addressed to Egyptian kings which seem to have been influenced by the *chairetismoi* addressed to gods.

in hymns to the Θεοτόκος (*Mother of God*).<sup>71</sup> These include an extensive poetic-prose *chairetismos* to the Theotokos that has survived in Cyril of Alexandria's encomium to *Maria Deipara*; it includes the lines:

Χαίροις Μαρία τὸ κειμήλιον τῆς οἰκουμένης·  
 χαίροις Μαρία ἢ περιστερὰ ἢ ἀμίαντος·  
 χαίροις Μαρία ἢ λαμπὰς ἢ ἄσβεστος.<sup>72</sup>

Another *chairetismos* to the Theotokos was found on a seventh century Fayûm papyrus.<sup>73</sup> This hymn contains three stanzas of praises to Christ, followed by several verses of praise to his Mother (lines 13-17):

Χαῖρε Θεοτόκε ἀγνή (τοῦ Ἰσράηλ)  
 χαῖρε ἥς μήτρα πλατυτέρα οὐρανῶν  
 χαῖρε ἀγία ἐπουράνιε θρόνε  
 ὃν οἱ παῖδες ὑμνοῦντες ἔλεγον  
 Εὐλογεῖτε τὰ ἔργα κυρίου.

In the Coptic *Difnar* there are many examples of the genre, including

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<sup>71</sup>For examples, see *ibid.*, 999, 1003-05.

<sup>72</sup>Migne, vol. 77, 1032 D; reprinted in E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 2nd corrected ed. (Oxford, 1962), 193 note 1.

<sup>73</sup>*P.Ryl.* III 466. A manuscript containing the same hymn was found on Mount Athos (Laura B 32); see *P.Ryl.* III 466, "Addenda and Corrigenda," p. xvii.



*chairetismoi* to saints, angels, and the Holy Cross.<sup>74</sup> The rubrics in the *Difnar* instruct that each hymn be sung in front of the icon of the appropriate saint or angel.<sup>75</sup> The most famous *chairetismos*—more accurately, collection of *chairetismoi*—during the Byzantine period and still today was the Ἀκάθιστος ὕμνος ("hymn sung while standing"). Egon Wellesz has argued persuasively that its composer was Romanus the Melodist, a contemporary of Dioscorus.<sup>76</sup> Here, the twelve *chairetismoi* are dispersed among twenty-four *troparia*; while the *Akathistos* in its essence is a hymn to Christ, the *chairetismoi* are mariological.<sup>77</sup> Finally, it needs to be pointed out that aside from what has been suggested concerning the Dioscorian poem, no evidence has been found of a *chairetismos* written for a Christian emperor or his effigy.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>The oldest surviving manuscripts with which De Lacy O'Leary was familiar are *P.Ryl. Coptic* 21, 22 (= Crum 435) and the Vatican Codex Copt. Borgia 53, 54, 59, 60, 104, 106, all dating from the eighteenth century. The Vatican manuscripts, however, may be copies of a fourteenth century manuscript; and mention of the Coptic *Difnar* was already made in the eight century. Most of its content is based upon the *Synaxarium*. See De Lacy O'Leary, *The Difnar (Antiphonarium) of the Coptic Church*, vol. 1 (London, 1926), "Foreword"; vol. 3 (1930), i-ii. Cf. E. Ishaq, "Difnar," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991). For examples of these *chairetismoi*, see De Lacy O'Leary, vol. 1, pp. 15, 33, 80, 82, 83f., 115; vol. 2 (1928), p. 33; vol. 3, pp. 9, 20, 42. For German translations of many of the hymns in these manuscripts, see M. Cramer, *Koptische Hymnologie in deutscher Übersetzung, Eine Auswahl aus saidischen und bohairischen Antiphonarien vom 9. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden, 1969).

<sup>75</sup>Baumstark, 1004. It has not been determined when began the practice of reciting *chairetismoi* before Christian icons.

<sup>76</sup>For the author of the *Akathistos*, see E. Wellesz, "The *Akathistos*, A Study in Byzantine Hymnography," *DOP* 9-10 (1956): 148-58; idem, *The Akathistos Hymn* (Copenhagen, 1957), xx-xxxiii; idem, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 194-97. It is possible that Dioscorus addressed the encomium H.12 to Romanus the Melodist; see C. Kuehn, "Dioskoros of Aphrodito and Romanos the Melodist," *BASP* 27 (1990): 103-07.

<sup>77</sup>Wellesz, *DOP*, 151. Passages from this long hymn are quoted below.

<sup>78</sup>"The present piece from Dioscorus' pen is unique in the genre in that it is addressed, not to God or a saint or divine being or attribute, but to an emperor, presumably Justin II"; MacCoull, "The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 43. Baumstark mentions no *chairetismos* composed

*The Dioscorian "Chairetismos"*

Dioscorus deliberately obscured the meaning of his *chairetismos*. Although it is a poem of praise, Dioscorus did not give the addressee a name, a specific title, or an easily recognizable epithet; thus an audience would not be able readily to identify him. Dioscorus also concealed the grammatical and logical relationships between his words by compounding them in an Aristophanic fashion.<sup>79</sup> Until the last verse, he avoided any verb (aside from the *χαίρε's*); and he made no attempt to delineate the logical relationships between the verses. Thus the denotations and connotations of the word-roots and the roots' arrangement in the compound words carry most of the weight in determining the meaning of this part of the poem. (His choice and creation of vocabulary were in no way forced by the exigencies of meter.)<sup>80</sup> The rest of the meaning is determined largely by the expectations aroused by the genre, by allusions to other literature and art, and by symbolic significances.

Maspero interpreted this *chairetismos* as a poem in praise of the emperor Justinian. According to Maspero, verse seventeen (the first verse of the *chairetismos*) was addressed to the image of the emperor on a gold coin; and verses eighteen to twenty-three were addressed to a statue which

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for an emperor.

<sup>79</sup>Ambiguity is a characteristic feature even of simple compounds, which may have several meanings. Buck, 354.

<sup>80</sup>In regard to the meter of this part, Maspero said: "L'auteur en a pu trouver le modèle dans Arius encore, qui ne dédaigne pas d'écrire de véritables lignes de prose, terminées seulement par la cadence caractéristique de l'hexamètre" (p. 478). For more on the metrics of Arius' *Thalia*, see M. L. West, "The Metre of Arius' *Thalia*," *JThS* 33 (1982): 98-105.

represented—and at times was addressed as—the emperor. Maspero even suggested that this statue had been seen by Dioscorus while he was in Constantinople in A.D. 551.<sup>81</sup> This interpretation was accepted by subsequent critics, with the chief point of disagreement being the identity of the emperor on the coin and statue: Justinian, Justin II, or Maurice.

Yet Maspero's and subsequent critics' interpretations of this part of the poem are questionable for a variety of reasons.<sup>82</sup> The first—already pointed out above—is that no other of the many surviving pagan and Christian *chairetismoi* was composed for an emperor. Below is a discussion of the other problems relating to their translations and interpretations, and some suggestions for possible solutions. There are five verses and phrases which seem to have been most crucial in guiding critics to conclude that this one *chairetismos* was composed for an emperor.

**Verse 17: Χαῖρε, ὀλοκοττινοπερίκατε ἀγγελοπρόσωπε.** Maspero concluded that verse seventeen, the first verse of the *chairetismos*, was trying to convey the image of an emperor's face stamped on a gold *solidus*. Thus he translated the verse as: "Salut, toi dont le visage angélique circule sur les pièces d'or!"<sup>83</sup> This interpretation was accepted by Baldwin,

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<sup>81</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472.

<sup>82</sup>Maspero noted the difficulty in translating the compound words in the *chairetismos*: "Ce jargon grotesque, qui n'est ni prose ni vers, ne peut se traduire littéralement: il faut, pour obtenir à peu près un sens, relier comme on peut les différents éléments de chacun de ces interminables composés." "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472.

I am very grateful to Dr. Edwin P. Menes for his guidance and suggestions toward determining the possible meanings of Dioscorus' compound words.

<sup>83</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445.

MacCoull, and Saija,<sup>84</sup> but is questionable for four reasons. First, it defines the word *περίπατος* in a way in which the word was rarely if ever used. In fact, the emperor's face *fills* the front of the *solidus*, and neither *circles* it (Maspero) nor *walks about* it (the primary meaning of the verbal root). Second, Maspero's interpretation ignores the close relationship between the image created by the two compound words and the image on the reverse side of the early Byzantine *solidi*. Third, it does not take into account the usual connotations of *περίπατος*. And fourth, it ignores the traditional use of the genre of the *chairetismos*.

Verse seventeen may mean literally: *Hail, walking about a gold solidus*,<sup>85</sup> *having the face of an angel*. Both compounds are vocatives, epithets, and fusions of two nouns apiece. They are probably possessive compounds; that is, although they are nouns, they act as adjectives modifying the implied (though unnamed) addressee of the verse.<sup>86</sup> Each compound appears to be determinative (rather than copulative); that is, there is an implied syntactical relationship between the roots of each compound.<sup>87</sup> The second root of each of the two compounds determines the meaning of the word. In the first compound, *περίπατος*, although formally a noun, has a verbal root; thus the *ὀλοκόττινος* is probably the object of the verbal root. *Ὀλοκόττινος* was used in the Byzantine period for

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<sup>84</sup>Baldwin, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and the Circus Factions," 285; MacCoull, "The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 43-44; Saija, "Neoformazioni linguistiche," 61-62.

<sup>85</sup>Alternatively: *talking about gold solidi* (collective). See the discussion below.

<sup>86</sup>Buck, 355.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.*, 354-55.

both a gold coin, the *solidus*, and a silver coin, the *denarius*.<sup>88</sup>

Thus Maspero was correct in as much as the initial image which the verse creates is that of a gold or silver coin. The difficulty in interpreting the entire word is caused by Dioscorus' linking of a term referring to a coin with the term *περίπατος*, which has the root meaning of *a walking around or a walk*.<sup>89</sup> If this compound is supposed to refer to a gold *solidus*, then Dioscorus is not referring to the emperor's face on the front side, but to the striding angel on the reverse side of the coin. The image on the reverse side of the gold *solidus* went through an interesting evolution in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>90</sup> Emperor Anastasius introduced in A.D. 420 a full-length figure of Victory, holding a long jewelled cross like a staff and striding to her right (Grierson, plate 2, figure 15);<sup>91</sup> Anastasius later replaced the top of this walking staff with the *chi-rho* monogram of Christ. The figure was again modified by Justin I, who replaced the female Victory with a male angel facing forward but stepping to his left. The angel was now holding a long thin cross as a staff in his right hand, and in his left hand a global universe (cf. verse 22) topped by a short cross. Justinian's only variation was changing the angel's long cross back into a long staff topped by the *chi-rho*

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<sup>88</sup>Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, section 17 ("Münzen"), s.v. *ὀλοκόττινον*; E. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100)* (New York, 1957), s.v. *ὀλοκότινος*; LSJ Suppl., s.v. *ὀλοκόττινος*; Lampe, s.v. *ὀλοκότινος*. See also Baldwin, "Dioscorus of Aphroditto and the Circus Factions," 285 note 4. In the papyri and manuscripts of antiquity, the word was spelled with one or two *tau*'s.

<sup>89</sup>Plato *Phaedrus* 227a; *ibid.* 228b.

<sup>90</sup>See the discussion and the photographs of the gold *solidi* in P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London and Berkeley, 1982), 51-52, plate 2.

<sup>91</sup>Compare the gold medallion struck by Anastasius that depicts Victory almost in a run (Grierson, plate 1, figure 1).

monogram of Christ. After brief changes by Justin II (a seated Constantinople, which was commonly interpreted as a seated Venus) and Tiberius II (stairs mounted by a cross), Maurice restored the angel of Justinian's *solidus*. Thus if Dioscorus' first compound is referring to a gold *solidus*, then the second compound in the verse indicates that the poet was probably considering the image of the angel who appears to walking about its reverse side—certainly not the face of the emperor filling the front side.

Already during the Classical period, however, the term *περίπατος* connoted a discussion or a discourse, especially one of a philosophical nature.<sup>92</sup> Among Christians, the word was used for a walk of God with man.<sup>93</sup> Both these latter meanings become especially significant when one considers Dioscorus' next word, *ἄγγελοπρόσωπε*. In this compound, the second, determining root is modified by the first in a noun-genitive relationship. The literal meaning may be: *face of an angel*. It is a vocative epithet which seems to have adjectival force; the addressee is *in possession of the face of an angel*. Not only does this word have obvious biblical overtones,<sup>94</sup> but also angels were the traditional messengers of divine discourses.<sup>95</sup> Thus through their connotations the juxtaposition of

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<sup>92</sup>Cf. *Ar.Ra.* 942, 953; Gell. 20.5.5; and see LSJ, s.v. *περίπατος*. The close association between walking around and discoursing is also evident in Menander's use of the word in his comedy *Epitrepontes*, of which Dioscorus owned a copy: *δίκαζ λέγοντες περιπατεῖτε*. For the reference and a discussion, see J. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (n.p., 1972), s.v. *περιπατέω*. In the New Testament, the concept of *to go around* was expanded to mean *to conduct one's life*; *ibid.*, s.v. *περιπατέω*.

<sup>93</sup>Lampe, s.v. *περίπατος*.

<sup>94</sup>Ac. 6:15. This was noted by MacCoull ("The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 44 and note 10) and Saija ("Neoformazioni linguistiche," 64).

<sup>95</sup>Cf. the Apocalypse of Joannis (*passim*), where angels, walking around with John, interpret the mystical visions. See also Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De coelesti*

ὀλοκοττινοπερίπατος and ἀγγελοπρόσωπος conjure up—in addition to the primary image of an angel on a coin—the image of a divine revelation or discourse, possibly concerning wealth or precious materials. The vocative case—the poet is addressing the angelic honoree—supports the impression of a celestial appearance. The expectations raised by the genre support the impression of a divine revelation. In the early Byzantine period the *chairetismos* was used especially for prayers and hymns to the Theotokos. The litany of χαίρε's recalled the greeting given to the Blessed Virgin by the angel Gabriel, who was bringing to her the Word of God.<sup>96</sup>

With respect to the expectations created by the genre, one should note that the term *denarius* (another meaning of ὀλοκόττινος) had already been used metaphorically to describe the Virgin Mary in a fifth-century *chairetismos* addressed to her: χαίροις, καλλιέμπορε τοῦ παρθενικοῦ δηναρίου (Theodotus Ancyranus *Homilia in BMV et Symeonem* 3). Significant too are the portrayals in early Byzantine icons of angels' faces surrounded by solid gold haloes. An example of this kind of angelic halo can be seen in a Coptic icon of the Virgin Enthroned, woven in Egypt in the sixth century (see figure 1).<sup>97</sup> The Blessed Virgin is wearing imperial purple and is sitting on a jewel-studded throne surrounded by imperial palace

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*hierarchia* 46.22-47.10.

<sup>96</sup>Lc. 1:26-38. The greeting of Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin, however, was not the only reason for the premier rôle which the *chairetismos* had in cults of the Virgin Mary; Baumstark, 998. For the history of the *chairetismos*, see *ibid.*, 993-1006.

<sup>97</sup>Now in the Cleveland Museum of Art; for a color reproduction and a short discussion, see K. Weitzmann, *The Icon, Holy Images—Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York, 1978), 46-47. For numerous photographs and a detailed discussion, especially of its relation to the iconoclast controversy, see J. Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (Princeton, 1990), *passim*. Cf. M. Rutschowskaya, *Coptic Fabrics* (Paris, 1990), 134-45, esp. 134-35.

architecture. The Christ Child is seated upon her lap, and she is flanked by the angels Michael and Gabriel. Surrounding these figures are medallions of the twelve apostles, arranged as though around a table and intertwined by fruits and flowers. In the large zone above, Christ is seated on a golden mandorla (a throne with footrest) resting inside an aura (a transparent golden bubble), which is being carried aloft by two angels into a blue heaven filled with stars. The two angels flanking the Virgin Enthroned have haloes of pale blue. The angels flanking Christ, however, have faces surrounded by solid gold haloes, and the total impression is very much like Christ surrounded by two gold *solidi*, where the profiles of the angels replace the profile of the emperor.<sup>98</sup> Thus the possible literal meanings of the two compound words—*walking about a gold solidus* and *having the face of an angel*<sup>99</sup>—combined with the connotations of περίπατος and ἄγγελος, the vocative case, the customary use of the *chairetismos* genre, the metaphorical use of *denarius*, and the sixth-century icons of angels with solid gold haloes—all these elements combine to create the impression of an angelic apparition and revelation possibly concerning wealth or precious metals.

**Verse 19:** χαῖρε, δέσπο(τα) χρυσολιθοκαχατωνύχιε. Maspero

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<sup>98</sup>Cf. the golden haloes of the angels in figs. 2 and 3; compare these angelic faces surrounded by gold nimbi with the profiles of the fifth- and sixth-century emperors on the gold *solidi*. On the coin issued by Justinian II (first reign, 685 - 695), the gold *solidus* has taken the place of the halo surrounding the face of Christ. See the comparison of coin and icons in Kurt Weitzmann's study of the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, plates 2-4. K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons, Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976).

<sup>99</sup>It is significant that this initial addressee is not addressed as lord (κύριος) or master (δεσπότης); see the discussion below. That this is a prayer and not a secular salutation is indicated by the litany of χαῖρε's.



concluded that the poet is now addressing a statue of the emperor.<sup>100</sup> The previous verse, verse eighteen, also describes the addressee in terms of precious materials (χαίρει, κύριε χρυσαργυροπιναροσμαραγδομαργαριτοβελτίων). Maspero probably thought (he does not specify) that the statue described here in verse nineteen is made of materials more precious than those described in verse eighteen (thus the final βελτίων).<sup>101</sup> Maspero translates the beginning of verse nineteen: "Hail, master with fingernails of topaz and agate." The interpretation that the addressee is now a statue was accepted by Baldwin<sup>102</sup> and Saija (who also accepted Maspero's translation).<sup>103</sup> MacCoull's discussion avoids the issue of a changed addressee. She says that the poem concerns an image of the emperor, but she does not specify which of verses eighteen to twenty-three concerns a face on a coin, a statue, or the emperor himself.<sup>104</sup> MacCoull translates the

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<sup>100</sup>"Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472. It was suggested by Maspero and accepted by subsequent critics that also Dioscorus' poem H.1 was addressed to an imperial image; Maspero, intro. to *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67183, p.161.

<sup>101</sup>Maspero translates this verse: "Salut, seigneur meilleur que l'or, l'argent, la nacre, l'émeraude et les perles." This translation was accepted by Bell ("An Egyptian Village," 28), MacCoull, and Saija.

<sup>102</sup>"Dioscorus of Aphrodito and the Circus Factions," 285. Correct Baldwin's footnote 3; Bell makes no statement about a statue ("An Egyptian Village," 28).

<sup>103</sup>Saija ("Neoformazioni linguistiche," 62) seems to interpret Maspero as stating that the ὀλοκόττινος of verse one is the statue of verse two, which she questions on the grounds of normal Greek terminology. This is probably a misinterpretation of Maspero, who seems to suggest two separate images: 1) a coin showing the emperor (or showing a statue of the emperor), and 2) a statue of the emperor. See Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445 note 3: "Ces invocations bizarres ne peuvent s'adresser qu'à une statue, et d'après la première il s'agirait d'une statue impériale (dont l'effigie circule sur les ὀλοκόττινοι ou sous d'or)."

<sup>104</sup>The addressee of the first verse, according to her translation and discussion, is the emperor's face on a coin. She does not discuss the change of addressee, but it seems from her translation and discussion that she believes the rest of the praises are addressed to the emperor as represented by his images. Her introduction states that ("The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 43): "[This poem] is an important addition to our sources for knowledge of the

epithet: "Hail, master of onyx, chrysolith, and agate." She suggests (and is probably correct) that there is a pun on onyx/fingernail.

The beginning of verse nineteen probably means: *Hail, sovereign, made-of-topaz-and-agate-[and]-onyx*. The sovereign is not "master of" in the sense of master over something; Dioscorus elsewhere used the genitive case for such a relationship (verse 22). Rather, the compound is probably an epithet which acts as an adjective describing the δεσπότης. The word ὀνύχιον can mean *little claw*, and can perhaps be extended to mean *fingernail*. The vocative of this word, however, would normally be ὀνύχιον and not ὀνύχιε. In the surviving iconography or statuary there is no evidence of fingernails made of topaz or agate.<sup>105</sup> The noun ὀνύχιον can also mean *onyx*, as seen already in the Septuagint (Ex. 28:20); this neuter noun, however, will not supply the necessary vocative form. It is therefore most likely that Dioscorus was using the adjective ὀνύχιος as a substantive (and one must understand λίθος, seen in the previous root χρυσολιθο).<sup>106</sup> The compound then is made of two nouns and a substantive, and seems to be copulative (that is, the parts are co-ordinate).<sup>107</sup> This interpretation is

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place of the imperial image in Late Antiquity. The unusual epithets by which the emperor is hailed deserve individual consideration." Her discussion of verses eighteen and nineteen focuses on the aesthetics of the juxtaposition of various colors and precious stones; she does not try to interpret the rôle of these precious stones in this poem. "The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 44.

<sup>105</sup>Cf. MacCoull, "The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 44.

<sup>106</sup>For ὀνύχιος (sc. λίθος) as meaning *onyx*, cf. Suidas.

<sup>107</sup>Buck, 354. An alternative would be that the adjective modifies the addressee directly, and the two nouns modify the adjective: the addressee is made of onyx which is made of topaz and agate. Although onyx is a veined rock, it does not seem possible that it contained topaz and agate.

supported by Dioscorus' elided καὶ between elements one and two.<sup>108</sup>

Thus Maspero and Saija seem to have been correct in concluding that in verse nineteen Dioscorus is addressing a piece of art (if there is a pun, then with jeweled fingernails). This conclusion is supported by the large body of literature written during this period in praise of works of art and architecture (*ekphraseis*).<sup>109</sup> Also, with respect to the first part of this poem, descriptions of art were one of the most common motifs in anacreontic poetry.<sup>110</sup> Is it, however, necessarily a *statue*? and is it a representation of an *emperor*?

If verse nineteen is compared to the Coptic tapestry described above, one finds that the thrones of Christ and the Mother of God seem to consist of gold, emeralds, pearls or mother-of-pearl, and rubies.<sup>111</sup> Representations of precious stones and metals can also be seen in the throne of the icon *La Madonna della Clemenza* (Rome, c. A.D. 705-707; see figure 2).<sup>112</sup> Here, the Mother of God, holding the Christ Child upon her lap, is also wearing an elaborate crown and necklace, both of gold, pearls, emeralds, and rubies. Weitzmann describes them as "obviously the adornments of a Byzantine

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<sup>108</sup>Dioscorus' compound word seems closely related to the biblical description of the chestplate which Aaron is supposed to wear in the sanctuary in the presence of Yahweh: καὶ ὁ στίχος ὁ τρίτος λιγύριον, ἀγάτης καὶ ἀμέθυστος; καὶ ὁ στίχος ὁ τέταρτος χρυσόλιθος καὶ βηρύλλιον καὶ ὄνυχιον Exodus 28:19-20.

<sup>109</sup>See the texts, translations, long introduction, and commentaries by P. Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza, Paulus Silentiarius, und Prokopios von Gaza: Kunstbeschreibungen justinianischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1912; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1969). Cf. Viljamaa, 15-17; G. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, 1983), 170-75.

<sup>110</sup>Cf. *Anacreontea* 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, 54, 57.

<sup>111</sup>In biblical literature, descriptions of Christ, God, and the New Jerusalem employ imagery of precious stones and metals; cf. Apoc. 4:3, 21:15-21. See the discussion below.

<sup>112</sup>See the color plate and brief discussion in Weitzmann, 49-50.

empress." Closer to Dioscorus' era is a fresco in Rome of the Virgin Enthroned, which dates probably to A.D. 528 (see figure 7).<sup>113</sup> Here too the throne appears to consist of precious metals and stones. These are only some examples of the art from this period which show that precious metals and stones were represented in *icons* (whether woven, painted, hammered, etc.). It is therefore not necessary to conclude that the precious materials described in this poem denote a *statue*. Moreover, actual precious materials were used in icons not only of the emperor,<sup>114</sup> but also of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the angels, and the saints. Holy icons made from precious materials became even more common after the iconoclast controversy. For instance, a tenth century icon from Constantinople of the archangel Michael presents his dazzling face surrounded by a halo made of genuine gold (see figure 3);<sup>115</sup> his face too is crafted of genuine gold, silver, and precious stones. In the upper corners were two medallions, one of Christ and one of the Blessed Virgin (which subsequently was moved to a different position); they too are made of precious materials. Thus it is certainly possible that Dioscorus in verse nineteen was addressing a holy icon. And this possibility is strengthened by the fact that Agathias, a younger contemporary of Dioscorus, wrote at least two epigrams to icons of the archangel Michael (*Anthologia Graeca* 1.34-35; cf. 1.36); and Neilus (fifth century) wrote at least one (*Anthologia Graeca* 1.33).

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<sup>113</sup>At Benedettine di Priscilla; see Weitzmann, 48-49.

<sup>114</sup>In defense of Maspero's position, that the *chairetismos* is addressed to an image of the emperor, one must point out the important place which images of the emperor and his consort had in Christian churches. For example, the sides of the apse of the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (completed in 547) hold mosaics of the emperor Justinian and the empress Theodora as they participate in the ceremony of the consecration of the church. Both their faces are surrounded by gold nimbi, and both are represented as wearing precious metals and jewels. See the detailed photographs and discussions of these mosaics in G. Bovini, *Eglises de Ravenne* (Novara, 1960), 134-42.

<sup>115</sup>Now at San Marco in Venice; see Weitzmann, 66-67.

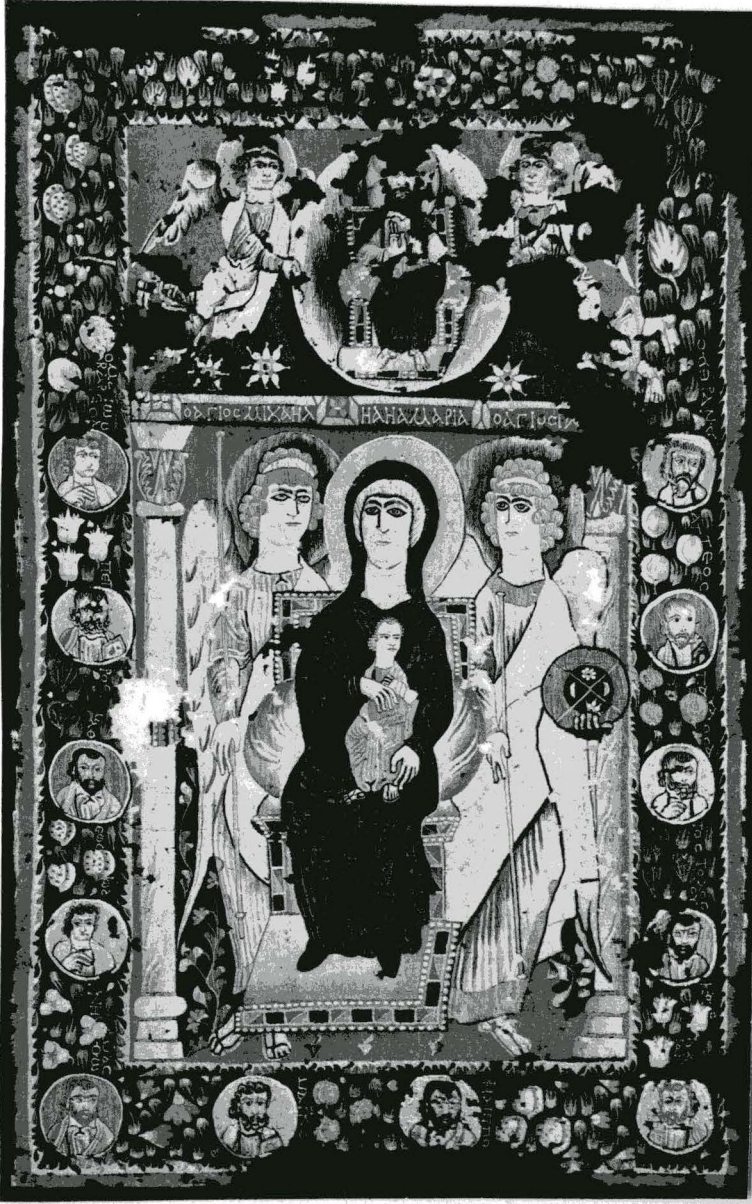


Fig. 1. Virgin Enthroned. This tapestry icon of the Virgin was probably woven in Egypt during the sixth-century, and is now in Cleveland. Note the golden haloes of the angels who are conveying Christ. Although the Virgin dominates the lower zone, the glory of Christ is the main subject of this tapestry.

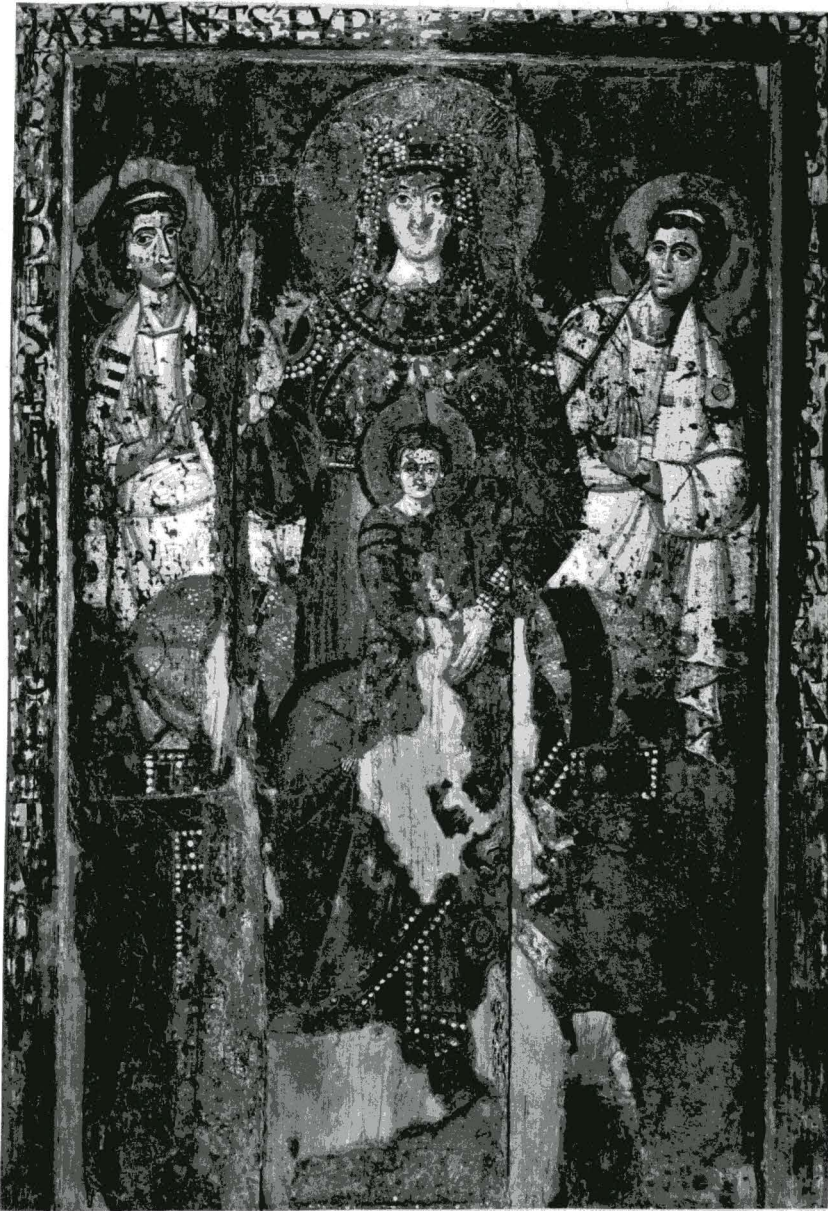


Fig. 2. *La Madonna della Clemenza*. This famous encaustic icon in Rome was probably made between 705 and 707. Note the pearl-studded crown, the necklace, the pearl-embroidered garments, and jewel-studded cross staff; the Virgin is obviously depicted as a Byzantine empress.



Fig. 3. Michael the archangel. This precious icon, probably made in the tenth century, is of gold, silver, and enamel. It was stolen from Constantinople by Venetians in 1204 and is now in Venice.



Fig. 4. Christ the Warrior. This mosaic at Ravenna was made perhaps between 494 and 519. It depicts the Savior as a young general, who in armor and chlamys has conquered a lion and a serpent. Cf. Dioscorus' fourth anacreontic strophe.



**Verse 19:** *πρα[σ]ινοπάντιμε*. This second epithet in verse nineteen has attracted considerable attention from critics, and much of Maspero's support for an imperial image comes from his interpretation of it. He suggests that *πρασινοπάντιμος* means that the addressee was a patron of the Green circus faction in Constantinople: "Je crois voir ici une allusion à la faction Verte des jeux du cirque. Justinien était protecteur des Πράσινοι."<sup>116</sup> Baldwin argues that Justinian was a patron of the Blues; thus Maurice, a patron of the Greens, was the addressee of this poem. MacCoull disagrees, claiming that Dioscorus was *wishing* that Justin II (who was neutral) would be supportive of the Greens; Dioscorus' disguised wish, however, was "that the emperor will be kindly disposed toward the affairs and aspirations of the Egyptian church."<sup>117</sup>

This compound word is composed of two adjectives which may be copulative; it may mean literally: *green and all-honorable*. It is certainly possible to see in the word a reference to the Greens (a circus faction) and to the honor of the emperor. There are, however, basic problems with Maspero's interpretation. First, the circus imagery is intrusive. There has been no mention of the chariot races in Constantinople, and there is little reason for them to be mentioned now. Second, the particular member of the Greens is left ambiguous, because there is no surviving evidence of the term *πάντιμος* used for an emperor.<sup>118</sup> Third, there is another possible

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<sup>116</sup>"Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445 note 3. For a discussion of these factions, see Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions* (Oxford, 1976).

<sup>117</sup>"The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 44.

<sup>118</sup>Dioscorus elsewhere used the term for the duke: τὸ πάντιμον ὕψος ὑμῶν *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67005.9. The word was used often in the *Orphic Hymns* (in the Quandt collection) to describe various gods.

interpretation which corresponds more closely with the rest of the poem.

The term πράσινος was used in the Septuagint (Genesis 2:12) to refer to a precious green gem: καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθραξ καὶ ὁ λίθος ὁ πράσινος. This biblical episode describes the creation of the universe, and in this passage the Garden of Eden is distinguished by its orchard, pure gold, fragrant resin, and green stone. The stone has not been identified; it was probably not the emerald because πράσινος is too light a green.<sup>119</sup> Dioscorus may have had this particular biblical passage in mind (cf. verse 22);<sup>120</sup> if so, his reader has to supply the idea of λίθος from the previous word χρυσολιθο-. Whatever the stone may be, it does continue the precious stone and metal imagery of the rest of the poem and thus offers a preferable interpretation of the compound πρασινοπάντιμος. The addressee is made of a green gem which is all-honorable because it was found even in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

**Verse 21:** χαῖρε, δέσ[π(οτα)...θαλασσιο]πλοιοχρυσ[ο]-  
γόμευ.<sup>121</sup> The surviving fragment of this verse suggests a compound made of an adjectival root followed by three noun roots. The compound appears to be determinative and to have the following syntactical relationship

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<sup>119</sup>See Sophocles, s.v. πράσιμος.

<sup>120</sup>There are several other surviving texts which use πράσιμος to indicate a green gem; see the citations in Lampe, s.v. πράσιμος.

<sup>121</sup>The remnant of this verse is now contained on two fragments with a lacuna between them. When Maspero examined the papyrus, there was another small fragment filling part of the lacuna; he transcribed several letters from this verse (ασσιο) and from the verse below (κτη) which are now not found with the papyrus in Cairo. Maspero in his 1911 essay even made a specific note (p. 445) about this verse: "Ms.: χαῖρε . . . [ . . . ]ασσιοπλοιοχρυσ. / γομου."

between the roots: *of the golden cargo in the sea-going ship*.<sup>122</sup>

Maspero (followed by MacCoull) suggests that the addressee was master of the seagoing vessels filled with gold.<sup>123</sup> MacCoull comments: "On foreign trade in Justin's reign (fourth line), at least so far as precious objects are concerned, we have the crosses and reliquaries sent by the rulers to Rome and other great shrines of the West."<sup>124</sup> One can also point to the holy icons shipped by Justinian to the West and East. For example, the icon of the Blessed Virgin, St. Theodore, and St. George was probably shipped by Justinian from the workshops of Constantinople to the monastery of St. Catherine, which he had built at Mount Sinai.<sup>125</sup> Maspero (quite tentatively) and MacCoull (with certainty) say that the addressee was the owner of (δεσπότης) the precious cargo in seagoing ships. This interpretation, however, seems strange in light of the following verse, where the addressee is master of (κύριος) everything in the entire universe. It is more consistent with the images created by verses twenty-two and nineteen that the addressee of verse twenty-one was *part of* the precious cargo being shipped across the sea—that is, an art object. The singular -γόμου specifies *one* golden cargo, and the roots [θαλασσιο]πλοιο- can mean one vessel. Yet the former term may be collective and roots in compounds do not normally carry number; thus Dioscorus may have had

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<sup>122</sup>Χρυσός can refer to anything precious; see LSJ, s.v.

<sup>123</sup>"Salut, [toi qui possèdes]? sur la mer des vaisseaux chargés d'or" (p. 445). Saija, perhaps unintentionally, omits translating this verse.

<sup>124</sup>"The Imperial *Chairetismos*," 44.

<sup>125</sup>See the discussion of this icon and icons B.1, B.5, and B.10 in Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons. Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century*, 5, 13-15, 18-21 (esp. 21), 23-26, 31-32.

in mind that the icon was part of the ongoing traffic in religious art.

Verse 22: χαῖρε, κ(ύρι)ε πανάξιο[κτη]νοπηναστροφωστηρο-κοσμοποιίας. Maspero writes that in his translation he had to change drastically the word arrangement in order to make this verse apply to an imperial addressee. Switching the positions of κύριε and πανάξιο- (and less significantly, changing the position of -κοσμοποιίας and switching the positions of -αστρο- and -φωστηρο-), he translates the verse: "Salut, digne seigneur du monde créé, des bêtes, des oiseaux, et de la lumière des astres!"<sup>126</sup> Saija's translation is the same: "Salve, o signore del tutto degno delle cose create, delle bestie, degli uccelli e della luce degli astri."

Literally, however, the verse means: *Hail, lord of the creating-of-all-worthy-beast-bird-star-light-universe.*<sup>127</sup> It is understandable why Maspero had trouble applying this verse to an imperial addressee. Even in an age where exaggerated praises of the emperor or his image were standard, an

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<sup>126</sup>"J'ai transféré l'adjectif πανάξιος au substantif κύριε, ce qui est la seule façon de lui trouver un sens." "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445 note 4.

<sup>127</sup>The final term in the compound is actually \*ποιία; this word, however, does not appear elsewhere independently. It does appear very often in the compound κοσμοποιίας, which means *the act of creating the cosmos*. In Christian literature, the word was used often for the creation of the world in the Genesis story; cf. the entry in Lampe, s.v. κοσμοποιία.

MacCoull's translation strays considerably from the actual Greek: "Hail, most worthy possessor of a star in the ascendant that illuminates the whole created universe." For the frequent questionable translations of the Greek by MacCoull, see E. Wipszycka, review of *Dioscorus of Aphrodito, His Work and His World*, by L. MacCoull, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 48 (May-July 1991): 529-36. In addition, M. Dickie has been kind enough to show me a draft of his yet unpublished article "Dioscorus and the Impotence of Envy," which discusses a significant mistranslation (H.10.12-13) by MacCoull.

Although the word πανάξιος appears in Oppianus Apamensis' epic *Cynegetica* (3.408), it is not necessary to suggest a borrowing by Dioscorus; the Aphroditan was fond of compounding adjectives, verbs, and even nouns with παν- prefixes. Cf. Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 475-76; Saija, "Neoformazioni linguistiche," 44, 63; Viljamaa, 44 note 10.

audience (as well as the emperor) would have balked at a verse which claimed that he was lord over the act of creating the beasts and birds, the stars and light,<sup>128</sup> and all the universe. And what made these creatures *all-worthy*?

This verse seems to apply more naturally to Christ, especially as he appears in the Apocalypsis Joannis. In the Apocalypsis, Christ is praised for having created all things anew: in other words, Christ made the universe *all-worthy* of himself.<sup>129</sup> Below I will examine in detail the relationship between the Dioscorian poem and the Apocalypsis with respect to vocabulary, imagery, and structure. What should be pointed out here is that the term φωστήρ has particular significance in the Apocalypse, where John uses it to describe the appearance of the New Jerusalem, whose illumination as it descends from heaven is similar to that of precious stones (21:10-11): εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων . . . ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχουσαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ φωστήρ αὐτῆς ὅμοιος λίθῳ τιμιωτάτῳ ὡς λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι κρυσταλλίζοντι.

Interpreting verse twenty-two (and the other surviving κύριε-verse, verse eighteen) as applying to Christ (as Logos, not the historical person) is consistent with the *chairetismos* genre. Although the *chairetismoι* from the

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<sup>128</sup>For a detailed sixth-century view of the arrangement and relationships of the world, the stars, and heaven, see W. Wolska-Conus, ed., *Cosmas Indicopleustès, Topographie chrétienne*, in the series *Sources chrétiennes*, vols. 141, 159, 197 (Paris, 1968-73); see esp. Wolska-Conus' helpful index in vol. 197, p. 402.

<sup>129</sup>Aside from the image of Christ in the Apocalypse, Christ as sovereign over creation which he had already renewed through the Incarnation was the ideology upon which holy icons were based. For the biblical and patristic sources of this ideology and its part in the iconoclast controversy, see Pelikan, 70ff; Barnard, 65-79, 89-103.

early Byzantine period focused primarily on the Theotokos, they praised her because of her relationship to Christ. In the *Akathistos* hymn by Romanus, the *chairetismoi* to the Mother of God are part of a much larger hymn in praise of Christ. In the hymn on the Fayûm papyrus discussed above (*P.Ryl.* III 466 recto), the five-verse *chairetismos* to the Theotokos follows fifteen verses of praise to Christ. The christological focus of these hymns is mirrored by the art of the early Byzantine period. For example, in the woven icon discussed above, the figure of Mary dominates the lower zone; yet the glory of Christ is the obvious subject of both the lower and upper zones. In his discussion of this tapestry, Pelikan observes:

The glorification of divinity made human in Christ is the ultimate object of both zones. The damage to the textile cannot obscure the obvious conclusion that the theme of the upper zone of the icon is the familiar one of Christ in Majesty, seated on a throne and flanked by the two archangels Gabriel and Michael; and although it is less massive in size than the lower zone, it is also still more exalted in theme. . . . But also in the lower zone of this *Icon of the Virgin* the most important figure is not the Virgin Mary as *Theotokos* or Mother of God, but her infant Son, even though the panel was inspired by devotion to Mary. . . . Here in our tapestry icon, Mary is holding him forward and presenting him to the world as its infant Sovereign. The angels Michael and Gabriel on either side likewise bear witness to him, with the globe as a sign of Christ's power and authority.<sup>130</sup>

Thus for Dioscorus to move away from christological hymns containing *chairetismoi* to a *chairetismos* which focuses on Christ—this reveals a small and natural development. And Dioscorus would not have been without an important forerunner. Compare the *chairetismos* by Synesius of Cyrene:

55     καὶ πατρὸς μέλπων ἀλκὰν  
           τοῖς σοῖς ὕμνοις ἀμπαύω

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<sup>130</sup>Pelikan, 69-70 (and see plates 44 and 50).

κλεινὰν ὠδῖνα ψυχᾶς.

Χαίροις, ὦ παιδὸς παγά,

χαίροις, ὦ πατρὸς μορφά·

60 χαίροις, ὦ παιδὸς κρηπίς,

χαίροις, ὦ πατρὸς σφρηγίς·

χαίροις, ὦ παιδὸς κάρτος,

χαίροις, ὦ πατρὸς κάλλος·

χαίροις δ' ἄχραντος πνοιά,

65 κέντρον κούρου καὶ πατρός.

The *chairetismos* in this mystic hymn (*Hymni* No. 3 [5]) is addressed to God and Christ. Notice also the rotation of *πατρός* with *παιδός*, which is mirrored by Dioscorus' rotation of *κύριε* with *δέσποτα*. Unlike Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, however, Synesius' *chairetismos* was written in the same difficult meter as the rest of the poem (spondaic dimeter catalectic).<sup>131</sup>

The above examination shows that it is possible that Christ and an icon of Christ are the addressees of this part of the poem (verses 18-22). This interpretation is supported by the final verse, verse twenty-three (*χαίρων χορείης εἰς μυριάμορον χρόνον*). The only appearance of the word *μυριάμορος*—outside of Dioscorus—is at Aristophanes *Pax* 522: *πόθεν ἂν λάβοιμι ῥῆμα μυριάμορον / ὅτω προσείπω σ'*; Here, Trygaeus is praising a handmaid of the goddess Peace, who has just been unburied and restored to the world. If verses eighteen through twenty-two are addressed to Christ and an icon of Christ, this literary allusion would be especially appropriate.

<sup>131</sup>For the Greek text, translation (French), and discussion of this hymn, see C. Lacombrade, ed., *Synésios de Cyrène*, vol. 1: *Hymnes* (Paris, 1978), 68-72.

Verse twenty-three appears at least once and probably twice elsewhere in Dioscorus' surviving *oeuvre* (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67317.19 + *P.Berol.* 10580.22 [=H.3.22] and *P.Berol.Inv.No.* 21334 verso 1). It is especially appropriate in the *chairetismos* because it contains two images which unify this part of the poem to the anacreontic part of the poem: 1) dancing imagery both closes the *chairetismos* and opens the anacreontic part, and thus creates a ring structure; and 2) the unusual adjective *μυριάμφορος* with its literal meaning of *ten-thousand amphoras full* recalls the symposiatic ethos of the anacreontic. Verse twenty-three also develops the connection between this *chairetismos* and the comedies of Aristophanes, a connection which is most obvious in Dioscorus' use of exaggerated compound words. The significance of this connection will be examined below.<sup>132</sup>

#### *The Literal Meaning and Organization of Dioscorus' "Chairetismos"*

The above observations suggest the following interpretation of the literal meaning of the *chairetismos*. The poet first gives the impression that he is addressing the figure of an angel on a coin. There is also the simultaneous impression of a real angelic apparition and discourse on wealth. This is followed by what seems to be a real vision of Christ (verse 18). Yet in a surprising contrast to verse eighteen, where Christ is said to be better than precious gems and metals, the poet reveals that he is now addressing an icon which is made of precious materials. Then in verse twenty-one, the poet continues to praise this icon of Christ, describing how

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<sup>132</sup>Note the similarity between the Dioscorian phrase *χαίρων χορείης* and the phrase used in the choral hymn in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* 981: *χαρέντα χορείαις*. In addition to affinities to Aristophanes, Saija sees several parallels between components of the compound epithets in Dioscorus and the comic vocabularies of Cratinus and Eupolis; "Neoformazioni linguistiche," 63-64.



it was shipped by sea. And in a humorous juxtaposition, verse twenty-two praises Christ as lord over the creation of the renewed universe.<sup>133</sup> Finally, in a humorous oxymoron, the poet invites Christ (who at least in verses 19 and 21 seems to be an icon) to dance. In sum, throughout the *chairetismos* the poet is reacting as though in the presence of a true angel, the true Christ, a coin carrying the image of an angel, and an icon,<sup>134</sup> without clearly pointing out a distinction between the spiritual beings and their representations. And although the account is humorous, the narrator of the poem appears to be sincere.

The above interpretation of the *chairetismos*, like the interpretation by Maspero, postulates several addressees; but instead of an emperor's face on a coin, a statue of the same emperor, and the emperor himself, it is more likely that the addressees are an angel on a coin, an angel, Christ, and an icon of Christ. The homogenous language, however, suggests that in the eyes of the narrator all the addressees are combined. That is, all the verses are addressed in reality to an icon (where the haloed angels remind the narrator of the angels on the *solidi*), and the representations are praised not only as representations (made of precious materials and shipped by sea) but also as real divine entities (an angel, and the ruler and creator of the universe).<sup>135</sup> The icon was possibly made in the workshops of Constantinople and shipped to an Egyptian city (Antinoopolis?), where

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<sup>133</sup>Minucius Felix, quoted below, also made fun of the discrepancy between the physical nature of idols and their so-called divine power.

<sup>134</sup>In a similar fashion, imperial images were often treated as though the person of the emperor were actually present.

<sup>135</sup>Cf. Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 122.

Dioscorus saw it. It is just as likely, however, that the icon was shipped from a provincial city to Constantinople, especially if the icon was thought to have had a miraculous origin; and Dioscorus saw it during his visits to the capital. Then again, the description need not refer to any real icon, but rather to a type of icon which the poet was envisioning. Whatever the case may be, it is important that the reader keep aware of the distinction which the poet made between verses: those verses addressed to the δεσπότης are more appropriate for an icon, while those addressed to the κύριος are more appropriate for Christ. The importance of this distinction and the reason for it will be shown in the discussion below, where the relationship between this poem and the Apocalypsis Joannis will be examined in detail.

This interpretation of the literal meaning of the *chairetismos* shows the following pattern:<sup>136</sup>

Verse 17: χαίρε ὀλοκοττινο... epithets appropriate for an image of an angel  
and an actual angel

Verse 18: χαίρε κύριε... epithet appropriate for Christ

Verse 19: χαίρε δέσποτα... epithets appropriate for an icon of Christ

Verse 20: [χαίρε κύριε... epithet(s) appropriate for Christ]<sup>137</sup>

Verse 21: χαίρε δέσποτα... epithet(s) appropriate for an icon of Christ

Verse 22: χαίρε κύριε... epithet appropriate for Christ

Verse 23: χαίρων χορείης appropriate for Christ

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<sup>136</sup>Refer to the structure of the poem P.Berol.Inv.No. 21334 verso, and the discussion of that structure by C. Kuehn, "A New Papyrus of a Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract: P.Berol.Inv.No. 21334," *ZPE* (forthcoming).

<sup>137</sup>There is a break in the papyrus after verse nineteen. Traces are visible below verse nineteen and above verse twenty-one.

Note that the *chairetismos* begins and ends with a verse whose style does not quite fit the pattern of the other verses. This structure, the obvious anaphora (which is part of the genre), and the consistent use of compound words (which are essential for Dioscorus' parody) combine to create a tightly organized hymn.

Dioscorus' account of one's experiences before an icon is similar in style to the *ekphraseis* by Procopius and John of Gaza, who not only described works of art, but in prose and verse relived the emotional and spiritual exuberance which they experienced in front of the art. For example, Procopius wrote the following description of a painting of the myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus:

Theseus is asleep and the members of his household take advantage of the opportunity. But sweet sleep holds not Phaedra. Instead of sleep, Love has taken possession of her heart. What is happening to you, woman? You suffer in vain from a love which cannot succeed. How will you persuade him who knows self-restraint? Why do you shame yourself by longing to approach a forbidden bed? Turn about a little and cast your glance on your spouse; scorn not what is available while you seek what you do not possess. Respect your husband even when he is asleep and take yourself out of the picture on which you fasten your eyes. For Hippolytus shows restraint, it seems, even in painting.

But what is this I experience? I am deceived by the art of the painter and think all this is alive, and my sight forgets that this is a painting. Let me speak about Phaedra, not to her.<sup>138</sup>

Some Christians, however, lost their objectivity when gazing upon holy icons, and believed that not only the subjects (martyrs, saints, angels, etc.) but the icons themselves possessed the Holy Spirit and miraculous powers. Ernst Kitzinger, in his analysis of early Byzantine art, saw a drastic change in

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<sup>138</sup>Translated by George Kennedy, 173-74. For the sources of the Greek text, see *ibid.*, 172 note 60, 173.

artistic styles in the mid sixth-century; and this change, he suggests, was caused by the sudden burgeoning of icon worship. Kitzinger notes:

The image stood in a transcendental relationship to the holy person it represents. No longer was it merely an educational tool, a means of instruction for the illiterate or edification for the simple-minded, as earlier writers had claimed. It was a reflection of its proto-type, a link with the invisible and the supernatural, a vehicle of transmission of divine forces. . . . Bearing this in mind while looking at actual representations of saints of that period, one is indeed tempted to see some connection. Are not the thinness and transparency of these figures fully in keeping with their being conceived as receptacles for the Holy Ghost and as channels of communication with the Deity?<sup>139</sup>

The second half of the sixth century witnessed a rapid development in the worship of holy icons. This worship included prayers, prostration, and acts of veneration which once had been the prerogatives of images of the emperor. It is probable that this religious development, which gave Dioscorus his inspiration, likewise gives his *chairetismos* its full meaning.

### *The Cult of Christian Icons*

The Christian cult of holy icon worship had grown steadily since the reign of Constantine,<sup>140</sup> but from the final years of Justinian's reign (r. 527 - 565) until the outbreak of the iconoclast controversy in the eighth century, the cult grew enormously in size and in intensity of belief.<sup>141</sup> There survives an abundance of literary evidence, beginning as far back as the end

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<sup>139</sup>E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art: 3rd - 7th Century* (Cambridge, 1977), 106-07.

<sup>140</sup>Although icons of Christian emperors were venerated and therefore can be termed *holy*, in the following discussion the term *holy icon* will refer specifically to icons of Christ, the angels, and the saints; the term *imperial icon* will refer to an icon of the emperor.

<sup>141</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 87.

of the fourth century, of the activities of this cult.<sup>142</sup> St. Augustine (354 - 430) was the first to mention in unambiguous terms the worship of icons. In *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* (1.34), he spoke of the *sepulcrorum et picturarum adoratores*, thereby joining the Christian cult of tombs to the cult of images.<sup>143</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315 - 403) argued extensively against religious imagery and its worship.<sup>144</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345 - c. 410) narrated (actually, loosely translated from Eusebius) an incident revealing the magical powers of a Christian sculpture. An herb, which had grown tall enough to touch the hem of Christ's garment in a bronze group at Paneas, had received miraculous healing powers (*Eusebii ecclesiasticae historiae liber VIII* 18.2).<sup>145</sup> And Theodoretus of Cyrus (393 - c. 458) recorded that images of St. Symeon were placed as *apotropaia* at the doors of

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<sup>142</sup>In "The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm," Kitzinger collected and examined the literary evidence regarding this cult's growth in the sixth and seventh centuries; and his conclusions have been utilized in the following discussion. See also L. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden, 1974), esp. 51-64. Cf. K. Schwarzlose, *Der Bilderstreit* (Gotha, 1890), 19; E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder* (Leipzig, 1899), passim; A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1946), 343ff.; Averil Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past and Present* 84 (1979): 3-35; reprinted in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium*, chap. XVIII (London, 1981).

<sup>143</sup>It seems that the growth of the cult of icons was closely associated with the earlier cult of relics. Barnard pointed out that (pp. 56-57): "There was from the beginning a strong visual element in the cult of relics, connected with the dust from martyrs' tombs, which carried with it the seeds of the later development of the image cult. Indeed relics and images were often associated as in the Coptic *Encomium of St. Menas*. In this story the commander of a Phrygian regiment, who took the Saint's body from its burial place in Phrygia in order to use it as a palladium during a military expedition to Libya, found that he was unable to move the relics. He therefore had an image of the Saint painted on a wooden tablet which he then placed on the Saint's remains so that his blessing and power should remain in the image. He would then take the image wherever he went as an invisible succor and weapon."

<sup>144</sup>For the authenticity of works attributed to Epiphanius, see Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 93 note 28.

<sup>145</sup>See E. Schwartz and T. Mommsen, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller*, vol. 9, part 2 (Leipzig, 1908), 672f.

workshops in Rome (*Religiosa historia* 26).

From the beginning of the sixth century comes the first mention of *proskynesis* (prostration) before Christian images. From a written reply by Bishop Hypatius of Ephesus (d. post 537) to a concerned inquiry by Julian of Atramytion, we learn that Julian had allowed paintings to remain in the sanctuary of his church, although he was aware that they were receiving *proskynesis*. Julian's chief concern was not, however, about the worship of paintings, but about the worship which sculptures were receiving; the latter practice was specifically prohibited by Scripture.<sup>146</sup>

It may be difficult for a twentieth-century Christian to appreciate how novel it was for the early Church to offer prayers and other acts of worship in front of holy images. Early Christians focused on the spirituality of their new religion, worshipping by-and-large without material props. This disdain for material props had three primary motivations: reaction against the extensive use and worship of images in the pagan Greek, Roman, and Egyptian religions; respect for Mosaic Law; and, most important, adherence to the spiritual theme of the gospels. This theme is brought out clearly by a statement of Jesus in the Gospel of John (4:23): ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. The spiritual focus of Christianity was still dominant at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third. This is evident in the dialogue written during this period and attributed to M. Minucius Felix. Little is known of the life of Minucius. His dialogue, *Octavius*, was probably

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<sup>146</sup>F. Diekamp, ed., *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, vol. 117 (Rome, 1938), 127ff. See also P. Alexander, "Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century," *HThR* 45 (1952): 177ff.; Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 94 note 33.

written a little before A.D. 197 (Tertullian borrowed from it). He was a Christian and well-educated; his dialogue shows that he was one of the rare Christian apologists of this period who understood pagan Romans' disdain for Christianity.<sup>147</sup> In this fictional dialogue, Minucius is a witness at Ostia of a debate between the pagan Cecilius Natalis and the Christian Octavius; Octavius eventually convinces and converts Cecilius. It is noteworthy that in the entire dialogue the name of Jesus Christ is not mentioned once. Concerning the creation and worship of pagan images in contrast to the Christian disdain for material props, Octavius says:

Nisi forte nondum deus saxum est vel lignum vel argentum. Quando igitur hic nascitur? Ecce funditur, fabricatur, sculpitur: nondum deus est; ecce plumbatur, construitur, erigitur: nec adhuc deus est; ecce ornatur, consecratur, oratur: tunc postremo deus est, cum homo illum voluit et dedicavit. . . . Putatis autem nos occultare quod colimus, si delubra et aras non habemus? Quod enim simulacrum deo fingam, cum, si recte existimes, sit dei homo ipse simulacrum? Templum quod ei extruam, cum totus hic mundus eius opere fabricatus eum capere non possit? Et cum homo latius maneam, intra unam aediculam vim tantae maiestatis includam? Nonne melius in nostra dedicandus est mente? in nostro intimo consecrandus est pectore? (*Octavius* 22.5-32.2)

By the end of the third century, however, symbols and didactic art (such as paintings of gospel scenes) were accepted into the meeting places and cemeteries of the Church.<sup>148</sup>

With the growth of the cult of relics, material props began to play an increasingly significant role in Christian life and worship. The worship of reputed relics of the saints and reputed fragments of the original Holy Cross paved the way for worship of holy images. It was the worship of imperial

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<sup>147</sup>E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1955), 46-47; see the excellent bibliography (p. 576 note 49) of literature concerning Minucius.

<sup>148</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 89.

images, however, which showed how these holy images should be venerated in the public sphere. Devotion to the emperors' images had remained strong in the beginning of the Byzantine period; sacrifice was no longer offered to them, but the imperial portraits were carried in processions, they received acclamations and *proskynesis*, and candles and incense played a part in their cult's rituals.<sup>149</sup> Under pressure from the populace, however, Justinian began to concede to holy icons the prerogatives once held by images of the emperor. In the years 554 to 560, under the advice of someone in the entourage of Justinian, an icon of Christ (a copy of a miraculous icon) was paraded through various cities in Asia Minor. The icon received all the veneration which traditionally had been given to the emperor's portrait. The anonymous author of the account (written in Syriac before 569) believed that the parade was symbolic of the imminent Second Advent of Christ.<sup>150</sup> Later, Justin II (r. 565 - 578) replaced the image of the emperor Constantine above the Chalke Gate with an icon of Christ.<sup>151</sup> Also during his reign (in 574), a miraculously made image of Christ's face, the Camuliana, was brought to Constantinople, where it quickly acquired official status.<sup>152</sup> Religious icons then began to replace imperial icons as *palladia* and *apotropaia* in military and civic contexts.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>For the cult of the imperial icon during the early Byzantine period, see *ibid.*, 91-92, 97-98, 121-27; Barnard, 67ff.

<sup>150</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 99-100, 125.

<sup>151</sup>G. Stricevic, review of *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai* by K. Weitzmann, in *AJA* 82 (1978): 268; Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 126.

<sup>152</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 114, 125. At the same period arose the stories of the miraculously created images of Christ at Edessa and Memphis.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 109ff., 125.



Tiberius II (r. 578 - 582) placed his own throne in subordination to Christ's by having an image of Christ Enthroned depicted in the apse of the Chrysotriklinium.<sup>154</sup> And Justinian II (r. 685 - 695) revolutionized Byzantine coinage by replacing the emperor's image on the *solidus* with an icon of Christ and the legend "the Ruler over Rulers."<sup>155</sup>

Worship of holy icons was not confined to images of Christ or to public worship. After an examination of the literature of this period, Kitzinger concluded:

What gestures and actions such prayers entailed is often left vague, but genuflections and *proskynesis*, already attested in the early sixth century, as we have seen, are mentioned repeatedly by writers of the seventh century. A story in which some devout workmen, in addition to saluting an image of the Virgin, "embraced it and kissed its hands and feet and continued to salute it a long time pressing it to their bosoms in great faith" unfortunately cannot be dated with any precision. But there can be no doubt, in the light of the sources just quoted, that during the late sixth and seventh centuries devotional practices in front of images became elaborate, common and intense.<sup>156</sup>

As testimony of icon worship in the private sphere, John Moschus, companion and spiritual master of Sophronius, recorded the story of a hermit who before leaving for any journey, prayed in his cave to an image of the Blessed Virgin and Christ Child. As a result of his prayers, a candle before the icon always remained lit—even if he was away for six months (*Pratum spirituale* 180).<sup>157</sup> And Sophronius, in his account of the miracles

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<sup>154</sup>*Ibid.*, 126 note 191.

<sup>155</sup>Dioscorus himself used the phrase βασιλεὺς βασιλευόντων when referring to Christ in the petition *P.Lond.* V 1674 83-84; cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso D.79; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67177.23. Cf. the *Martyrum Acta*, *M. Scill.* 6; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 49, 66.

<sup>156</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 98-99.

<sup>157</sup>Cf. a petition sent to the duke of Antinoopolis by an embassy of Aphroditans, complaining of new outrages committed by the pagarch. (Bell [intro., p. 57] dates this

performed at the Egyptian shrine of saints Cyrus and John, described a heretic's dream, in which the two saints prostrated themselves before an image of Christ.<sup>158</sup>

The loss of distinction between the physical icon and the spirit of the person it represented is shown clearly by the increase in the belief in the magical power of images.<sup>159</sup> This magic was twofold: sometimes the images were created miraculously, sometimes miracles emanated from images. Rare, however, are the stories in which images become animate and talked or moved. The miraculously created image of Camuliana has been mentioned above.<sup>160</sup> According to an early Syriac version of its creation (A.D. 569), a woman desired to see Christ face to face; she found instead an image of him in her garden. She wrapped this icon in a cloth, which then immediately received a miraculous imprint of the image.<sup>161</sup> In a later version, Christ himself appeared and pressed his face into the cloth.<sup>162</sup>

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petition, *P. Lond.* V 1674, to circa 570.) To confirm the truth of their statements in the petition, the villagers took an oath in the monastery of Apa Macrobius ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἁγίων *in the presence of the saints* (*P. Lond.* V 1674.73). Kitzinger is unsure if the phrase means that the oath was made in the presence of icons of saints, whose power was an intimidation against swearing falsely. See Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 99 note 50; cf. MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 49.

<sup>158</sup>Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 106 note 86, 99 note 47.

<sup>159</sup>"The icon has undoubtedly a magical tendency as its fundamental purpose and could only become an object of worship for millions of human beings on account of the conception latent in the soul of the people of a real union between worshipper and saint. The doctrine of this connection between the picture and the represented saint was established by Basil the Great and dogmatically developed by Theodosius and others." E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece: Hosios Lucas and Daphni* (Cambridge, 1931), 26-31.

<sup>160</sup>See also Kitzinger, "The Cult of Images," 112-15.

<sup>161</sup>For a bibliography about this miraculous icon see *ibid.*, 100 note 51.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

Among other testimonia regarding magically created icons, around A.D. 570 Antoninus of Picensa recorded how he had worshipped a miraculously created image of Christ at Memphis. The Church historian Evagrius (d. c. 600) recorded that the image of Christ at Edessa was not only miraculously created, but also saved the city from the Persian siege of A.D. 544. The miraculous powers which emanated from icons sometimes worked through intermediaries. Sophronius in his *Miracula* of the saints Cyrus and John described how a miraculous cure was caused by the oil taken from a lamp which burned before an image of Christ in the Tetrapylon at Alexandria (M.87.3560 C-D). The Coptic encomium to St. Menas, which cannot be dated with certainty, relates that the mother of the saint, being barren, dipped her finger in the oil of a lamp burning before an icon of the Mother of God. The Christ Child in the icon was heard to say, "Amen"; and the following evening she conceived. More often, the icons worked miracles through direct intervention. John Moschus recorded how a woman had obtained water from a dry well by lowering an icon of St. Theodore into it. Another story concerns John the Fourth (Jejunator), patriarch of Constantinople; it was written by his follower Photinus soon after the patriarch's death (A.D. 595). According to the story, a woman had been told by a hermit that if she could obtain an icon of the Virgin which was blessed by the patriarch, her husband would be cured of the evil spirits plaguing him. She asked Photinus to intercede for her to the patriarch, but the patriarch refused. So Photinus obtained an icon so elaborate that it looked as if it had come from the patriarch, and gave it to the woman. The icon, although not having been given by the patriarch and not having received any special blessing,

exorcised the demons from the man by its mere presence in the house.<sup>163</sup> The authors of these stories clearly had no metaphorical intention when writing about the magical powers of icons. Rather, the accounts make clear that in the second half of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century there existed a belief among some Christians—including Sophronius and John Moschus—that holy icons had miraculous powers and were worthy of worship.

The cult of holy icons was obviously a move away from the intense spirituality of the primitive Church and a move toward a materialistic worship very similar to that which had been practiced in Greco-Roman and Egyptian paganism. Finally in the beginning of the eighth century, the cult came under fierce attack from within the Church itself. This is not the place to review the eighth century criticism and defense of holy images (and the underlying political causes).<sup>164</sup> What is important for the present study is that the phenomenon of worshipping images of Christ and the saints was not part of the original Church and grew significantly during Dioscorus' lifetime. It was this development in Christian thought and practice which spurred Dioscorus to compose his *chairetismos*. It is doubtful, however, that Dioscorus was offering earnest adoration.

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<sup>163</sup>For more miracle stories involving holy icons from the pre-Iconoclasm period, see *ibid.*, 100-09.

<sup>164</sup>For a discussion of the political motivations behind the Iconoclasm controversy, see Barnard, 65-79.

*Prayer Parodies*

Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, through its form, would have called to mind the reverent mood associated with the genre of the early Byzantine *chairetismos*. In contrast, through its use of exaggerated compounds, Aristophanic vocabulary, and a convivial setting (established by the introduction), Dioscorus' *chairetismos* would also have called to mind the playful mood associated with comedy, especially Athenian comedy. What this contrast of moods and expectations was supposed to convey—this can be fully understood only if one is familiar with the rich tradition of prayer parodies in Classical and Hellenistic literature.<sup>165</sup>

In an extensive study published in 1937, Hermann Kleinknecht found many examples of prayer parodies among pagan Greek and Latin authors, including Aristophanes, Plato, Menander, Lucian, Plautus, Catullus, Horace, Petronius, Martial, and Apuleius.<sup>166</sup> Prayer parodies among Christian writers, however, were rare for the first eight centuries of the Christian era.<sup>167</sup> One early Christian example has survived from the beginning of the Carolingian period, where a comic epitaph to an abbot ends in a refrain more appropriate for a drinking song (Lehmann, 12):

Eia, eia, eia laudes  
eia laudes dicamus Libero.

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<sup>165</sup>Among the ancient Greeks, the genres of prayer and comedy were not, in fact, as disharmonious as a modern reader might imagine. Traditionally the relationship of the pagan Greeks to their gods allowed much room for humor. The origin of this tradition in literature goes back as far as Homer; one only needs to recall the song of Demodocus in Book 8 of the *Odyssey*. See also, for an early example, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (4).

<sup>166</sup>*Die Gebetsparodie in der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1937; repr., Hildesheim, 1967).

<sup>167</sup>P. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1963), 8-18, esp. 11-12; cf. Kleinknecht, 120 note 3.

Paul Lehmann suggested, probably correctly, that the refrain was modeled on a verse of a Christian hymn.<sup>168</sup>

Laudes dicamus Domino.

From the remaining medieval period, especially after the eleventh century, there have survived numerous Christian prayer parodies in Latin.<sup>169</sup> In the Greek language, one of the earliest examples is a mock canon by the monk Michael Psellus (1018-97).<sup>170</sup> After Psellus, the practice of parodying religious prose and verse continued to develop, culminating in the fourteenth century with a parody of the entire liturgy (Ἡ ἀκολουθία τοῦ Σπανοῦ).<sup>171</sup> Thus Dioscorus is the author of what may be one of the oldest surviving examples of a Christian prayer parody; and his parody techniques, as the following discussion will show, were borrowed from pagan models.

### Theory and Practice

Kleinknecht proposed that the understanding of what constitutes a parody was different among ancient than among modern critics.<sup>172</sup> The etymology of the *terminus technicus* παρωδία (also παρωδή and παρόδησις) gives some sense of the ancient understanding of the literary device. παρά

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<sup>168</sup>Lehmann, 12 note 2; he notes occurrences of the verse at *Analecta hymnica* XLIII 10; U. Chevalier, *Repertorium hymnol.* II 30.

<sup>169</sup>Lehmann, *passim*.

<sup>170</sup>Trypanis, *Greek Poetry from Homer to Seferis*, 467.

<sup>171</sup>K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literature*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1897), 682, 809f.

<sup>172</sup>Kleinknecht, 10-17; cf. LSJ, s.v. παρωδέω, παρωδή, παρωδία. For a modern definition of parody, see G. Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton, 1962), 69ff.

and ᾠδή mean *a singing beside* or *a singing in addition to*; Kleinknecht added: "παρά bedeutet auch noch eine gewisse Gegensätzlichkeit, einen gewissen Abstand von der ursprünglichen ᾠδή."<sup>173</sup> The etymology of the word therefore suggests a song based upon a recognizable model but containing conscious contrasts or incongruities.<sup>174</sup> This definition is near to that proposed by Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.2.35):

παρωδή, quod nomen ductum a canticis ad aliorum similitudinem modulatis abusive etiam in versificationis ac sermonum imitatione servatur.

The idea of imitation was paramount in the scholia to Aristophanes *Acharnenses* 8: τοῦτο παρωδία καλεῖται ὅ τι ἂν ἐκ τραγωδίας μετενεχθῆ; and also in the definition in Suidas: παρωδία· οὕτω λέγεται ὅταν ἐκ τραγωδίας μετενεχθῆ λόγος εἰς κωμωδίαν. Suidas' definition is followed by an example where a passage from Euripides' *Telephus* was used in a comedy; in the example, there is nothing apparently humorous.<sup>175</sup> Kleinknecht therefore suggested that in contrast to modern theories of parody, the element of humor was at most of secondary importance to ancient critics. This is evident in the qualification made by Athenaeus (14.638b): τῶν ἑξαμέτρων ἐπὶ τὸ γελοῖον παρωδαί; and later, in the qualification made by Eustathius (xii A.D.): τὸ σκωπτικῶς παρωδεῖν (*Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam* 1.1).

In 1967 Peter Rau too analyzed the scanty information about parody found in the ancient literary critics and scholia, arriving at general

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<sup>173</sup>Kleinknecht, 12.

<sup>174</sup>"So kommt παρωδεῖν zu der Bedeutung: ein Lied mit Veränderungen, Abweichungen singen, wobei man aber in dem Begriff die Nachahmung eines Vorbildes festgehalten hat"; *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>175</sup>For the citation from Suidas and the interpretation of the passage, see *ibid.*, 13.

conclusions similar to Kleinknecht's but with important variations.<sup>176</sup> Rau found the earliest instance of the stem παρωδ- in Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulidensis* (1146-47):

ἄκουε δὴ νυν· ἀνακαλύψω γὰρ λόγους  
κούκ ἔτι παρωδοῖς χρησόμεσθ' αἰνίγμασιν.

There was no connotation of humor in Euripides' use of the term. Yet Rau thought that as a *terminus technicus*, παρωδία *did* carry the connotation of humor. Rau was led to this conclusion by Aristotle's description of Hegemon as τὰς παρωδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος (*Po.*1448a13); Hegemon wrote mock epics in the style of the surviving *Batrachomyomachia*. Rau also pointed out that the rhetorician Hermogenes (second century A.D.) in his *Περὶ μεθόδου δεινότητος* (34) included parody under the category of σχήματα which have a humorous effect.

Rau also concluded that ancient critics accepted direct quotations, without alterations in the words, under the category of parody. This was indicated by both Suidas (quoted above) and another remark by Quintilian (*Inst.* 6.3.96ff.):

adiuvant urbanitatem et versus commode positi, seu toti ut sunt . . . , quod fit gratius, si qua etiam ambiguitate conditur, . . . seu verbis ex parte mutatis, . . . seu ficti motis versibus similes; quae παρωδία dicitur.

Here the humorous effect was produced by a change in the *meaning* of the words, what Quintilian called *ambiguitas*.<sup>177</sup> The above passage also indicates that an imitation of style was included by ancient critics under the

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<sup>176</sup>*Paratragodia: Untersuchung einer komischen Form des Aristophanes* (Munich, 1967), 7-18, and esp. 7-10.

<sup>177</sup>See the discussion below, concerning Dioscorus' anacreontic verses 9-12.



category of parody. Yet no matter whether a parodist was quoting directly, quoting with variations, or imitating a style, it was necessary for the model to be familiar. This was indicated by Schol. Hermogen. 6 p. 400 (Walz):

παρωδία γάρ ἐστὶν ὅταν τὸ ἀλλότριον εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν σύνταξιν μεταποιήσῃ τις οὕτως ὡς μὴ λανθάνειν.<sup>178</sup>

These discussions by ancient critics were limited to parodies of literary models. Ancient writers, however, parodied a wider range of materials. According to Kleinknecht, Lehmann's definition (in the 1922 edition of his monograph) takes into account the broad range of subjects of ancient parody:<sup>179</sup>

Ich verstehe hier unter Parodien nur solche literarischen Erzeugnisse, die irgendeinen als bekannt vorausgesetzten Text oder—in zweiter Linie—Anschauungen, Sitten und Gebräuche, Vorgänge und Personen scheinbar wahrheitsgetreu, tatsächlich verzerrend, umkehrend mit bewußter, beabsichtigter und bemerkbarer Komik, sei es im ganzen, sei es im einzelnen, formal nachahmen oder anführen.<sup>180</sup>

Ancient writers in their works imitated or recalled all or some of the formal elements of a well-known text, custom, or ritual. These imitations were distorted; and the effect was some degree of humor.

When what has been suggested concerning Dioscorus' *chairetismos* is compared to ancient parodies, the following similarities are observable. 1) Dioscorus is imitating the formal elements of the earnest *chairetismos* prayer (the litany of χαίρε's) and simultaneously imitating the religious practice of icon worship. Prayers were said by Christians to icons; yet it

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<sup>178</sup>Rau, 10.

<sup>179</sup>Kleinknecht, 14; cf. 10.

<sup>180</sup>The definition was repeated in the second, 1963 edition; Lehmann, 3.

cannot be proven from the surviving evidence that in the sixth century these prayers included *chairetismoι*. 2) There are obvious incongruities in Dioscorus' imitations. There are no other *chairetismoι* which contain Aristophanes-like compound words. Likewise, worship of icons did not take place at a drinking party and the devotees did not call upon the holy image to dance. 3) I, for one, find the compound words rather humorous; Sophronius, however, did not find them funny or—more likely—did not appreciate the humor. Funny or not, an ancient critic might still have considered Dioscorus' poem a parody.

Pagan prayer parodies also reveal a similarity in methodology: not only *what* they did (creating contrasts), but also *how* they did it shows certain patterns. The contrast was often created by employing an heroic or reverent form for a trivial content—what Kleinknecht called "das Erhabene neben das Alltägliche." Another common method was to vary the form of the model, frequently by using a vocabulary not suited to the genre of the model. Rau termed this technique a *parodische Auflösung*, and described it as follows:

Meistens ist die Änderung von Formelementen für die Komik genauso wichtig; in tragische Worte eingestreute Diminutiva und Obszönitäten beispielsweise bewirken nicht nur eine inhaltliche Unangemessenheit, sondern auch einen Bruch des Stils.<sup>181</sup>

The method of *parodische Auflösung* is obvious in Dioscorus' *chairetismos*. The earnest prayer form is maintained in the litany of χαίρε's and the epithets; but the style is broken by employing for the epithets a word structure (exaggerated, Aristophanes-like compounds) associated with the

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<sup>181</sup>Rau, 11.

genre of comedy and employing vocabulary recognizably drawn from Aristophanes (μυριόμορφον). The contents of Dioscorus' poem, however, cannot be considered entirely trivial. The praises of Christ are appropriate for the genre; the praises of the icon representation may have been considered inappropriate by Dioscorus, but not by others. Thus the most obvious contrasts are created by Dioscorus' *Bruch des Stils* (the comic vocabulary) and the *alltägliche* environment (the anacreontic symposium).

Finally, Rau agreed with Kleinknecht that ancient parody could have one of two basic effects: either it simply lightened the heart or it lightened the heart and also encouraged doubts about the model. The latter category had two aspects: ancient parody criticized either 1) the *form* of the model (*ästhetisch-formale Kritik*) or 2) the *beliefs* underlying the model (*fundamentale Kritik*). In contrast to laughter, a critical response was not an instantaneous reaction from the audience. Rather, the audience came to understand the criticism only after extended consideration. As Rau put it: "Der Witz der Parodie wie alles Komischen liegt zuallererst in einem *sinnfälligen* Widerspruch, Kritik wird erst wirksam im Weiter *denken*."<sup>182</sup>

With respect to Dioscorus, it is highly probable (but not certain) that he had Monophysite leanings; and Monophysites were predominantly opposed to icon representations of spiritual beings (especially angels and the Holy Spirit). Chalcedonians like Sophronius and Moschus, however, not only supported holy icons of all kinds, but also taught that the spirit of holy persons dwelt in these icons, which therefore should be venerated. It is not difficult to imagine that Dioscorus' *chairetismos* was written with the intent

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 17.

of making a *fundamentale Kritik* of such icon representations and worship of them.<sup>183</sup> Aside from this external evidence, internal evidence of a *fundamentale Kritik* is supplied by the deeper level of meaning (discussed below), which seems to criticize icon worship. That is, the Apocalypsis Joannis, to which this poem alludes on a deeper level of meaning, criticizes the worship of idols and precious things.

### **Aristophanes and Lucian**

There are two prayer parodies from pagan Greco-Roman literature which reveal several parallels with the Dioscorian *chairetismos*. Although both parodies are found in dramas—one from Aristophanes, the other from Lucian—one must not imagine that prayer parodies were limited to drama. In Greco-Roman literature, prayer parodies were common; not only were they included in a variety of literary environments, from lyrical poetry to philosophy, but also they formed independent poems.<sup>184</sup>

**Aristophanes.** The prayer in Aristophanes' *Nubes* 263ff. seems to be based not on a specific literary model, but rather on the kind of prayer which typically accompanied initiations into mystery cults like the Eleusinian rites.<sup>185</sup> Although there is little surviving evidence about these secret rites, correspondences are evident between this scene and other scenes in

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<sup>183</sup>Dioscorus is *not* offering a criticism of the *chairetismos* prayer (*ästhetisch-formale Kritik*).

<sup>184</sup>Kleinknecht, 130-32, 178-204.

<sup>185</sup>For information about the ancient literature related to these rites, see L. Alderink, *Creation and Salvation in Ancient Orphism* (Ann Arbor, 1981); M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983). For the rites themselves, see P. Stengel, *Die griechischen Kultusaltertümer*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1920), esp. 78-82.

Aristophanes which portray the rites of mystery cults. In addition, it may be significant that there are many parallels between (on the one hand) Socrates' prayer to Ἄηρ, Αἰθήρ, and the Νεφέλαι, and (on the other hand) the *Orphic Hymns*, which also include a hymn to Αἰθήρ (5) and another to the ἀέριοι Νεφέλαι (21).<sup>186</sup>

The following prayer is said by the philosopher Socrates, in the rôle of a teacher of sophistry; it is said on behalf of Strepsiades, an old man desiring to be one of his pupils:

- Σω. εὐφημεῖν χρὴ τὸν πρεσβύτην καὶ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐπακούειν.  
 ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ ἀμέτρητ' Ἄηρ, ὃς ἔχεις τὴν γῆν μετέωρον,  
 265 λαμπρός τ' Αἰθήρ σεμναί τε θεαὶ Νεφέλαι βροντησικέραυνοι,  
 ἄρθητε φάνητ' ὦ δέσποιναι τῷ φροντιστῇ μετέωροι.  
 Στ. μήπω μήπω γε πρὶν ἂν τουτὶ πτύξωμαι, μὴ καταβρεχθῶ.  
 τὸ δὲ μηδὲ κυνῆν οἴκοθεν ἐλθεῖν ἐμὲ τὸν κακοδαίμον' ἔχοντα.  
 Σω. ἔλθετε δῆτ' ὦ πολυτίμητοι Νεφέλαι τῷδ' εἰς ἐπίδειξιν·  
 270 εἴτ' ἐπ' Ὀλύμπου κορυφαῖς ἱεραῖς χιονοβλήτοισι κάθησθε.  
 εἴτ' Ὠκεανοῦ πατρὸς ἐν κήποις ἱερὸν χορὸν ἴστατε Νύμφαις,  
 εἴτ' ἄρα Νείλου προχοαῖς ὑδάτων χρυσέαις ἀρύτεσθε πρόχοισιν,  
 ἢ Μαιῶτιν λίμνην ἔχετ' ἢ σκόπελον νιφόεντα Μίμαντος·  
 ὑπακούσατε δεξάμεναι θυσίαν καὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖσι χαρεῖσαι.

Although the prayer proper extends only from verses 263 to 274, the entire scene was written in language reminiscent of mystery cults, with Socrates

<sup>186</sup>Although the surviving *Orphic Hymns* (as contained in the collection edited by G. Quandt, 1955) were probably composed sometime after the end of the second century A.D. and before Nonnus, other versions (perhaps orally transmitted) probably existed much earlier. Cf. G. Quandt, ed., *Orphic Hymni* (Berlin, 1955), 44; A. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns: Text, Translation and Notes* (Atlanta, 1977), vii-xiii.

imitating a hierophant and Strepsiades a proselyte. Socrates begins with a call for reverent silence (εὐφημία). Similarly, at *Thesmophorizusae* 295, in order for the chorus of cult members to begin their hymn, the ἱεροκῆρυξ calls for silence: εὐφημία "στω, / εὐφημία "στω. / εὐχεσθε ταῖν Θεσμοφόροιν, / τῇ Δήμητρι καὶ τῇ Κόρῃ, etc. At *Ranae* 354, the hierophant announces: εὐφημεῖν χρῆ, after which the chorus of initiates begin their hymn to Core, Demeter, and Iacchus.<sup>187</sup> The formula is parodied by Trygaeus at *Pax* 96ff., when before his trip to heaven he calls out: εὐφημεῖν χρῆ καὶ μὴ φλαῦρον / μηδὲν γρούζειν . . . καὶ πρωκτοὺς ἐπικλείειν, instead of the expected τὰ στόματα ἐπικλείειν. In *Nubes*, after Socrates receives silence, he begins what he calls an εὐχή, following the format of a ὕμνος κλητικός.<sup>188</sup> In the initial summons—ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ ἀμέτρητ' Ἀήρ, ὃς ἔχεις τὴν γῆν μετέωρον, / λαμπρός τ' Αἰθὴρ σεμναί τε θεαὶ Νεφέλαι βροντησικέραυνοι—the gods are grouped in a triad, which is customary in mystery invocations; compare the invocation (*Thesmophorizusae* 1136ff.) to Pallas and the τὼ Θεσμοφόρω, Demeter and Persephone, and the invocation (*Ranae* 371ff.) to Athena-Soteira, Demeter, and Iacchus.<sup>189</sup> In verse 269, the term πολυτίμητος (ὦ πολυτίμητοι Νεφέλαι) is an exclusively divine epithet; in verse 265, the epithet σεμναί (σεμναί τε θεαὶ Νεφέλαι), according to Kleinknecht,

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<sup>187</sup>For more instances of this call for silence, both sincere and comic, see Aristophanes *Eq.* 1316; *Ach.* 237, 241; *Pax* 434, 1316; *Av.* 959, 969; Euripides *IA* 1564; *Bacch.* 70; Callimachus *Hymni* 2.17.

<sup>188</sup>Cf. Menander (*Rhetor*) 334.25-336.4. For the various structures of prayers, see esp. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*, 4th ed. (Darmstadt, 1956), passim; Kleinknecht, 25, 152; cf. the bibliography at *ibid.*, 1 note 4.

<sup>189</sup>See H. Usener, "Dreiheit," *RhM* 58 (1903): 4, 17; P. Friedländer, "ΥΠΟΘΗΚΑΙ," *Hermes* 48 (1913): 573ff.

distinguishes the clouds as mystery divinities.<sup>190</sup> The *whether you are here or there* type of litany—

εἴτ' ἐπ' Ὀλύμπου κορυφαῖς ἱεραῖς χιονοβλήτοισι κάθησθε.  
 εἴτ' Ὠκεανοῦ πατρὸς ἐν κήποις ἱερὸν χορὸν ἴστατε Νύμφαις,  
 εἴτ' ἄρα Νείλου προχοαῖς ὑδάτων χρυσέαις ἀρύτεσθε πρόχοισιν,  
 ἢ Μαιῶτιν λίμνην ἔχειτ' ἢ σκόπελον νιφόνετα Μίμαντος·

—is found often in the *Orphic Hymns* (for example, at 42.5ff., 49.5ff., and 55.15ff.). And the final summons in verse 274 (ὑπακούσατε δεξάμεναι θυσίαν καὶ τοῖς ἱεροῖσι χαρεῖσαι), has many Orphic parallels (cf. 51.17, 46.8).<sup>191</sup> Finally, it is apparent that the entire structure of Socrates' prayer in *Nubes* is based on triads, an important number in the mystery religions: not only are there three gods, but also nine verses (264-266, 269-274), three anastrophic εἴτ' s, and three summonses (266, 269, 274).<sup>192</sup> Thus, although no model for Aristophanes' parody has survived, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that Aristophanes was imitating the type of prayers used during initiations into mystery cults. The evidence, however, consists only of 1) Aristophanes' other cult parodies and 2) cult hymns which were written about six hundred years later.

Because so little information has survived concerning the secret rites of these mystery cults, the degree of imitation and variation is difficult to determine. Yet it is likely that the humorous incongruity lay not between the form and content—the Clouds and the Air were viable divinities in the

<sup>190</sup>See the extensive discussion at Kleinknecht, 23 note 3.

<sup>191</sup>See *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>192</sup>Kleinknecht finds that Aristophanes' hymn is similar to the Orphic hymn to Aphrodite (55); see his page 25 for the parallels.

mystery cults. Rather, the incongruity lay between the prayer and the situation surrounding it; more specifically, in Kleinknecht's words, the parody is created by the fact that "der gottesleugnerische, sophistische Sokrates zu diesen windigen Mächten betet."<sup>193</sup> In addition, a *parodische Auflösung* takes place when the solemn prayer is interrupted by Strepsiades' mundane remark (verses 267-68): μήπω μήπω γε πρὶν ἂν τοῦτὶ πτύξωμαι, μὴ καταβρεχθῶ. / Τὸ δὲ μηδὲ κυνῆν οἴκοθεν ἐλθεῖν ἐμὲ τὸν κακοδαίμον' ἔχοντα.

The similarities, therefore, to the parody which has been suggested for Dioscorus' *chairetismos* are the following. Both authors were imitating cult prayers, but whether or not they had a specific model in mind cannot be proven from the surviving evidence. Both authors did not create a contrast between the form and content; that is, in both poems the objects of worship were considered divine by at least a recognizable cult. Rather, the incongruity lay between the situations (Socrates' school of sophistry; an anacreontic symposium) and the prayers. And both poets included a *parodische Auflösung* of the form, caused by intrusions of inappropriate wishes (Strepsiades wants to protect himself from the rain; Dioscorus wants the icon representation to dance). In consideration of the above similarities, it should be mentioned again that Dioscorus' library probably contained a manuscript of Aristophanes (see chapter 1).

The *Nubes* scene above reveals other parallels with the Dioscorian hymn. With respect to the general topic, Aristophanes' audience is informed that the clouds are virgin goddesses: παρθένοι ὀμβροφόροι (verse

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<sup>193</sup>Kleinknecht, 25. Compare the parody of the Iacchus-cult song at *Ranai* 324ff., which also shows many correspondences to the *Orphic Hymns*; see F. Adami, "De Poetis Scaenicis Graecis Hymnorum Sacrorum Imitatoribus," *Jahrbuch für klassische Philologie* Suppl. 26 (1901): 244ff.



299). So also the genre of the Christian *chairetismos* was especially associated with the Blessed Virgin (as Theotokos). In verses 331-34, Strepsiades learns that what he had considered inanimate vapor and mist and smoke are considered divinities by Socrates: *μὰ Δί' ἄλλ' ὀμίχλην καὶ δρόσον αὐτὰς ἠγούμην καὶ καπνὸν εἶναι*. So also the narrator of Dioscorus' *chairetismos* considers a fabrication of inanimate stones and metals to be a divinity. With respect to the vocabulary, in Aristophanes the clouds are worshipped by prophets and poets whom Socrates describes with a slew of compound words, including (verse 333): *Θουριομάντεις ἰατροτέχνας σφραγιδοῦνχαργοκομήτας*.<sup>194</sup> Finally, with respect to the form of the prayer, Strepsiades responds to the epiphany of the clouds with a brief *chairetismos* (verses 356-57):

*χαίρετε τοίνυν ὦ δέσποινα· καὶ νῦν, εἴπερ τινὲ κᾶλλω,  
οὐρανομήκη ῥήξατε κάμοι φωνήν, ὦ παμβασίλεια.*

Here Kleinknecht notes correctly: "Χαίρειν an die Götter gerichtet, ist kein Gruß, sondern Gebet."<sup>195</sup> Note also the similarity between Aristophanes' verse-beginning *χαίρετε τοίνυν ὦ δέσποινα* and Dioscorus' *χαῖρε, δέσπ(οτα)*

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<sup>194</sup>For the connotations of these epithets, see K. Dover, ed., *Aristophanes: Clouds* (Oxford, 1968), 144-45; A. Sommerstein, ed. and trans., *The Comedies of Aristophanes, Vol. 3: Clouds*, 2nd corrected impression (Chicago, 1984), 178.

<sup>195</sup>Kleinknecht, 25 note 3; cf. Baumstark, 995-97. For parallels in the *Hymni Homerici*, see 5.292, 6.19, 7.58, 10.4, 11.5, 13.3, 15.9, 17.5, 18.12, 22.6, 25.6, 27.22, 29.13, 31.17, 32.17, and 33.18. The *chairetismos* in the hymn *Εἰς Ἡρακλέα λεοντόθυμον* (15) is quoted above.

(verses 19, 21).<sup>196</sup>

**Lucian.** The comedy Ποδάγρα by Lucian (second century A.D.)<sup>197</sup> is a compilation of prayer parodies, imitating primarily models found in Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and prayers of the mystery cults.<sup>198</sup> In this comedy, the sickness gout is portrayed as a goddess of a mystery cult, Podagra, who is worshipped by a chorus of initiates suffering from arthritic-type symptoms. The comedy opens with a prayer to the goddess (verses 1-29);<sup>199</sup> yet, in place of a hymn praising her virtues, Podagrus, a gout sufferer, presents a reviling ψόγος (*invective*; the opposite of τὸ ἔπαινος an *encomium*).<sup>200</sup> The choral hymn which follows the ψόγος is sung in an

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<sup>196</sup>In addition, the divine epithet παμβασιλεύς is often used by Dioscorus in his encomia (cf. ὦ παμβασίλειαι above). ὡς γενετῆρ δεδάηκε τὰ νεύματα [πα]μβ[α]σιλῆος H.3.33; ἐκ θεοῦ παμβασιλῆος ἐπεὶ θέμιν ἔλλαχεσ ἀλκήν, / ἐκ θεοῦ παμβασιλῆος αἰοιδίμον οὔνομ' ἄειρες H.4.8-9; and in the set phrase ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος, as in the verse ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος H.5.4; cf. 2.4, 3.40, 6.23, 13.6. See also Nonnus *Par. Jo.* 1.85, 5.162; Cosmas Indicopleustes 5.42.3.

It may be significant that although the Dioscorian abbreviation δεσπϚ was resolved as masculine singular by all editors, it can also be resolved as feminine. The adjectives in verse nineteen are two-termination adjectives and can modify either a masculine or feminine vocative (as explained above, ὄνυχιε is probably a substantive whose gender is determined by λίθος). Thus it is possible that verses nineteen and twenty-one are addressed to a woman—that is, the icon of a woman. There is little possibility, however, that the abbreviated κε refers to a woman. And the final verse is addressed to a male, as shown by the masculine participle χαίρων.

<sup>197</sup>There is some doubt about its authenticity, but *Podagra* was included in the Lucian corpus by M. Macleod because of the testimony of three medieval manuscripts; cf. M. Macleod, ed., *Luciani Opera*, vol. 4 (Oxford, 1987), 1; idem, ed. and trans., *Lucian*, vol. 8, in the *Loeb* series (Harvard, 1967), 319-22.

<sup>198</sup>See Kleinknecht, 148-55. See also Macleod's informative apparatus and commentary to the metrics: *Luciani Opera*, 1-16.

<sup>199</sup>Cf. the prayer parody which opens Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, verses 1-16.

<sup>200</sup>Menander Rhetor 331.15-18.

anacreontic meter (verses 30-53), and is reminiscent of *Anacreontea* 12.<sup>201</sup> When in response to the chorus' invocations Podagra appears, the gouty cripples send up another hymn:

ΧΟΡΟΣ

Ἄδαμάντινον ἦθος ἔχουσα κόρα,  
 πουλυσθενές, ὀβριμόθυμε θεά,  
 κλύε σῶν ἱερῶν μερόπων ἔνοπας.  
 μέγα σὸν κράτος, ὀλβιόφρον Ποδάγρα,  
 195 τὰν καὶ Διὸς ὠκὺ πέφρικε βέλος,  
 τρομέει δέ σε κύμαθ' ἄλὸς βυθίης,  
 τρομέει βασιλεὺς ἐνέρων Ἀΐδας,  
 ἐπιδесμοχαρές, κατακλινοβατές,  
 κωλυσιδρόμα, βασαναστραγάλα,  
 200 σφυροπρησιπύρα, μογισαψεδάφα,  
 δοιδυκοφόβα, γονυκλαυσαγρύπνα,  
 περικονδυλοπωροφίλα,  
 γονυκαμπεπικυρτε Ποδάγρα.

This hymn's vocabulary is similar to that of the *Orphic Hymns*.<sup>202</sup> The

<sup>201</sup>In both songs, there is mention of Attis, the young consort of Cybele and the deity of a resurrection cult. For the Attis myth, see Catullus 63; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 10.102-05. For the cult, see J. Frazer, *The New Golden Bough*, ed. by T. Gaster (New York, 1959), 313-14; H. Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, 2nd ed. (Zurich, 1957), 75.

<sup>202</sup>These verses are in an anapestic meter. The similarity to the *Orphic Hymns* is even more apparent in the Sotadeic verses (120-24) and in the dactylic hexameter (miuri) verses (322-24); cf. Macleod (Oxford edition), 16; Kleinknecht, 153-54. It is important to distinguish between the *Orphic Hymns* (as edited by Quandt) and the rest of the large body of literature, including hymns, which has been called "Orphic." For a discussion of Orphic literature in general, see M. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), 1-38, esp. 28-29. For texts of Orphic poetry (other than the hymns edited by Quandt), see O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1963); E. Abel, *Orphica* (Leipzig, 1885; repr. Hildesheim, 1971).

epithet ὄβριμόθυμος (in the form ὄμβριμόθυμος) is found no less than nine times in the Orphic hymns edited by Quandt. Verse 193 is reminiscent of the Orphic ἦ χαίρει θνητῶν μερόπων γένος (*Orphei Hymni* 78.7) and ὑμεῖς καὶ τελετὴν πρῶτοι μερόπεσσι ἔθεσθε (*Orphei Hymni* 38.7).<sup>203</sup> The phrase μέγασον κράτος recalls τὸ σὸν κράτος ἴσμεν ἅπαντες (*Orphei Hymni* 19.19). And verses 195-97 echo: οὐράνιον βέλος ὄξυ καταιβάτου αἰθαλόεντος, / ὄν καὶ γαῖα πέφρικε θάλασσά τε παμφανόωντα (*Orphei Hymni* 19.12-13). Similar to the compound epithets above (πουλυσθενές, ὀλβιόφρον), epithets constructed with the prefixes πολυ- and ὀλβιο- are very frequent in the *Orphic Hymns*. For the mention of the goddess' name at the verse end, see *Orphei Hymni* 39.4: φαντασιῶν ἐπαρωγόν, ἐρημοπλάνον Κορύβαντα. The Lucian hymn is also similar to the *Orphic Hymns* in its asyndetical string of compound epithets. Thus it is possible that prototypes (oral or literary) of the cultic *Orphic Hymns* served as a model for Lucian. The *Orphic Hymns*, however, as they have been transmitted to us, were probably written after the composition of this comedy.

The solemn hymn form and vocabulary are in contrast to the ludicrousness of the situation, in as much as a physically crippled chorus is attempting to sing and dance. Another element of parody is seen when, after the anaphora in verses 196-97, the content deteriorates and becomes mundane; moreover the *alltäglichen* images created by the vocabulary in verses 198-203 are incongruous with the noble images of verses 191-97. Yet another element is evident when the epithets lengthen until they resemble the exaggerated compound words of Aristophanes. Thus the parody here is

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<sup>203</sup>Dioscorus used the term μέρωψ in the important verse ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος H.5.4.

created by means of four elements incongruous with the general hymn form and vocabulary: 1) the ludicrous situation, 2) the ignoble subject (Gout), 3) the intrusion of mundane images, and 4) the Aristophanes-like compound words.

Similarities with the suggested Dioscorian parody are evident in that both parody cult prayers, show incongruous situations, and include inappropriate images. Even more important is the similarity in their exaggerated compound epithets. Nowhere else from Greco-Roman literature before the second half of the sixth century has there survived a hymn which is so like the *chairetismos* by Dioscorus in its use of exaggerated compound epithets. One is led to wonder if Dioscorus was alluding to this hymn with its chorus of crippled devotees worshipping their ailment.

The above two passages make clear that the Dioscorian *chairetismos* shares some important characteristics with the genre of prayer parody. In addition to Dioscorus' emphasis on a cult activity, the similarities include: 1) the employment of a familiar prayer form; 2) a *parodische Auflösung* of that form;<sup>204</sup> 3) inappropriate vocabulary; 4) inappropriate content; and 5) a

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<sup>204</sup>It should be noted that although the Dioscorian *chairetismos* lacks a strict meter (Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 472), this can not be considered an *Auflösung* of the form. There is no apparent meter in the *chairetismos* composed by Cyril; for other examples of prose *chairetismoi*, see Baumstark, 1002. Although there was a meter in the *chairetismoi* composed by Romanus, the rhythm was so innovative it would not have been readily comprehensible. See J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 32-36, and especially the detailed metrical analysis at 151. I am not qualified to judge the metrics of the Coptic *chairetismoi*. For a study of Coptic metrics, see H. Junker, *Koptische Poesie des 10. Jahrhunderts*, part 1 (Berlin, 1908; repr. Hildesheim, 1977), 35-56. Cf. K. Kuhn, "Poetry," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (1991).

Although there is no apparent meter in the Dioscorian *chairetismos*, there is internal rhyme; in verse nineteen: -νόχιε . . . -πάντιμε . . . -πρόβιε; in verse twenty-two: -κτηνο- . . . -πητηνο- . . . -στηρο-.

It is noteworthy that there is no meter in Aristophanes' prayer parody at *Thesmophoriazusae* 295-311. Cf. B. Zimmermann, *Untersuchungen zur Form und dramatischen*

situation incongruous with the reverent mood of the prayer. The similarities between Dioscorus' *chairetismos* and prayer parodies suggest that if the hymn was addressed to an icon of Christ—which seems likely—then it was meant not as earnest worship of that icon, but rather as a parody of icon worship.<sup>205</sup> It is possible that the incongruities described above were intended to create some amusement, but the poet seems also to have had a critical intent. This criticism was not aimed at the form of the *chairetismos* (*ästhetisch-formale Kritik*), but rather at the belief which supported the practice of icon worship (*fundamentale Kritik*). Kleinknecht, in his discussion of the relation between pagan prayer parodies and religious belief, made the observation that when pagan parodists ridiculed the anthropomorphic aspects of their gods, they compelled their audience to look more seriously at the spiritual side of the divinities:

Für den Griechen aber wird in der wahrhaften Komik (die von gemeiner Polemik und frivolem Spott wohl zu scheiden ist), zwar vielleicht die äußere anthropomorphe Gestalt vernichtet, in der menschliches Denken das Göttliche zu fassen sucht, nicht aber das ideale Wesen und Sein der Götter in Mitleidenschaft gezogen. Vielmehr erscheint und erhebt sich hinter Komik und Parodie unausgesprochen die erhöhte Gestalt des Göttlichen.<sup>206</sup>

Pagan prayer parody served the function of drawing believers to a more refined belief. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss whether and

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*Technik der Aristophanischen Komödien*, part 1, 2nd ed. (Königstein, 1985), 112-14.

<sup>205</sup>Maspero denied that Dioscorus was intentionally parodying (imperial) icon worship: "L'emploi de ces composés ridicules est emprunté à Aristophane; on les retrouve encore, bien plus tard, dans la poésie byzantine, par exemple chez Constantin le Rhodien. Mais ici le poète d'Aphroditô n'avait évidemment aucune intention satirique." *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso, page 154 comment to line 17. Maspero's conclusion, although unsupported, has gone unchallenged by subsequent critics.

<sup>206</sup>Kleinknecht, 121.

how Kleinknecht's general observation is applicable to the two parodies quoted above. It can be concluded, however, that Dioscorus' parody was intended to bring his audience to a more refined spirituality, an intention which he made clear in his deeper level of meaning.

### The Dioscorian Anacreontic

Unlike Dioscorus' *chairetismos*, his anacreontic generally does not offer problems in defining words and interpreting their logical relationships. The scene is clearly presented: the poet is at a celebration, singing, dancing, drinking wine. He is stricken with desire for another guest, probably the honoree of the party; and after expressing his love and admiration, the poet wishes continuous success for his beloved. The scene fits into the pagan anacreontic tradition with only one significant hitch. It is usual to find that individual verses in a pagan anacreontic have close parallels in other surviving anacreontics;<sup>207</sup> but it is unusual that Dioscorus took one entire four-verse strophe almost verbatim from another (*Anacreontea* 45). Maspero condemned this as outright plagiarism; and the borrowing has been analyzed no further.<sup>208</sup> It appears, however, that Dioscorus did not want the four verses to be understood as his own. Rather, by incorporating the four verses, he was making an unmistakable reference to the specific original poem, whose unusually vivid fatalism acts as a foil to Dioscorus' own jubilation. The label *plagiarism* is no more accurate here

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<sup>207</sup>See the detailed apparatus (noting sources, cross influences, and imitations) to the individual poems in M. West, ed., *Carmina Anacreontea* (Leipzig, 1984).

<sup>208</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471. Although Saija's tone was less condemnatory, she too called it an act of plagiarism (see the discussion below); "La metrica di Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," 845. Crönert, MacCoull, and Baldwin noted the borrowing but did not comment further either on the technique or on Maspero's conclusion.

than it is for the borrowings by Vergil from Homer, or the borrowings by Prudentius from Vergil;<sup>209</sup> each of these authors wanted his audience to recognize the source of his borrowings and used the borrowed material to create a specific effect not only in the new poem but also on the reader's attitude toward the source.<sup>210</sup> It is perhaps impossible to find one accurate label for what Dioscorus did; yet it is possible to determine the effects on the borrowed material and on the rest of the Dioscorian poem.

The reminiscences in Dioscorus' anacreontic put the poem firmly into the pagan anacreontic tradition.<sup>211</sup> Dioscorus' first verse (ἀεὶ θέλω χορεύειν) is reminiscent both of *Anacreontea* 49.10 (πάλιν θέλω χορεύειν) and *Anacreontea* 38.21 (μεθύων θέλω χορεύειν). Dioscorus' second verse (ἀεὶ θέλω λυρίζειν) is reminiscent of *Anacreontea* 48.4 (θέλω καλῶς αἰεῖδειν). Verses 3 and 4 have no direct parallels in the surviving *Anacreontea*.<sup>212</sup> Later in Dioscorus' poem, verse 13 (στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι) is reminiscent of

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<sup>209</sup>"This Poet is that Poet's plagiarist, / And he a third's, till they end all in Homer. / And Homer filch't all from an Aegyptian Preestesse. / The world's a Theater of theft." Thomas Tomkis (1615). I am grateful to Dr. James Keenan for pointing this little gem out to me; quoted in G. Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge, 1992), 376.

<sup>210</sup>For Vergil, see R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig, 1915; repr. Darmstadt, 1965), 248-55; G. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1964), passim. For Prudentius, see Smith, 234-300.

<sup>211</sup>The relationship of Dioscorus' anacreontic with the pagan tradition is strengthened by the inclusion of the name Ἀνακρέων in his Greek-Coptic glossary (line 250); Dioscorus followed it with the gloss: ΠΜΕΘΥΣ / ΤΗΣ ΕΤΧΟΥ ΠΠΟΙΗ[Τ]ΗΣ *the drunkard that sings, the poet*.

<sup>212</sup>They do, however, have a parallel in *Carmina Anacreontica* 23 by Sophronius, whose Christian anacreontea may have been based on a model or models which also had influenced Dioscorus (see below): ἀναβάλλομαι λιγαίνειν / ἱεροῦς λόγους ἐγείρας (verses 15-16). Verse 4, ἀναβάλλομαι λυρίζειν, appears to be reminiscent also of the beginning of an epithalamium by Georgius Grammaticus: ἀναβάλλομαι χορεύειν. See Crönert, 664-65; cf. Nissen, 17, 25-26.



*Anacreontea* 39.2 (φιλω νέον χορευτάν) and in negative form Archilochus 60.1 (Ὀὐ φιλέω μέγαν στρατηγόν); Dioscorus' passion, however, is much stronger. These reminiscences, combined with the four borrowed verses and the general ethos of intoxication and passionate homosexual love, remove Dioscorus' anacreontic from the Christian anacreontic tradition, which included poems by Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329 - c. 390), Synesius of Cyrene (c. 365 - c. 414), and (soon after Dioscorus) Sophronius (d. 639). By firmly establishing himself in the pagan tradition, Dioscorus pointed out that his *chairetismos* was a parody: a pagan drinking party was a situation incongruous with singing a Christian *chairetismos*—obviously Christian because of its litany of χαίρε's.

Maspero proposed that there may be even more reminiscences of anacreontics with which Dioscorus' generation was familiar but which now are lost.<sup>213</sup> Most of our knowledge and surviving examples of Hellenistic and early Byzantine anacreontea come from a single manuscript, copied probably in the tenth century A.D. (containing also the *Palatine Anthology*) and originally compiled probably in the ninth century.<sup>214</sup> These are not songs written by Anacreon of Teos, as once was believed;<sup>215</sup> they are poems of a later date which were inspired by the poetry of Anacreon. The poems in this collection were composed, generally, between the first and sixth

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<sup>213</sup>Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471. The one surviving anthology of anacreontics (see below) seems to be a selection from previous collections of anacreontics; Rosenmeyer, 115-16.

<sup>214</sup>West, *Anacreontea*, v, xvii. For a description of this manuscript and a discussion of the principles guiding its organization, see Rosenmeyer, 115-46.

<sup>215</sup>See the titles of the manuscript in West, *Anacreontea*, v, 1; cf. Rosenmeyer, 3-7.

centuries of the Christian era.<sup>216</sup> Many efforts have been made by critics to date the individual poems precisely, basing the chronology on metrical strictness and use of quantitative or accentual responsion; but the efforts, plagued by textual problems, have reached only general, tentative conclusions.<sup>217</sup> Martin West divided the poems into three groups on the basis of their prosody. The first group closely follows Classical (or earlier) metrical rules; the second group sometimes changes the quantities of dichronic vowels, and sometimes shortens long vowels and diphthongs when they fall at the end of a word and are not accented; the third group freely treats long unaccented vowels as short and short accented vowels as long.<sup>218</sup> Some examples of the corruption of the third group are: ῥόδα with a long omicron, ἔγνω with a short omega, ὄπου with a short diphthong, Ζέφυρος with a long epsilon, πέταλα with a long epsilon, κατέχων with a long epsilon, πίνειν with a short diphthong, and φρένας with a long epsilon.<sup>219</sup> The hypothesis behind West's categorization is that the further

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<sup>216</sup>See the review of the several classifications of the poems in D. Campbell, ed. and trans., *Greek Lyric II: Anacreon, Anacreontea, Choral Lyric from Olympus to Alcman*, in the Loeb series (Cambridge, 1988), 16-18; cf. M. Brioso Sánchez, *Anacreontea: Un ensayo para su datación* (Salamanca, 1970), 14ff.; Rosenmeyer, 3.

<sup>217</sup>See the review of these efforts in Campbell, 10-18.

<sup>218</sup>"1. Primus maximusque est eorum qui syllabarum quantitates antiqua lege metiri callent . . . vel utique possunt esse, locis paucis leviter correctis. . . . 2. Secundus est ordo degener eorum qui non solum vocales διχρόνους (α ι υ) hic illic falso metiuntur, sed etiam η ω diphthongosque corripiunt accentu carentes in exitu verbi. . . . 3. Tertius et pessimus est ordo eorum qui liberius vocales longos corripiunt, dum ne accentum ferant, breves autem accentu praeditos pro longis habent." West, *Anacreontea*, xiii-xiv.

Dioscorus' prosody would fall into West's third category; see Saija, "La metrica di Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," 845. For Dioscorus' prosody in general, see *ibid.*, 825-44; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 475-79.

<sup>219</sup>The examples are from *Anacreontea* 5, 40-41, 45, and 49.

from Classical prosody, the more recently the poem was written; some Byzantine poets, however, followed Classical models carefully. Dioscorus was not included among the pagan anacreontics in the tenth century manuscript or among the recent collections made by Campbell and by West (although the latter made note of him in his apparatus).<sup>220</sup>

Here are Dioscorus' final two strophes (three and four) and the entire poem from which he borrowed strophe three:

<u>Dioscorus</u>	<u>Anacreontea 45</u>	
10 Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον εὐδουσιν αἰ μέριμναι. Τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων; Τί μοι μέλει μέριμναι; —— ———	Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον, εὐδουσιν αἰ μέριμναι. τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων, τί μοι μέλει μεριμνῶν; θανεῖν με δεῖ, κἄν μὴ θέλω	5
15 Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι, ποθοβλήτην Ἑρακλέα, δαμάζοντα τοὺς λέοντας· ἀεὶ τὰς πόλεις σαώσαι.	τί δὲ τὸν βίον πλανῶμαι; πίωμεν οὖν τὸν οἶνον τὸν τοῦ καλοῦ Λυαίου· σὺν τῷ δὲ πίνειν ἡμᾶς εὐδουσιν αἰ μέριμναι.	10

Before this poem's relationship to *Anacreontea* 45 is discussed in detail, it should be pointed out that Dioscorus shows two significant

<sup>220</sup>Nor is Dioscorus discussed in Nissen's analysis of Byzantine anacreontic poetry; he is mentioned, however, in a footnote (pp. 26-27 note 1). The pagan anacreontea of John of Gaza and Georgius Grammaticus are also not included in West and in Campbell; but they are discussed by Nissen, pp. 13-26; and by Viljamaa, 32. Dioscorus is mentioned by Rosenmeyer, 2 note 2.

variations: πίννω and μέριμναι. These striking variations seem to be a misspelling and an incorrect case. These and the mistake in gender or declension of ποθοβλήτην are probably a poetic device to indicate the narrator's increasing intoxication.<sup>221</sup>

*Anacreontea* 45 cannot be accurately dated. Edmonds dates its composition between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50; Sánchez dates it between A.D. 100 and 400; Campbell, West, and Sitzler agree that it was a "late" composition; and Hanssen states more specifically that the composition was after A.D. 400.<sup>222</sup> In any case, it is certain that it was composed before Dioscorus' poem and that Dioscorus was using it. Why? Maspero and Saija have stated that Dioscorus in writing the pagan-style anacreontic was revealing nostalgia for a lost world (Saija) and a contemporary taste for archaizing (Maspero);<sup>223</sup> and Saija proposed that Dioscorus took these four verses to help him with the difficult meter.<sup>224</sup> This is indicated by the fact that the verses which are clearly not borrowed—those in the last strophe—show unique variations from usual anacreontic meters. No reason for such large-scale borrowing was given by Maspero; but he concluded: "Ainsi, l'avocat d'Aphrodité ne

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<sup>221</sup>For discussions of Dioscorus' spelling of πίννω, the nominative form of the second μέριμναι, and the spelling of ποθοβλήτην, see Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445 note 2; Crönert, 664; B. Baldwin, "Dioscorus of Aphrodito: The Worst Poet of Antiquity?" *Atti del XVII congresso internazionale de papirologia*, vol. 2 (Naples, 1984): 329; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 121; West, *Anacreontea*, 33.

<sup>222</sup>Campbell, 16-17.

<sup>223</sup>Saija, "La metrica di Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," 844: "indice de malinconica nostalgia per un mondo ormai scomparso"; Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471: "une petite pièce bachique, sans prétention archaïsante."

<sup>224</sup>"Il che è certo in buona parte spiegabile con le difficoltà metriche che spingono il poeta a riprendere da altri versi, parole o espressioni per ovviare alle difficoltà quantitative"; Saija, "La metrica di Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," 845.

s'est pas amusé à recopier pour son plaisir une pièce d'anthologie: il en a seulement intercalé des morceaux dans une composition à lui personnelle: c'est un plagiat nettement caractérisé."<sup>225</sup> That is, Dioscorus wanted the verses to appear to be his own creations—a conclusion accepted by Saija.<sup>226</sup>

What Maspero and later critics did not ask is: what did Dioscorus do with the four verses in his own poem? That is, what effect did the transplant have on the borrowed verses and on the rest of Dioscorus' poem? First, Dioscorus subtly changed the verses' meaning. *Anacreontea* 45 is one of the most depressing and fatalistic poems in the collection. Its core is the realization by the poet that he himself has to die. His response to this situation is to stop contemplating the meaning of life, and to unravel his thoughts and worries through inebriation. In short, if the poet can foresee that he must die, then he is determined to avoid far-reaching thoughts and sorrow by numbing his mind with wine. The short poem is tightly structured, making its depressive mood and fatalistic theme more intense. A ring structure is formed by verses 1-2 and 9-10: "Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον, / εὐδουσιν αἱ μέριμναί . . . σὺν τῷ δὲ πίνειν ἡμᾶς / εὐδουσιν αἱ μέριμναί. The repetition of verse 2 at line 10 is especially noticeable in so short a poem; and μέριμναί is repeated a third time in verse 4 and echoed by two synonyms in verse 3. The organization shows that at the heart of all this worry is death; θανεῖν με δεῖ is placed in the very center of the poem.

In contrast, Dioscorus' anacreontic is a jubilant and optimistic poem.

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<sup>225</sup>"Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 471.

<sup>226</sup>Saija, "La metrica di Dioscoro de Afroditopoli," 845. MacCoull twice avoided discussing the lengthy borrowing; in her analyses of the anacreontic she focused on the aesthetics of what a Coptic palace may have looked like. "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 38-39; *Dioscorus*, 120.

The poet does not worry because of death; rather, he wants to sing and dance in celebration of a feast. Yet it is not exclusively the feast which is the source of the poet's obvious jubilation. Dioscorus has used the adjective *γεραρῆν* to describe that event, an adjective whose root meaning implies that the celebration is being held in *honor* of someone (cf. Xenophanes 1.9; *Anthologia Graeca* 9.692.2); the source of the persona's jubilation, or at least the direction which that joy finally takes, is his love for the στρατηγός, whom the celebration is probably honoring. Wine is not alluded to until the second strophe and does not appear until the third; and here, by removing any distracting worries, it prepares for and augments the direct experience of love and desire. The Dioscorian anacreontic, like *Anacreontea* 45, has a ring structure; this one, however, carries the mood of joy into the future (in so far as a wish can do). 'Αεί is repeated twice as an anaphora to begin the poem and is repeated again in the final verse. (The motif is also echoed in the final verse of the *chairetismos*: χαίρων χορείης εἰς μυριάμορον χρόνον.)<sup>227</sup>

Thus, because the mood imbuing the four borrowed verses is different, and the final focus of the poem (the στρατηγός) is different, the verses have a different connotation in the Dioscorian anacreontic and thereby have a different meaning.<sup>228</sup> Drinking is not an escape from the

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<sup>227</sup>In regard to the use of *ἀεί* in the *Anacreontea*: at 14.18, the transmitted reading is doubtful; and even if accurate, the use of *ἀεί* is not comparable to its use in the Dioscorian poem. At 26.6, 8 the connotation is of an activity that should continue—at most as long as the beloved lives. Continuous activity is also the connotation of *ἀεί* at 25.6, 11 and 58.4. The motif of eternity is uncommon in the pagan anacreontics; thus *ἀεί* might be interpreted in the Dioscorian anacreontic (on the literal level) as connoting *continuous* rather than *eternal* activity.

<sup>228</sup>Compare Vergil, who in his epic *Aeneid* borrowed many passages from Homer but—in the words of R. Williams—"could use the structure, the episodes, the divine machinery, the similes, the very phraseology, in order to create something quite new in ethos and tone."

worries which arise ultimately from a fear of death; drinking is one of three means (χορεύειν, λυρίζειν, πίννω τὸν οἶνον) to honor Dioscorus' beloved. Because of the change in meaning, therefore, it is difficult to classify this borrowing simply as plagiarism.

There is another reason why the label plagiarism is inappropriate. It is almost certain that various poems in the transmitted *Anacreontea* were familiar to Gregory Nazianzus, Synesius, Proclus, George the Grammarian, and Sophronius; these poets appear to have borrowed individual verses from many of the transmitted anacreontics.<sup>229</sup> Thus it seems that Dioscorus could have expected an erudite audience to be familiar with *Anacreontea* 45, and could not reasonably have expected the four verses to pass for his own.<sup>230</sup>

It is more likely that Dioscorus was pointing directly at the source's despair in order to provide a foil for—and thereby intensify—his own

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R. Williams, ed., *The Aeneid of Virgil, Books 1-6* (London, 1972), xv. Christodorus of Coptus, an older contemporary of Dioscorus, made use of the *Aeneid* in his epic ecphrasis (see Trypanis, 401); and Dioscorus in his Greek-Coptic glossary perhaps referred to the *Georgics* by Virgil (see Bell-Crum, p. 181 and p. 208 comment to line 204).

<sup>229</sup>I do not know of any extensive study of the use of verses from the *Anacreontea* by these early Byzantine poets; but see the critical apparatus in West for the many parallels between these poets and the pagan *Anacreontea*.

<sup>230</sup>It is clear that Dioscorus' contemporaries, Agathias, Paul the Silentary, and John of Gaza, were writing for an erudite audience. Maspero suggested that Dioscorus' encomia were delivered privately to the individual addressees; "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 479. The common practice of the period, the doubts that the addressees were real magistrates, and the complexity of the poems argue against Maspero's suggestion. Sophronius is the one Dioscorian audience of which we are sure; and he was unquestionably erudite. It is also probable that Sophronius wrote his *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 for an audience which was aware of Dioscorus' poem. See the discussion above. No other conclusions, however, about Dioscorus' method of publication and actual audience can be made. The absence of a transmitted manuscript is not surprising when one considers the deliberate destruction of so much non-Orthodox and pagan literature (including the comedies by Menander and the mystical treatises by Evagrius) during the Byzantine period—literature which often has survived, if it survived at all, only in Syriac translations or on papyrus.

poem's joyful, loving mood.<sup>231</sup> In this sense, the borrowing is an allusion. Such wholesale borrowing was necessary to make a precise reference; at least two other anacreontics had similar verses (50.5-6 and 48.1-2):

Anacreontea 50

“Ὅτ’ ἐγὼ πῖω τὸν οἶνον,  
ἀπορίπτονται μέριμναι.

Anacreontea 48

“Ὅταν ὁ Βάκχος ἔλθῃ,  
εὔδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι.

Anacreontea 45

“Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον,  
εὔδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι.

Synesius in his mystical poem *Hymni* 9 also seems to have alluded to an anacreontic poem which acts as a foil.<sup>232</sup> The original verse from *Anacreontea* 53 reads: νέος ἐν νέοις χορεύσω (verse 8). Synesius' verse, the final in his long hymn, reads: θεὸς ἐν θεῷ χορεύσεις (verse 134), where the poet is addressing his own soul. All the desires of the poet in the pagan poem are mundane; the desires of Synesius are transcendent. Unlike Dioscorus,<sup>233</sup> Synesius altered the borrowed verse; but the verse which Synesius adopted has no parallels among the other surviving anacreontics and although altered may have been readily recognizable.<sup>234</sup>

By making an allusion to *Anacreontea* 45 in particular, Dioscorus was not only intensifying his anacreontic's joyful mood, but also making clear that the final solution to death was not wine but the στρατηγός. Thus Dioscorus was changing an audience's attitude toward the original poem.

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<sup>231</sup>Dioscorus also took advantage of the exceptional artistry of the four verses; in addition to the omicron assonance of verse 9 and the internal rhyme of verse 11, verse 12 shows some noteworthy mu alliteration (see the discussion below).

<sup>232</sup>See the discussion of this poem in my introduction.

<sup>233</sup>Except definitely the second μέριμναι and possibly πίνω.

<sup>234</sup>West, *Anacreontea*, 38.



Perhaps Dioscorus here was influenced by Prudentius' *Psychomachia*. Prudentius' use of Vergil was extensive—to the point that one critic called it a "nearly continual pastiche of Vergilian epic style."<sup>235</sup> One out of ten verses in the *Psychomachia* contains a direct borrowing of more than a single word. The quotations from Vergil tend to occur in dense clusters, leading Smith to the conclusion that the *Psychomachia* is "cento-like."<sup>236</sup> These quotations are not random; rather, Prudentius at significant moments in his mystical allegory points through these quotations to specific episodes in the *Aeneid* and replaces or criticizes the source's concepts or attitudes. One episode which shows this technique clearly is Prudentius' description of the construction of the temple in the human heart and the advent and rule of *Sapientia*. This is the jubilant climax of the epic, which describes allegorically the mystical union. In this passage, the quotations and allusions to Vergil's *Aeneid* are frequent. Yet the allusions refer "with far greater clarity than heretofore to major moments of pathos in the *Aeneid*."<sup>237</sup> Smith describes Prudentius' use of Vergil in the following way:

All Vergilian allusions at the end of the *Psychomachia* are to moments of considerable pathos, moments when the pagan reader (or the sympathetic modern reader) of Vergil is overwhelmed by the cost of empire in terms of its birthpangs of human suffering. As a Christian, and especially as a Christian c. 400, when Vergil's status is a central issue in the anti-pagan struggle of the Church, Prudentius must respond differently. He converts the **tragic vision of Vergil** into his own and the Church's **positive Christian vision**.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup>See Smith, 235 note 4.

<sup>236</sup>Ibid., 268.

<sup>237</sup>Ibid., 296.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid., 299; the emphasis is my own.

John Moschus. Both John and Sophronius were very much concerned with the welfare of their souls and the souls of their contemporaries. This concern basically boiled down to acceptance or rejection of the ecclesiastical doctrines ratified at the sixteen sessions of the Council of Chalcedon (held between October 8 and November 10, A.D. 451). Sophronius, it was argued above, probably assumed that his own readers were aware of Dioscorus' poem; otherwise much of the meaning of his *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 would have been lost and misunderstood. I have as yet, however, said little about the sort of audience which was addressed by Sophronius—that is, the early Byzantine reader of poetry, who (if we can extrapolate from Sophronius) was addressed also by Dioscorus. The following descriptions by Dihle, Malamud, and Lamberton show much agreement and give some insight into the early Byzantine readers of anacreontic, Christian, and erotic verse.

A conjecture concerning the early Byzantine audience was made by Dihle after his examination of the allegorical elements of a particular anacreontic poem, *Anacreontea* 34. Sophronius' and Dioscorus' audience may have been aware of this anacreontic poem, which was included in the tenth-century manuscript and which narrates a Stoic-Platonic allegory.<sup>241</sup> On the literal level, this anacreontic is a charming song in praise of a cicada. Yet, the author of this poem uses a vocabulary and images which invest the insect with the supreme virtues of the Stoic sage. The insect, according to Dihle's analysis, "is said to be king (4) and owner of everything (5-7); it does not do any harm (8-9), is the true meteorologist and musician (11-14), is

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<sup>241</sup>The dating by Dihle (p. 111), accepted by Campbell (p. 11), is A.D. 350-580.

made because of the homogeneity of education. Although her discussion focuses on the beginning of the fifth century, this same education continued into the seventh century.<sup>246</sup> Malamud says:

They [Christian poets of the Late Antique period] wrote, from their point of view, from firmly within a highly developed and articulated literary tradition that stretched back to Homer, and they had the luxury of knowing that, because of the remarkable homogeneity of education in the ancient world, their audience was as steeped in that literature as they were. This enabled them, through the judicious use of literary allusion, quotation, and variation, to write in a language whose economy, depth, and precision is hard for us to grasp today, because so many of its terms are lost to us.<sup>247</sup>

In addition to an education which was generally similar throughout the early Byzantine empire, contemporary Latin writers read Greek poets, and Greek writers read Latin poets.<sup>248</sup>

The sensitivity of the early Byzantine audience to recondite levels of meaning, and the creative literature which this sensitivity produced, has been discussed in detail by Lamberton. Concerning the epyllion *Hero and Leander*, whose pagan love story seems to conceal a Christian mystical allegory, Lamberton writes:<sup>249</sup>

One can, however, say that the time [c. A.D. 500] was right for such deliberate allegory, that the visual arts had exploited it for centuries, and that a pervasive interpretive tradition, known to Musaeus, had

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<sup>246</sup>A. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284 - 602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Norman, Oklahoma, 1964), 997-1112. Even as Egypt became increasingly Christian during the second half of the fifth and the sixth centuries, its poets did not reject the Hellenistic culture but rather combined it with Christian themes. See esp. G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 55-69.

<sup>247</sup>M. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation* (Ithaca, 1989), 4.

<sup>248</sup>Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 986-91. See my introduction for a discussion of the cross-influence between Latin and Greek poetry.

<sup>249</sup>See the discussion of Musaeus' *Hero and Leander* in my introduction.

accustomed readers to make upon literature—at least upon certain literature—the sort of demands *Hero and Leander* seems to invite. One thing that is clear is that *Hero and Leander* is not an allegory of the stamp of the *Psychomachia*. Aside from other obvious differences, the "secondary" level of meaning is not obtrusive; it does not dominate the surface meaning. Still, given the date of the poem and its cultural context, we must consider it probable that for Musaeus' audience, the fate of their souls was an issue of immediate and burning importance, one that entered into their perceptions concerning the world around them and especially into their perceptions regarding works of art.<sup>250</sup>

Although among modern critics there linger some doubts that Musaeus deliberately created an allegory, Lamberton concluded that at least his audience would have found a mystical allegory in it.<sup>251</sup> A Christian Neoplatonic level of meaning was found even in the pagan romance *Ethiopica* by Heliodorus.<sup>252</sup> The following discussion of the allegory in Dioscorus' poem, however, argues that the Aphroditan poet deliberately created a second level of meaning to complement the literal level. And Dioscorus' poem may in fact be a *comparandum* to add to the evidence that Musaeus' allegory too was deliberate.

*Dioscorus' Anacreontic and the Apocalypsis Joannis*

Aside from the peculiarities of the borrowed verses and of the *chairetismos*, the ethos of the fourth strophe is peculiar with respect to

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<sup>250</sup>Lamberton, 159-60. He continued (pp. 160-61): "The radical demands made on literary texts by this tradition of exegesis were influential in producing a narrative literature still profoundly influenced by Homeric models but thoroughly imbued with Platonism and—perhaps—deliberately incorporating a secondary level of meaning complementing and completing the superficial meaning."

<sup>251</sup>*Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>252</sup>The romantic novel dates from the third or fourth century; the exegesis could have been written as early as the late fifth century. For a translation and discussion of Philip's exegesis, see Lamberton, 306-11, 148-57.

Dioscorus' other poems. What are we to make of Dioscorus' uncharacteristically direct statement of love and desire for the στρατηγός?<sup>253</sup> Who was he? Critics have been understandably silent about both questions. If the anacreontic part is analyzed as an isolated piece, an identification cannot be made; and if Dioscorus had no specific addressee in mind, the anacreontic can be considered an impersonal exercise—that is, the expression of love was an imitation of the anacreontic ethos without any relation to the ethos in the author's other poems.<sup>254</sup> If the anacreontic part is taken with the *chairetismos*, however, the Christian connotations of the latter make it possible that Dioscorus was writing figuratively in the former. In fact, much of the language found in Dioscorus' anacreontic had been used metaphorically by early Christian writers. If the language and images of the anacreontic are examined for their metaphorical meanings, it soon becomes evident that the figurative level follows a pattern that is continued and developed in the *chairetismos*. In short, both parts of Dioscorus' poem show correspondences to the vocabulary and imagery of the Apocalypsis Joannis. It thus becomes possible that the νέος στρατηγός is symbolic of Christ (see figure 4), and Dioscorus is expressing love and desire for God.

Already by the early Byzantine period, many of the words and images in the Dioscorian anacreontic were imbued with Christian significance and

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<sup>253</sup>I follow Maspero's conclusion that ποθοβλήτην is passive: Hercules *is desired* ("l'Héraklès tant désiré"); Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 445 note 2. Cf. MacCoull, who understands the adjective as active: Hercules "with longing eyes"; *Dioscorus*, p. 121 commentary to verse 14.

<sup>254</sup>From the pen of Dioscorus survive at least two clear examples of *ethopoeiae*, H.26 and H.27. Viljamaa has suggested that perhaps some of his surviving encomia fall into this class of exercises; Viljamaa, 122-24. Cf. the *ethopoeiae* of John of Gaza and George the Grammarian; Nissen, 13-14; Viljamaa, 17-18, 32.

specifically Christian mystical significance. The Christian connotations of several words were as follows. 'Εορτή carried a variety of Christian meanings. It could denote generally a feast day for a saint (Gregorius Nyssenus *Encomia in Stephanum* M.46.701; etc.) or one of the major feast days, especially Easter (idem, *Epistula canonica* M.45.221B; etc.). It could even denote the Christian way of life (Clemens Alexandrinus *Stromateis* 7.7; cf. Chrysostomus *Anna* 5.1; etc.).<sup>255</sup> Concerning Dioscorus' phrase *Θέλγουσίν με αἱ Βάχαι*, the earliest surviving use of the term *βακχεύω* to denote inspiration by the Holy Spirit is by the eighth century poet John of Damascus (*De hymno trisagio ad Jordanem* M.95.21). From the third strophe of the anacreontic, the term *οἶνος* was rich in Christian significance already in the first century A.D. For example, wine and inebriation were motifs in the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. An angel announces to John about the city Babylon: *ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ' αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν* (18:3). When Babylon is personified as a prostitute, the images of wine and drunkenness are used again: *καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς* (18:2). The common interpretation of her prostitution and of her wine is idolatry.<sup>256</sup> John also used the image of wine to represent God's anger: *καὶ αὐτὸς πίεται ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου ἐν τῷ ποτηρίῳ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ* (14:10). These uses of the image of wine carried negative connotations; by the sixth century, however, the

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<sup>255</sup>In John's allegorical vision, the coming of the New Jerusalem out of heaven is celebrated as the procession of a bride to a wedding feast: *ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς* Apoc. 21:2. The occasion, of course, is celebrated with singing; but there is no doubt that the celebration is of a marriage: *ἦλθεν ὁ γάμος τοῦ ἀρνίου* Apoc. 19:7.

<sup>256</sup>See Caird, 185, 223; cf. 226.

image of wine and inebriation had acquired positive Christian connotations. Wine was used in celebrating the Christian liturgy, where it symbolized and became, in a spiritual sense, the blood of Christ (Justinus Martyr 1 *Apologia* 65.5; idem, *Dialogus* 54.1; Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus *Catecheses* 19.7; etc.). Οἶνος was one of the favorite metaphors in Origen's literary works. For example, he used it to refer to the knowledge of Christ which mystically flows from the True Vine (*Exposita in Pr.* 9:2; *Homiliae in Cant.* M.13.155A-C). Clement of Alexandria used the term οἶνος for the Holy Spirit (*Paedagogus* 2.2; etc.). Beside the various uses of the term *wine*, among the writings of the Church Fathers *inebriation by wine* became a standard symbol for the mystic state.<sup>257</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, for example, remarked:

This is also the meaning of the flourishing vine, whose wine gladdens the heart [Ps 103:15] and will one day fill the cup of wisdom. It will be freely offered to those who drink from the exalted preaching to enjoy a good and sober inebriation. I mean that inebriation through which men pass ecstatically from the material to the divine realm.<sup>258</sup>

Thus both verses by Dioscorus, Θέλωσιν με αἱ Βάχαι and Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον, may have suggested to a late sixth-century audience the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the divine grace which lifts one toward the noetic realm.

Christian mystical significance can also be found in the final three verses in Dioscorus' borrowed strophe (verses 10-12): εὔδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι. / Τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων; / Τί μοι μέλει μέριμναι; In early Christian

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<sup>257</sup>See H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas. Untersuchung zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik* (Giessen, 1929), esp. 132-36.

<sup>258</sup>Οὕτω μοι νόησον καὶ τὴν κυπρίζουσαν ἄμπελον, ἧς ὁ μὲν οἶνος ὁ τὴν καρδίαν εὐφραίνειν πληρώσει ποτὲ τὸν τῆς σοφίας κρατῆρα καὶ προκίεσται τοῖς συμπόταις ἐκ τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ κρύγματος κατ' ἐξουσίαν ἀρύεσθαι εἰς ἀγαθὴν τε καὶ νηφάλιον μέθην. ἐκείνην λέγω τὴν μέθην, δι' ἧς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ τῶν ὑλικῶν πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον ἢ ἔκστασις γίνεται. *Commentarius in canticum canticorum*, Jaeger 156.14-20. The translation is by C. McCambley, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Brookline, 1987), 118.

mysticism, one of the prerequisites or one of the results of entering a mystical state was that the mystic becomes ἀπαθής, which condition these three verses denote.<sup>259</sup>

In the final strophe of the anacreontic, the (probable) honoree of the celebration is called στρατηγός. This title was commonly used for various Christian figures. A contemporary of Dioscorus, Cosmas Indicopleustes, used the title to denote the prophet Elijah (*Topographia christiana* 5); and another contemporary of Dioscorus, Romanus the Melodist, used the term for Saint Peter (*SBBAW* 1901, p. 742). Στρατηγός was also applied to Christ (*Methodius Symposium* 4.6); to the Logos (Clemens Alexandrinus *Paedagogus* 1.8); and later to God (Georgius Pisida *Persica* 1.35). An interpretation of στρατηγός as figurative of Christ would be supported by the metaphor in the next verse: Heracles. There was no figure in Greek and Roman mythology so similar to Christ as Heracles.<sup>260</sup> The similarity is obvious in the *Homeric Hymn* quoted above (*Hymni* 15; cf. *Od.* 11.601-27). In this hymn, Heracles is described as the virtuous son of Zeus and the mortal woman Alcmene. Born at Thebes of the lovely dances, Heracles' life was filled with hardship; but now he is united with the beautiful Hebe and living in joy on Olympus. The poet concludes the hymn with a brief

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<sup>259</sup> Völker summarizes the prerequisite: "Verlangt wird besonders die Freiheit vom Materiellen und die Lösung von den πάθη und ihrem verderblichen Einfluß, vor allem muß der νοῦς darüber erhaben sein: ἐν ἀπαθεί καὶ ἀύλῳ τῷ νῶ (DN 1, 4, M.592C)." W. Völker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 197. Cf. Carpus' hostility and bitterness, which the vision of Christ removes; Pseudo-Dionysius *Areopagita Epistulae* 8 (Ritter 188.9ff.).

<sup>260</sup>For a detailed comparison between the figures of Christ and Heracles in Late Antique society and culture, see M. Simon, *Hercule et le christianisme* (Paris, 1955), esp. 51-165; cf. G. Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1972), esp. 185-91.



*chairetismos*, praying to Heracles for virtue and happiness: Χαῖρε ἄναξ Διὸς υἱέ· δίδου δ' ἀρετὴν τε καὶ ὄλβον.<sup>261</sup> Obvious are the similarities to the birth, virtuous life, and heavenly marriage of Christ (see Apoc. 19:5-9, 22:17).<sup>262</sup> For Stoic philosophers, especially Seneca, Heracles was *the* model of the virtuous life. Moreover, Heracles became the deity of a resurrection cult, which worshipped him as both god and man.<sup>263</sup> If Dioscorus had wanted to maintain a pagan surface for a Christian allegory, the "new general Heracles, who destroys the lions" was the best choice for a Christ-like figure (cf. figure 4).<sup>264</sup>

In the same strophe, which is immediately before the *chairetismos*, Dioscorus expresses his love for the general not with the term ἀγαπάω (which is the appropriate term to designate the love of man for God) or even φιλέω (the appropriate term to designate affection), but instead with the passionate and erotic term ἔραμαι, which is strengthened by the adjective

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<sup>261</sup>Dancing and (Egyptian) Thebes were motifs in Dioscorus' encomia; he also made numerous requests for ὄλβον.

<sup>262</sup>One would feel more certain that the figure Christ was being suggested if Dioscorus had used the metaphor νέον Ηρακλέα; instead, Dioscorus combined the adjective νέος with στρατηγός: Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι, / ποθοβλήτην Ἡρακλέα (verse 13-14).

<sup>263</sup>See esp. Simon, 127-31. Because the cult and the philosophy which had developed around Heracles were among the chief competitors against Christianity in the Mediterranean world, Heracles became a special target for attack by the Church Fathers; see Galinsky, 188-90; Simon, 128-30. Concerning the Heracleian cult described in Simon, cf. W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, 1987), 76.

<sup>264</sup>No attempt has been made to identify the literal honoree of the anacreontic, who is not mentioned until the final verse. Crönert imagined that he was a young man soon to be married: "Offenbar war der junge Gauleiter, dem der Trinkspruch galt, den Flitterwochen nicht fern" (Crönert, 664). MacCoull pictured him as "a cataphract-mailed figure with great dark eyes" (MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes," 38). Perhaps Dioscorus was sparing of historical details so that the reader would be compelled to appreciate him on a symbolic level; contrast this paucity with the richness of details in Sophronius' *Carmina Anacreontica* 20.

ποθοβλήτην.<sup>265</sup> Homosexual love was a common motif in pagan anacreontics, but not in Christian anacreontics and not in Dioscorus' other poems; and it definitely had no place in the tradition of Christian *chairetismoi*. In the early Byzantine period, however, ἔραμαι had special significance when applied to Christ. Around 500 A.D., Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite composed several popular treatises which included discussions of the allegorical meanings of biblical terms and images used in connection with God.<sup>266</sup> He devoted an extensive passage to the term ἔρωσ (De *divinibus nominibus* 4.10-16; Suchla 155.8-161.16); and according to him, ἔρωσ, although less common, is more appropriate than the term ἀγάπη to denote love for God and Christ. And Pseudo-Dionysius designated the Scriptures as τὰς ἐρωτικὰς θεολογίας (DN Suchla 157.7-8). His conclusion corresponds to that of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, who also thought that true love for God was erotic; Scripture, Origen explained, tended to use the term ἀγάπη instead of ἔρωσ in order to avoid misunderstanding.<sup>267</sup>

As just seen, many of the words and images chosen by Dioscorus had been used in early Christian literature with a wide range of metaphorical meanings.<sup>268</sup> This broad range of referents, however, becomes narrowed

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<sup>265</sup>For a discussion of the feminine ending of ποθοβλήτην, see above.

<sup>266</sup>For an analysis of Pseudo-Dionysius' interpretations of these terms and images, see P. Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto, 1984).

<sup>267</sup>See A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford, 1981), 66-67. Cf. R. Greer, trans., *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer and Selected Works* (New York, 1979), 25-26; W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 190.

<sup>268</sup>Compare Farrer's statement about the "multiplicity of reference" shown by the images in the Apocalypse; A. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Glasgow, 1949; repr. Albany, 1986), 19ff.

and organized if the anacreontic is compared to the opening of the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. In this allegory, one Sunday (probably Easter Sunday)<sup>269</sup> John enters into a mystic state: ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ (1:10). In Dioscorus' poem, on a holy feast day, possibly Easter Sunday (γεραρῆν . . . ἑορτήν), the persona enters into a mystic state (Θέλγουσιν με αἱ Βάχαι. . . Ὅταν πίννω τὸν οἶνον). In conjunction with that state, the poet achieves the moral condition of ἀπάθεια (εὐδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι).<sup>270</sup> There is no direct mention of this moral condition in John's account; but it may have been symbolized by John's statement that he was on the island of Patmos when the vision came. Patmos is a tiny island among the Sporades off the coast of Asia Minor; and Tertullian and more recently G. B. Caird (pp. 21-23) have interpreted the passage as meaning that John was in exile there.<sup>271</sup> In early Christian mysticism, removal from the world (ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένη Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ Apoc. 1:9) and removal from worldly concerns (Τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων; / Τι μοι μέλει μέριμναι verses 11-12) were synonymous.<sup>272</sup>

Another possible correspondence is that in John's allegory Christ's first words are that the following message and vision have been sent to help

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<sup>269</sup>Farrer, 60, 67.

<sup>270</sup>Cf. Dihle's remarks on ἀπάθεια in the anacreontic poem to the cicada, p. 110.

<sup>271</sup>Tertullian, a lawyer, used the legal term *relegatio*; *De praescript. haer.* 36. For a delightful modern account and photos of the austerity of "this dry, rocky spot of land," see L. Bailey, *Lee Bailey's Cooking for Friends* (New York, 1992), 36-63.

<sup>272</sup>"Auch darin stimmt Gregor mit seiner Zeit überein, daß er den Kampf gegen die πάθη in einer Ablehnung der Welt und ihrer Einrichtungen sich fortsetzen läßt. Sind doch die Dinge dieser Welt aufs engste mit den πάθη verbunden, wie es damals allgemein angenommen wurde, und wie es auch Gregor glaubte." W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 123.

save the Christians in seven cities of Asia Minor (1:11). In the last verse of the anacreontic, the poet says of the new general and Heracles: ἀεὶ τὰς πόλεις σαώσαι. (The verb is a third-person aorist optative.)<sup>273</sup> It is possible that an erudite early Byzantine audience, attuned to recondite allegories, would have recognized this and the above correspondences, and would have concluded that Dioscorus' anacreontic contained a deeper level reflecting the beginning of the Apocalypsis.

*Dioscorus' "Chairetismos" and the Apocalypsis Joannis*

The *chairetismos* continues the pattern of using vocabulary, images, and metaphorical meanings (such as the meaning *divine inspiration* derived from the image of intoxication) which are reminiscent of the Apocalypsis Joannis. Although in John's allegory it is Christ who first speaks to John and who is the central figure of the vision, it is a series of angels who are John's guides and teachers for much of the vision. John's first sentence is: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξει τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ Apoc. 1:1. And the Apocalypsis concludes with Christ speaking to John through the mouth of an angel (Apoc. 22:12ff.). Between this beginning and conclusion, the relationship

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<sup>273</sup>Although use of the optative mood in general began to decline already in the third century B.C., the aorist optative form to express a wish (volative) was the most tenacious form of the mood and continued to be used until the eighth century. See N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. J. Moulton, vol. 3: *Syntax* (Edinburgh, 1963), 118.

One might imagine that in this verse Dioscorus could have used the term ἐκκλησία and still have maintained his pagan facade (cf. Ar. Eq. .746; Th. 1.139; And. 1.2; etc.). Yet, the term ἐκκλησία with its Christian connotations may not have been subtle enough for Dioscorus; and—metrical considerations aside—there would not have been enough room in the verse to complete the ring structure.

between Christ and his angels in conveying John's divine vision is complex. It is explained by Austin Farrer as follows.<sup>274</sup> There are five separate acts of revelation: 1) Christ appears and gives specific messages to the churches in seven cities in an attempt to restore their deteriorating worship. 2) The Lamb, seen in heaven, unseals the book that was sealed with seven seals, and simultaneously opens two "weeks" of visions. 3) An angel brings John a scroll, which he eats; and the result is two more "weeks" of visions. 4) An angel steps out of the vision and shows John further visions, including Babylon and the Whore of Babylon. 5) Another angel steps out of the vision and shows John the New Jerusalem. Farrer explains the final synthesis of Christ, angel, and vision in these words:

After the vision the angel begins again to say things so divine that St. John attempts to worship him afresh. He is again reproved: but this time the worship is not directed away from the angel to a visionary Christ whom the angel shows; it is directed as it were inwards to the living Christ in the angel's soul, out of which the Savior speaks with his own voice. . . . The angel is not, indeed, Christ, but Christ reveals himself through the angel, so that the person of the angel can be, in a sense, discounted, and Christ heard through and in him.<sup>275</sup>

Thus it corresponds to the Apocalypsis that first in the anacreontic Dioscorus sees Christ and wishes him success in saving the cities; and then in the first verse of the *chairetismos* (verse 17), he addresses an angel (*ἀγγελοπρόσωπε*); and in three of the following verses (18, 22, and 23), he possibly addresses Christ (either directly or "in the angel's soul").

Verses 18 and 19 of the *chairetismos* involve precious stones and metals. In the first of the two verses, the addressee *is better than the*

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<sup>274</sup>Farrer, 73-74.

<sup>275</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

precious materials (χρυσσαργυροπιναροσμαραγδομαργαριτοβελτίων); but in the second verse, the addressee is *made of* precious materials (χρυσολιθοκαχατωνύχιε, πρα[σ]ινοπάντιμε λαμπρόβιε). The dichotomy of imagery between these two verses can be compared to the dichotomy which John employed in describing the New Jerusalem and Babylon, and in describing Christ and the Babylonian Whore. For example, in the dirges sung by the shippers and sailors of Babylon (18:11-20), one of their themes is the city's wealth in precious materials. This theme is evident in the song at 18:15-16:

οἱ ἔμποροι τούτων οἱ πλουτήσαντες ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἀπὸ μακρόθεν στήσονται διὰ τὸν φόβον τοῦ βασανισμοῦ αὐτῆς κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες λέγοντες,

Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη,

ἡ περιβεβλημένη βύσσινον

καὶ πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον

καὶ κεχρυσωμένη [ἐν] χρυσίῳ

καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίτῃ.

In contrast, the New Jerusalem is also described by John in terms of precious metals and stones (21:18-19):

καὶ ἡ ἐνδώμησις τοῦ τείχους αὐτῆς ἴασπις καὶ ἡ πόλις χρυσίον καθαρὸν ὅμοιον ὑάλῳ καθαρῷ. οἱ θεμέλιοι τοῦ τείχους τῆς πόλεως παντὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ κεκοσμημένοι.

As can be seen in the two examples above, John's creative technique made use of contrasting pairs. This technique often involved using one kind of imagery, but giving that imagery contrasting characteristics and connotations. For example, the city of Babylon is constructed of precious materials; the materials are transitory. The New Jerusalem is constructed of

precious materials, but the materials last forever. This same technique was used when John employed precious stones and metals to describe not only the Whore (καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἦν περιβεβλημένη πορφυροῦν καὶ κόκκινον καὶ κεχρυσωμένη χρυσίῳ καὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ καὶ μαργαρίταις 17:4), but also Christ (περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσᾶν . . . καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης 1:13, 15) and God (καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ὅμοιος ὀράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ 4:3). Using a dichotomy which is not too dissimilar from John's, Dioscorus described the δεσπότης as consisting of precious materials; specifically, he is made of topaz, agate, onyx, and emerald. The precious creation may be an icon of Christ, the worship of which was being criticized by Dioscorus. Dioscorus described the κύριος, however, as being better than precious materials; specifically, he is better than gold, silver, mother of pearl, smaragdus, and pearl.<sup>276</sup> The one who is better may be the actual, spiritual Christ. It is significant that the verses which seems most applicable to an icon (verses 19 and 21) were addressed to the δεσπότης;<sup>277</sup> while the verses which seem most applicable to Christ (verses 18 and 22) were addressed to the κύριος. The titles are changed in a rotating fashion, perhaps to maximize the contrast.

Also in verses 21 and 22, Dioscorus' images recall the imagery and vocabulary of the Apocalypse. Because of the lacuna in the papyrus, what Dioscorus meant to say in verse 21 cannot be established; nevertheless, sea

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<sup>276</sup>The κύριος is not described as consisting of precious materials which have a different connotation (as in the Apocalypse); nevertheless, the κύριος is described in relationship to precious materials.

<sup>277</sup>As pointed out above, it is possible for these two verses to refer to a female addressee. In such a case, they allude to the Whore of Babylon, who is the personification of idol worship.

trade imagery has survived: [θαλασσιο]πλοιοχρυσ[ο]γόμου (where Maspero also saw σσιο). Likewise, in the Apocalypsis Joannis, when the destruction of idolatry is portrayed by the fall of Babylon, this fall reaches its climax in the sailors' and traders' dirges mentioned above. They are mourning the loss of their sea trade in precious materials. These laments conclude with the following scene:

Καὶ πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων καὶ ναῦται καὶ ὅσοι  
θάλασσαν ἐργάζονται, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἔστησαν καὶ ἔκραζον . . . ,  
Οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη,  
ἐν ἣ ἐπλούτησαν πάντες οἱ ἔχοντες τὰ πλοῖα  
ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἐκ τῆς τιμιότητος αὐτῆς,  
ὅτι μιᾷ ὥρᾳ ἠρημώθη.

It may be that Dioscorus intended to show allegorically that his δεσπότης was a precious icon included among that sea trade. In the Apocalypsis Joannis, the destruction of Babylon is followed by a festival in heaven celebrating the new reign. This new reign involves a re-creation of the world, about which John wrote (21:5-6): Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, Ἴδου καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα . . . καὶ εἶπέν μοι, Γέγοναν. This statement by Christ echoes an earlier hymn (sung, in fact, before the holocaust began [5:13]):

καὶ πᾶν κτίσμα ὃ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ  
τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς πάντα ἤκουσα λέγοντας,  
Τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἄρνιῳ  
ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος  
εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

Dioscorus wrote: χαῖρε, κ(ύρι)ε παναξιο[κτη]νοπηναστροφωστηρο-  
κοσμοποιίας. A possible translation is: "Hail, lord of the creating of all-



worthy beast, bird, star, light, universe!" If Dioscorus had the above passages from the Apocalypsis in mind, then creation has become all-worthy of the Lord because it has been renewed.

In the final verse of the *chairetismos* (verse 23), in a climactic consonance of χ and ρ (<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>χαίρων <sup>1 2 3</sup>χορείης εἰς μυριάμορον <sup>1 2</sup>χρόνον), Dioscorus expresses a jubilation which echoes the joy of the first verse of the anacreontic: Ἄεὶ θέλω χορεύειν. Similarly, John's revelation ends in jubilation. The cause of this joy is stated by a voice coming from God's throne, saying (21:4): καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν. There is no more πόνος because the Savior has ended death. This statement from the throne seems to be a direct contradiction of the sentiments of *Anacreontea* 45, which was unmistakably alluded to by Dioscorus' anacreontic verses 9-12. The beginning of *Anacreontea* 45 states:

Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον,  
εὐδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι.  
τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων,  
τί μοι μέλει μεριμνῶν;  
θανεῖν με δεῖ . . .

By making the allusion unmistakable, Dioscorus may have wanted the pagan anacreontic to act as a foil not only to the mood of jubilation in his anacreontic part, but also to the allegorical level of his entire poem.<sup>278</sup>

What the preceding examination of the anacreontic and *chairetismos*

<sup>278</sup>It is even possible that by using in the final verse of his *chairetismos* the unusual adjective μυριάμορος, Dioscorus was recalling *Anacreontea* 45 and his earlier allusion to it. Not only was the amphora usually used for holding wine, but the two mu's of μυριάμορος recall 45's vivid mu alliteration: τί μοι μέλει μεριμνῶν.

has shown is that Dioscorus' poem is replete with vocabulary, images, and metaphorical meanings that play a significant rôle in the Apocalypsis Joannis. These correspondences are more extensive than a simple allusion. Because they extend from the first strophe of the anacreontic to the final verse of the *chairetismos*, and because they show a recognizable pattern and a development, they suggest a second level of meaning in the Dioscorian poem. It would not be incorrect to label this level a mystical allegory. It is an allegory in as much as it is a developed level of meaning beyond the literal level and it involves narration.<sup>279</sup> It is mystical because the subject of the allegorical level (Christ) is ultimately beyond sensual perception, and the narrator "meets" the Logos in the noetic sphere.<sup>280</sup> Similar to the Stoic-Platonic allegory in the pagan anacreontic on the cicada, the mystical level interacts with the literal level, in as much as the Apocalypsis Joannis supports the parody that has been postulated for the *chairetismos*. The condemnation of image worship of any sort is one of the principal motifs in the Apocalypsis.<sup>281</sup> In the midst of the destruction of the old world by the angels of God, John learns (9:20):

Καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἳ οὐκ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν ταῖς πληγαῖς ταύταις, οὐδὲ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν, ἵνα μὴ προσκυνήσουσιν τὰ δαιμόνια καὶ τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ χρυσᾶ καὶ τὰ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χαλκᾶ καὶ τὰ λίθινα καὶ τὰ ξύλινα.

Prostration before images made of gold and silver is shown to be an idolatry

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<sup>279</sup>See the definition of allegory in my introduction.

<sup>280</sup>See the definition of mysticism in my introduction.

<sup>281</sup>See Apoc. 22:15. Cf. Apoc. 14:4; Os. 1:2ff.; *The Jerusalem Bible: The New Testament* (1966), 443 note e.

which is not practiced by true believers. When John so much as kneels before an *angel*, he is criticized (19:10):

καὶ ἔπεσα ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ λέγει μοι, "Ὁρα μή· σύνδουλός εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

Later, the angel is more specific: not the angels, nor the saints, nor the prophets are worthy of *proskynesis*—only God is (22:8-9):

καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἔβλεψα, ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. καὶ λέγει μοι, "Ὁρα μή· σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου· τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον.

Concerning the first of the two above attempts to worship an angel, Farrer notes:

St. John falls to worship the angel, but the angel forbids idolatry: let him keep his worship for God. Immediately the heavens open, and he appears in whom God must be worshipped, riding the white horse, and called Faithful and True. (St. John still had this scene in mind when he wrote the words we have just quoted from his First Epistle. 'We are in him that is True, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and life everlasting. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*')<sup>282</sup>

If wrong before an angel, far more was it wrong to prostrate oneself before an icon—whether an angel's, a saint's, or even Christ's.

The relationship between the poem and the Apocalypse shows basically the following pattern:

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<sup>282</sup>The italics are Farrer's (p. 73). What would have been of special interest to Dioscorus with his involvement in legal activities, was that the rider of the white horse not only was Πιστός καὶ Ἀληθινός, but also ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει (Apoc. 19:11).

P.Cair.Masp. I 67097 verso F - IApocalypsis Joannis

Verses 3-4. The poet is celebrating a solemn feast (γεραρὴν λόγοις ἑορτήν / ἀναβάλλομαι λυρίζειν). On a metaphorical level, this could refer to Easter Sunday (see Lampe, s.v. ἑορτή).

John says that the first vision came to him on a Sunday (probably Easter Sunday; 1:10).

Verses 5, 9. Metaphorically, the poet enters a mystic state of consciousness (Θέλγουσίν με αἱ Βάχαι / . . . Ὅταν πίνω τὸν οἶνον).<sup>283</sup>

John says that he was in a mystic state of consciousness (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι 1:10).

Verses 10-12. The poet is removed from the cares of the world (εὐδουσιν αἱ μέριμναι. / Τί μοι πόνων, τί μοι γόων; / Τί μοι μέλει μέριμναι;). Ἀπάθεια was

Through exile on Patmos, John is removed from worldly concerns (1:9).

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<sup>283</sup>The image of wine seems to be doing double-duty here. Inebriation was used by the Church Fathers as a metaphor for the mystical state; and wine was used in the Apocalypsis as a symbol of idolatry and of God's anger. The image of inebriation is dominant in Dioscorus' anacreontic (Θέλγουσίν με αἱ Βάχαι); but the term οἶνος keeps the verses closely tied to the Apocalypsis. Dioscorus had little choice concerning this term—it was part of the borrowed verses.

considered an essential aspect of mystic consciousness.

Verses 13-14. The poet expresses to the celebrants his love and desire for the new general, who is like Heracles (Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι, / ποθοβλήτην Ἑρακλέα). The figure of Heracles has many similarities with the figure of Christ; these similarities were recognized already in Late Antiquity and made the pagan hero/god an ideal symbol for Christ.

Verse 15. The new general (a Heracles) is a slayer of lions (δαμάζοντα τοὺς λέοντας).

John's first vision is of Christ (1:13), who is later compared to a general directing his troops (καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα [τὰ] ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ ἐφ' ἵπποις λευκοῖς . . . καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ἐκπορεύεται ῥομφαία ὀξεῖα 19:14-15).

Christ captures and destroys the beast, the image of the beast, and their followers (καὶ ἐπιάσθη τὸ θηρίον καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης . . . καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ 19:20). Cf. figure 4.

Verse 16. The poet wishes that the general will save the cities (ἀεὶ τὰς πόλεις σαώσαι).

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Verse 17. The poet addresses an angel (ἀγγελοπρόσωπε), who is delivering a divine revelation, possibly about wealth (ὀλοκοττινοπερίπατε).

Verse 18. The poet prays (χαίρει) to a κύριος, who is better than (or a better kind of) gold, silver, pearls, etc. (χρυσσαργυροπιναροσμαραγδομαραριτοβελτίων).

Verse 19. The poet prays to a

At the beginning (and again at the end) of the Apocalypse, Christ tells John that the messages and visions are meant to save the deteriorating worship of him in seven cities (cf. 1:4, 11; 22:16).

Apocalypsis Joannis

Angels convey to John several mystic visions, of which the angels serve as guides and interpreters (cf. 1:1; 10:8-11; 17:1-18; 19:9; 21:9-22:16).

John describes God, Christ, and the New Jerusalem in terms of gold, silver, pearls, etc., which are better than normal (cf. 3:17-18; 21:21) and which last for eternity (cf. 1:13-18; 22:5).

John sees Babylon and the

δεσπότης (or δέσποινα), who is made of topaz, agate, onyx (χρυσολιθοκαχατωνύχιε), and a green gem (πρα[σ]ινοπάντιμε); and who lives splendidly (λαμπρόβιε).

Verse 21. The poet prays to the same δεσπότης, who was part of a precious shipment by sea (δέσ[π(οτα) . . . θαλασσιο]-πλοιοχρυσ[ο]γόμου).

Verse 22. The poet prays to the same κύριος, who is lord over the creating of an all-worthy universe (παναξιο[κτη]νοπτην-αστροφωστηροκοσμοποιίας).

Verse 23. The poet wishes that the κύριος (the last addressee)

Whore of Babylon (interwoven symbols of idolatry), who have authority over all the rulers and nations on earth (cf. 17:18), who are covered with gold, precious stones, and pearls (cf. 18:16; 17:4), and who live splendidly (πάντα τὰ λιπαρὰ καὶ τὰ λαμπρὰ 18:14).

The sailors and sea traders, because of the fortune they had made in importing precious materials, mourn the destruction of Babylon (18:11-19).

Christ tells John that he is making all of creation new—in fact, it is already accomplished (cf. 21:1-6).

The destruction of Babylon is followed by a celebration of the

has joy and jubilation forever                      marriage of the Church and  
 (χαίρων χορείης εἰς μυριάμορον                      Lamb (cf. 19:1-9).  
 χρόνον). By means of a ring  
 structure, Dioscorus refers back  
 to the celebration described in  
 the anacreontic part.

### *Dioscorus and Prudentius*

Dioscorus was not the first Christian poet to trace on a deeper level of meaning a biblical development. Prudentius in his mystical allegory *Psychomachia* traced the spiritual development of the entire Bible from Genesis to the Apocalypsis; and this Latin poet from the province of Spain may have provided the model for Dioscorus. This becomes all the more probable when one considers the wide popularity of the *Psychomachia* in the fifth and sixth centuries, as attested by contemporary writers and the many manuscripts still surviving from this period. Prudentius' allegory is typological; that is, the moral battle in the soul of the Christian has its precedents and parallel in the salvation history depicted in the Bible.<sup>284</sup> Accordingly, in his representations of the virtues and their battles, Prudentius makes constant allusions to both New and Old Testament characters and their activities; and these allusions form a recondite level of meaning that informs the rest of the poem.<sup>285</sup> The correspondence between

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<sup>284</sup>Prudentius' attitude here was derived from allegorical exegeses of the Old Testament; and his *Praefatio* and his vocabulary throughout the *Psychomachia* show his indebtedness to allegorical interpretation. Smith, 175-77.

<sup>285</sup>This deeper meaning is in addition to the personification allegory.



the struggles of the individual soul and salvation history is described by Smith as follows:

This careful parallelism between soul-struggle and scriptural history is not gratuitous. It is not due solely to aesthetic considerations—although it produces much beauty. Prudentius' Christian moral outlook naturally perceives similarities between psychological and historical experience: both the soul and mankind collectively exist in a turmoil of imperfection; both desire God and struggle to progress toward God. Thus the temple symbolizing Pauline perfection in Christ is the goal of the soul-struggle, and the temple symbolizing New Jerusalem is the goal of salvation history. According to Christian eschatology, the two temples are in fact identical. The comparison between them, therefore, is not a simile or an analogy and is not artificial. Rather, a vital and operative connection—usually termed figural or typological—joins the moral world of the allegory with the world of history at large.<sup>286</sup>

For Dioscorus, the problems relating to correct worship in the sixth century after Christ were prefigured by the problems concerning correct worship in the Church of the *Apocalypsis Joannis*.

One episode of the *Psychomachia* is especially relevant to *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F: the depiction of the vice *Luxuria*. *Luxuria* was depicted by Prudentius as comical.<sup>287</sup> She is most dangerous, and yet her attack consists of throwing rose petals and flower baskets at the soldiers—"O nova pugnandi species!" (verse 323). The soldiers of virtue swoon at her charms; and yet in pointed contrast she has just finished vomiting after an all-night drinking party: "Ac tunc peruigilem ructabat marcida cenam" (verse 316). The troops of virtue were unconquered by wrath and idols

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<sup>286</sup>Smith, 168-69.

<sup>287</sup>"Vice is meant to be amusing, of course, but also to be taken seriously. The comedy is instructive: if the soul loses its battle against *Luxuria*, it will be damned." Smith, 180. Smith (p. 181) notes that *Ira* too is depicted in a comical vein: "As in the battle of *Luxuria* versus *Sobrietas*, the moral lesson is mainly revealed in the comic, mannered heroic action of the antagonists."

("quosque uiros non Ira fremens, non idola bello / cedere conpulerant verses" [verses 379-80]), but now they are unmanned and lay down their weapons before the beauty of her chariot. The soldiers are awed by the precious metals and stones, which are described in detail and form a contrast with the gems and precious metals of the New Jerusalem (described in verses 826-74).<sup>288</sup> The troops are dumbstruck as the chariot gleams with flashing gems of various hues ("obstupefacti / dum currum uaria gemmarum luce micantem / mirantur " [verses 333-35]). The reins are gold foil, the axle is solid gold, the spokes are white silver, the wheel rim is electrum (verses 335-39). *Sobrietas* the good general ("dux bona" verse 348; cf. 450) attempts to reorganize and revitalize her troops by describing their final defeat—in terms of a symposium:

inde ad nocturnas epulas ubi cantharus ingens  
despuit effusi spumantia damna Falerni  
in mensam cyathis stillantibus, uda ubi multo  
fulcra mero ueterique toreumata rore rigantur? (*Psych.* 367-70)

The similarities of the above episode with various elements in the Dioscorian poem (the symposium, the general, the precious metal imagery, the comic tone), coupled with Prudentius' constant allusions and references to pertinent Bible characters and episodes (taken from Exodus, I and II Kings, and Matthew)<sup>289</sup> add to the evidence presented in my introduction that Dioscorus was influenced by this mystical allegory.

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<sup>288</sup>See the discussion of Prudentius' New Jerusalem in my introduction.

<sup>289</sup>Smith, 179-81.

Another episode of the *Psychomachia* which offers considerable help in understanding Dioscorus' allegories—both here and in the encomia—is Prudentius' description of the temple in the human soul. The building of this temple, which prepares for the climactic mystical union with Christ,<sup>290</sup> alludes constantly to the Apocalypsis Joannis. What Prudentius makes clear through various allusions to the Bible is that the New Jerusalem is in the future only with respect to salvation history, which moves chronologically. In respect to the individual soul, the New Jerusalem can exist right now.<sup>291</sup> It was established by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, who right now invites each person to partake in the mystical feast with him and his new citizens in heaven. Smith describes this important mystical concept in the following way:

By bringing the heavenly Jerusalem of the Last Judgment into the final vision of the *Psychomachia*, the poet has stated once again the basic Christian moral doctrine: that the character of the soul's eternal life is decided by the activity of the will as it chooses folly or wisdom, Satan or Christ. But he has done more than this. He has turned narrative into mystical vision, transformed the moral soul-struggle in time into eternal aesthetic perfection.<sup>292</sup>

So also in the allegories by Dioscorus, the New Jerusalem (represented by the Egyptian city Thebes and its environment—the Thebaid) is not a future prophecy, but rather a reality very much present to the poet in mystical ecstasy.

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<sup>290</sup>Ibid., 194, 199.

<sup>291</sup>Smith (p. 199) sees in the final scene not the record of a completed act, but rather the potential for mystical union. That a mystical union has been achieved often (if not right now) is made obvious by Prudentius' final narration, where falls from the mystical state and returns to it are explicitly described: "O quotiens animam uitiorum peste repulsa / sensimus incaluisse deo, quotiens tepefactum / caeleste ingenium post gaudia candida taetro / cessisse stomacho!"

<sup>292</sup>Ibid., 203-04.

## Conclusions

During the second half of the sixth century, and especially after the reign of Justinian, there rapidly developed a practice of worshipping images of Christian personalities, especially Christ, the Mother of God, the angels, and the saints. This practice was shunned in the early days of the Church because of the spiritual orientation of Christianity and because of the idolatrous practices of pagan religions. Yet by the third century symbolic devices and didactic drawings had been allowed into the assembly rooms and cemeteries of the Christians; and by the beginning of the sixth century, representations of Christian personalities were being offered prayers, *proskyneseis*, and sacrifices of incense. Because of their reputed protective powers (as *apotropaia* and *palladia*), they were hung in front of shop doorways, they were attached to city gates, and they were carried before armies into battle. They began, in fact, to assume the honors and prerogatives of imperial images. Some holy images were even believed to emit magic healing powers; and some images were reputed to have had divine origins. After the iconoclast controversy of the eighth century, these images were briefly forbidden; but by A.D. 835 they had been accepted again by the Church, and have since received varying degrees of adoration. It may be difficult for a twentieth-century Christian to appreciate the novelty of this cult of icon worship. The threat which this religious development posed for the early Byzantine Church, however, can be measured by the vast literature written to oppose or support it—a literature which began to appear with regularity in the sixth century and burgeoned in the seventh and eighth.

Among the hymns which reflect the practice of icon worship are a collection of *chairetismois* contained in the *Difnar* of the Coptic Church. The

rubrics of the *Difnar* state that these hymns should be sung in front of the image or icon of the saint for whom each hymn was written. It has not been established when the practice of singing *chairetismoi* in front of icons began, but it is possible that *chairetismoi* were among the prayers recited to holy images in the sixth century. Another hymn which clearly reflects the worship of icons is *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 by Sophronius of Jerusalem (c. 560 - 639). In this poem, Sophronius fantasizes making a tour of the holy sites of Jerusalem. As part of his tour, he worships various sites and objects, including an icon of Christ.

Dioscorus perhaps—as other Christians certainly—was disturbed by this religious development. This is conceivable for several reasons, among which is the fact that the practice of icon worship ran contrary to the beliefs of Monophysites, toward which beliefs Dioscorus probably leaned. In response he may have written his only surviving anacreontic-*chairetismos*. The anacreontic appears to be a song in the tradition of the pagan *Anacreontea*. The persona is singing, dancing, and drinking in honor of a new general, a love-inspiring Heracles, whom Dioscorus hopes will forever save the cities. The anacreontic is followed immediately by a *chairetismos*, to which it is connected by more than physical juxtaposition. There is, for example, a tight ring structure joining the first verse of the anacreontic (Ἄει θέλω χορεύειν) with the last verse of the *chairetismos* (χαίρων χορείης εἰς μυριάμφορον χρόνον). This is a surprising sequence, because in the early Byzantine period the litany *chairetismos* form was commonly used for Christian prayers, especially in worship of the *Theotokos*. In the Dioscorian poem, however, the epithets are compounded into exaggeratedly long words reminiscent of the comedies of Aristophanes and Lucian. These compound

words, the incongruous setting of the symposium, and similarities with the prayer parodies in Aristophanes and Lucian suggest that Dioscorus was writing a parody of a hymn sung to a Christian image—sculpted, painted, or woven.

The poem is more complex, however, than a simple parody. The meanings of the epithets in the *chairetismos* are obscured by the compounding process and by their elliptical and metaphorical nature. Yet the root vocabulary and the images they create—these correspond to the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. In fact, the correspondence is so close and so consistent throughout the *chairetismos*, that one suspects that under the parody lies an allegorical level of meaning. These correspondences between the Dioscorian *chairetismos* and the *Apocalypsis Joannis* would probably have been recognized by a small early Byzantine audience, which was erudite,<sup>293</sup> steeped in the gospels and their interpretations,<sup>294</sup> and sensitive to allegorical literature.<sup>295</sup> The audience may then have reconsidered the anacreontic in light of the *chairetismos*. Such a reconsideration would have shown that the vocabulary, the images, and the symbolic significances in the anacreontic correspond to the beginning of the *Apocalypsis Joannis*. The literary allusion made by Dioscorus (verses 9-12) to *Anacreontea* 45 would have supported these correspondences. The pained fatalism which infuses

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<sup>293</sup>As evidently were the audiences of poets such as Agathias, Paul the Silentiary, and John of Gaza, who were contemporaries of Dioscorus.

<sup>294</sup>During the early Byzantine period, biblical motifs were employed even in legal petitions; see A. Kovelman, "From Logos to Myth: Egyptian Petitions of the 5th-7th Centuries," *BASP* 28 (1991): 135-52.

<sup>295</sup>See the introduction and the above discussion of the Stoic allegory in *Anacreontea*

the sentiments of *Anacreontea* 45 is a foil not only to the mood of joy and love in Dioscorus' poem, but also to one of the final and most important statements made by Christ in the Apocalypse: he has ended death and subsequently all suffering (καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν Apoc. 21:4).

While it is conceivable that an early Byzantine audience saw a mystical allegory in this poem, is it probable that Dioscorus *deliberately* created a deeper level of meaning? The answer to this question is *yes* for two reasons. 1) The deeper level relates intimately with the parody of the literal level. Such intimacy is obviously not the product of interpretation, but of intentional composition. 2) Sophronius appears to have written *Carmina Anacreontica* No. 20 as a Chalcedonian response to Dioscorus' poem. Sophronius' poem not only shows icon worship, but also praises the historical Jerusalem. Thus Sophronius saw the deeper level (with its emphasis on Babylon, the Whore of Babylon, and the New Jerusalem) and its relationship to the literal level.

In its tracing of a biblical book, Dioscorus' allegory is similar to the allegory by Prudentius, the *Psychomachia*. The Dioscorian poem also shows correspondences to early Byzantine icon representations of Christ and the *Theotokos*. Like Dioscorus, sixth century icons depicted sacred figures by means of representations of gold, silver, and precious gems. Like Dioscorus' metaphorical representation of Christ as a new (or young) general conquering the lions, a mosaic made between 494 and 519 at Ravenna depicts Christ as a young general conquering a lion. At Classe near Ravenna, a mosaic made in 549 in the apse of the Basilica of Saint

Apollinarius (see figures 9, 10, 11) also shows similarities to Dioscorus' poem.<sup>296</sup> The subject of this mosaic is very complex, and the mosaic is, according to Kitzinger, "perhaps the most intricately constructed of all Justinianic programmes."<sup>297</sup> It represents a fundamental change in the style of Byzantine art; Hellenistic realism is here superseded by austere symbolism and allegory. The center of the apse holds a round icon of Christ in the crux of a golden cross which is studded with green and blue gems, precious stones, and pearls. The cross itself is floating in a blue sky densely filled with 99 stars and surrounded by a circle adorned with more jewels and pearls. The cross represents Christ in an theophanic scene—his transfiguration on Mount Tabor—that is depicted as timeless. Below the cross is the inscription: SALUS MUNDI. Below this and filling the apse is an intricate depiction of renewed creation, including sheep, birds, flowers, trees, rocks, etc. Compare Dioscorus' epithet: χαίρε, κ(ύρι)ε παναξιό- [κτη]νοπτηναστροφωστηροκοσμοποιίας.<sup>298</sup>

The above examination has shown that the allegory *P.Cair.Masp. I 67097 verso F* is subtle and complex. As the form of this poem is different from that of the Dioscorian encomia, so the allegory is different. Yet this poem reveals the subtlety, complexity, and spiritual insight which also make Dioscorus' encomia outstanding, and it serves as a good introduction to them.

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<sup>296</sup>See the color photographs and discussion by Farioli, 193-224.

<sup>297</sup>Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, 101.

<sup>298</sup>This mosaic recalls other Dioscorian motifs, which will be discussed in chapter 3. These are the hand of God stretched from heaven (above the cross) and the mystical vision on Mount Tabor (Moses and Elijah are flanking the cross; cf. Mt. 17:1-8).





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CHANNELS OF IMPERISHABLE FIRE :  
THE CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL ALLEGORIES  
OF DIOSCORUS OF APHRODITO

VOLUME II

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL STUDIES

BY

CLEMENT A. KUEHN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 1993

VOLUME II

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CHAPTER 3  
MYSTICAL ALLEGORY  
IN DIOSCORUS' ENCOMIA

Dioscorus' encomia are Christian mystical allegories. The poems generally follow a format for encomiastic literature which was developed by Isocrates in Athens and which by the early Byzantine period had become standardized; and on the literal level, they appear to be praising dukes, generals, a silentarius, a cancellarius, and other government officials.<sup>1</sup> Dioscorus, however, did not follow the encomiastic tradition closely; and encomiastic motifs which have been altered and Dioscorian images and vocabulary which do not belong to the tradition—all of these point toward a deeper level of meaning in his poetry. On this deeper level,<sup>2</sup> the poems are praising saints and angels and suggesting a spiritual hierarchy. What Dioscorus was doing with his poetry reflects an already established tradition in art, where Christian saints and angels were depicted as government officials and high-ranking officers, and where the developing hieratic style stressed the importance of spiritual ranks. Much like the encomiastic format and motifs employed by Dioscorus, this art employed traditional secular mediums (such as the consular diptych), settings (palace architecture

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<sup>1</sup>T. Viljamaa, "Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry of the Early Byzantine Period," *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum Societas Scientiarum Fennica* 42 (Helsinki, 1968), 8ff.

<sup>2</sup>This deeper level will be referred to by any of the following terms (depending on the nature of the particular discussion): the *allegorical, metaphorical, symbolic, or mystical level*.

and thrones), accoutrements (crowns; imperial, consular, and military clothes), and poses. Dioscorus' allegories, however, contain yet another depth of meaning. The praises often go beyond what seems appropriate for saints and angels; the praises seem to be directed toward Christ. This suggests that the allegorical level is structured according to the mystical theories of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>3</sup> The latter explicated and emphasized in his popular mystical treatises the concept of a divine hierarchy, according to which God and Christ do not usually appear directly to man, but their presence and messages are conveyed through the ranks of saints and angels.

This chapter will examine some of the evidence of mystical allegory in the Dioscorian encomia.<sup>4</sup> First, in order to give a sense of the cultural milieu, some examples of Christian allegory in the art of the early Byzantine period will be examined, with an emphasis on their relationship to the proposed allegory in the encomia of Dioscorus. This will be followed by a brief overview of the encomiastic literature of the early Byzantine period; the popular handbook by Menander Rhetor is especially helpful in illuminating the characteristics of this genre. Then several images and terms in the Dioscorian encomia will be examined in detail. Some Dioscorian elements modify encomiastic motifs and thereby point toward a

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<sup>3</sup>Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations from the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius are taken from: B. Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiicum I, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De Divinis Nominibus [=DN]* (Berlin, 1990); G. Heil and A. Ritter, *Corpus Dionysiicum II, Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, De Coelesti Hierarchia [=CH], De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia [=EH], De Mystica Theologia [=MTh], Epistulae [=Ep]* (Berlin, 1991). References are to page and line numbers in these two volumes.

<sup>4</sup>This chapter will examine the Dioscorian encomia exclusive of the epithalamia. The epithalamia show some fundamental differences and need to be analyzed separately.

mystical level of meaning.<sup>5</sup> Other elements seem to have no relationship to the literal level; they relate only to the mystical level (for example, ὦν γένος ἀφρά[σ]τοιο νοός *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67184 recto B 16). Still other elements are not incongruous to the literal level, and yet also add significantly to the second level of meaning. After an examination of some examples of these three classes of vocabulary and images, the relationship of the mystical elements to one another will be analyzed and compared to the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius. Pseudo-Dionysius was very popular during the sixth and seventh centuries, especially among Monophysites.<sup>6</sup> His mystical theories clarify and augment the elliptical allegory in the encomia.

One group of terms and images which is significant but which will not be discussed, is that which develops the literal level, is comprehensible on that level, and does not seem to add support to the mystical level of meaning. These elements in Dioscorus' poetry are often features common in encomiastic poetry. Their function for Dioscorus is two-fold: to establish his poems in the encomiastic tradition and to lift his poems above the simplicity of a clear one-to-one correspondence between the literal and symbolic levels, where each vehicle on the literal level would have an obvious referent on the mystical level. Such literal elements were studied by Jean-Claude Margolin. His analysis focused on the allegorical poetry of

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<sup>5</sup>For the artistic effect created by variations of common motifs, see S. Tarán, *The Art of Variation in the Hellenistic Epigram* (Leiden, 1979); P. Rosenmeyer, *The Poetics of Imitation: Anacreon and the Anacreontic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>6</sup>One objective of the extensive commentaries on the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus by John of Scythopolis and Maximus Confessor was to make his mystical treatises acceptable to orthodox faith. J. Pelikan, "The Odyssey of Dionysian Spirituality," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by C. Luibheid and P. Rorem (New York, 1987), 11-24.

sixteenth-century France; but some of his observations are applicable to our own study and are paraphrased and quoted by Robert Lamberton:

[Margolin] emphasizes the element of mystery involved in the experience of allegorical art, the enigmatic surface that appears constantly to be referring to something beyond itself. He argues, in fact, that the ability to match up each element in the allegorical work with its referent (as in the example of the *roman à clef*) may be a hindrance to the full experience of "ce plaisir délicat de l'allégorisme, fait de dépaysement, de goût de l'inconnu, du sentiment de participer plus ou moins à la création, de l'incitation à la rêverie."<sup>7</sup>

The purely encomiastic elements of the Dioscorian poems add to the mystery, the tension, and ultimately the pleasure of the experience. Also Proclus, whose literary theories seem to have influenced Dioscorus, stressed the importance of elements which do not develop the symbolic level of meaning in a mystical allegory.<sup>8</sup> These elements are the product or reflection of activities of the soul that are different from its mystical activities (see the introduction). The encomiastic elements of the Dioscorian poetry and the characteristics of encomia in the early Byzantine period have been discussed by Toivo Viljamaa;<sup>9</sup> a discussion here would be largely a repetition of that fine work, and thus superfluous.<sup>10</sup> This chapter will therefore focus on Dioscorian vocabulary and images which appear to

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<sup>7</sup>Jean-Claude Margolin, "Aspects du surréalisme au xvi<sup>e</sup> siècle: Fonction allégorique et vision anamorphotique," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* 39 (1977): 520; quoted by Lamberton, 186.

<sup>8</sup>See my introduction for a discussion of Proclus' theories about mystical allegory.

<sup>9</sup>"Studies in Greek Encomiastic Poetry of the Early Byzantine Period"; see note 1 above. Viljamaa (p. 33) summarized Dioscorus' output in the following words: "[They] represent the types which were evidently the most popular in the early Byzantine period: hexametric and iambic *encomia*, hexametric *ethopoeiae*, and anacreontic poems."

<sup>10</sup>See also R. McCail, "P.Gr.Vindob. 29788C: Hexameter Encomium on an Un-Named Emperor," *JHS* 98 (1978): 38-63; G. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, 1983), *passim*.

relate to a level of meaning beyond the literal.<sup>11</sup>

### Allegory in Byzantine Icons

The structure of the allegory in the Dioscorian encomia corresponds to the allegories in early Byzantine icons. Dioscorus himself hints at this correspondence by his variation and elaboration of a conventional encomiastic motif. Menander Rhetor instructed that icons be mentioned in the epilogue to two kinds of encomia, the βασιλικὸς λόγος and the ἐπιβατήριος λόγος. In the former, the encomiast should say: πλήρεις εἰκόνων αἱ πόλεις, αἱ μὲν πινάκων γραπτῶν, αἱ δέ που καὶ τιμιωτέρας ὕλης (377.26-28). The cities are full of the emperor's images; what kind of images is not clearly stated. The former (πινάκων γραπτῶν) are probably painted tablets.<sup>12</sup> The latter images (which are only a possibility: που) are made from more precious materials,<sup>13</sup> perhaps ivory, but probably wood suitable for statues.<sup>14</sup> In the second kind of encomium, that composed for the arrival of a new governor, the encomiast should say: μετὰ μικρὸν ἀναθήσομεν εἰκόνας

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<sup>11</sup>Most of Dioscorus' poems (the surviving fragments commonly recognized as written by him) are contained in the first volume of Ernst Heitsch's excellent edition: *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, 2nd edition (Göttingen, 1963), 127-52. The present study will focus on the poems in this collection; references will be abbreviated H.1, H.2, H.3, etc. Poems and documents not contained in this collection will be cited according to J. F. Oates, R. S. Bagnall, W. H. Willis, and K. A. Worp, *Checklist of Editions of Greek Papyri and Ostraca*, 4th ed., *BASP Supplement 7* (Atlanta, 1992). For a list of Dioscorian poems excluded by Heitsch, see Viljamaa, 33 note 55; L. MacCoull included the texts of several of these in her monograph, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988).

<sup>12</sup>See Simon. 178; Anaxandr. 33.2; Thphr. *HP* 5.7.4; *SIG* 1068.21 (Patmos); D. H. *Comp.* 25.

<sup>13</sup>See *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.91 (the testament of Phoibammon, composed by Dioscorus)

<sup>14</sup>Cf. *Od.* 5.257; LSJ, s.v. ὕλη.



(381.18-19). In the former circumstance (for the emperor), the encomiast envisions the painted images as many and more precious images as a possibility; in the latter circumstance (for the governor), the encomiast is sure that images will soon be erected. How different is the impassioned desire of Dioscorus for just one εἰκὼν of the shimmering addressee:

ζωγράφον ἀμφιβόητον ἐπίπνοον εἰκόνα πῆξαι  
 ἀτρεκέως ποθέω πολήρατον εἶδος ὑφαίνειν  
 χάρματι λαμπετόντ' ἀμαρύγματα οἶα Σελήνη.

(H.5.20-22, 21.17-19, 2.16-18)<sup>15</sup>

The emphasis of these verses is the strong desire of the poet (ποθέω πολήρατον εἶδος); the illuminating beauty of the addressee (λαμπετόντ' ἀμαρύγματα οἶα Σελήνη); and the doubt that a painted (πῆξαι) or woven (ὑφαίνειν) likeness can be made. This doubt is suggested by: 1) the adverb ἀτρεκέως, 2) the call for a renowned portrait-painter, and 3) the understanding that the work will need to be inspired.<sup>16</sup> If on an allegorical level the reference is to the mystic's desire for a sensual representation of the saint or Christ, both of which were imperceptible to the senses, it is not surprising that the poet had some doubts. A sensual representation of a mystic experience would be unattainable—unless that painting was allegorical.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Correct Heitsch's ἐπίγνοον (H.5.20).

<sup>16</sup>The adjective ἐπίπνοον agrees with both ζωγράφον and εἰκόνα; either way, the sense is the same. Dioscorus' predilection for chiasmic constructions supports its association with the icon.

<sup>17</sup>Dioscorus' desire for an icon is not necessarily a contradiction of his disdain shown in *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F (discussed in chapter 2). The object of his parody was obviously not icons, but *worship* of icons. In the encomia, I sense no wish to worship an icon, but a desire to have a tangible representation of the beloved addressee, who is ἀσώματος.

Allegory was a technique frequently employed in the icon paintings of the early Byzantine period; one kind of allegory was the portrayal of Christ, Mary, the saints, and the angels as government magistrates in a secular setting. A good example is a late sixth-century Sinai encaustic icon (in remarkably good shape), the product of a Constantinopolitan workshop,<sup>18</sup> which depicts the Virgin as an empress upon her throne (B.3; see figure 8). Wearing a purple tunic and purple hood, she sits upon a red cushion on an ochre throne. Her cheeks, lips, and chin are painted with makeup. Above a golden footstool studded with deep blue stones and pearls, she is wearing red-purple shoes—an imperial prerogative. The Virgin is flanked by two saints, Theodore Stratelates and George, who are depicted as court officials<sup>19</sup>—specifically, they are wearing the ceremonial clothes of the imperial guard.<sup>20</sup> It was not uncommon to depict these two saints as high-ranking soldiers; there survives a similar but Egyptian icon from the sixth or seventh century, which depicts Saint Theodore "in golden

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One kind of allegorical art which was extensively practiced in the Byzantine period was hieratic art, which sought to represent spiritual dynamics through symbolism and the ordering of the elements in the representation. Diez and Demus noted: "The new hieratic style was coming up. . . . Frontality, symmetry, subordination and dematerialisation are the determining factors in the style. . . . The most logical result of an art directed toward a hieratic style is the icon, which is meant to represent the spirituality of the figure." E. Diez and O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece: Hosios Lucas and Daphni* (Cambridge, 1931), 26-31.

<sup>18</sup>"The icon shows a complexity and richness which we can imagine to have existed in the early period of Byzantine icon painting only in Constantinople. . . . Whether the icon could have been painted during Justinian's reign when the monastery must have received gifts from its imperial founder cannot be proved but only suggested as a possibility." K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, The Icons, Volume One: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton, 1976), 21; for a detailed description, a bibliography, and photographs of this icon, see *ibid.*, 18-21, plates 4-6, plates 43-46.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

armor with a floral design indicating the rank of a high officer."<sup>21</sup> The saints' representations in the icon with the Virgin are very realistic; the face of Theodore, as Weitzmann notes, is "reddish brown, as is fitting for a sunburned, weatherbeaten soldier." Behind the Virgin are two archangels carrying consular staves. This group portrait, of course, is not reflecting any historical group or situation. It is rather a representation through allegory of a spiritual situation; Mary's status in heaven and her relationship to the saints and angels are depicted by means of political architecture, clothes, symbols, and physical stances.

This particular icon corresponds to Dioscorus' encomia in several ways. First, generally, there is a mixture of Hellenistic,<sup>22</sup> imperial,<sup>23</sup> and Christian<sup>24</sup> modes of expression. Weitzmann was fascinated by the complexity and richness of the icon, "with its emphasis on Christian

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<sup>21</sup>See the description and plates in *ibid.*, 36-37; plates 15, 59. Cf. the Palestine-made ninth-century triptych of the same two saints in full military regalia; this triptych shows a strong relationship to imperial iconography. K. Weitzmann, *The Icon: Holy Images—Sixth to Fourteenth Century* (New York, 1978), 56-57.

<sup>22</sup>The Hellenistic elements in both the icons and the Dioscorian poetry incorporate, of course, Classical elements as well. Concerning the Classical influence seen in the icon under discussion, Weitzmann observes (*Sinai*, 20): "The classical tradition is so much more alive in our icon than in any of the Saloniki mosaics. . . . That classical pathos is still strongly reflected in our icon can be seen by comparing the angel heads with the head of Pylades in the Iphigeneia scene of the Pompeian fresco from the Casa del Citarista now in the Naples Museum."

<sup>23</sup>The term *imperial* must be understood as anything which relates directly to the imperial government, whether it be palace architecture, a consul's chair, or a general's cloak.

<sup>24</sup>The Dioscorian encomia are surprisingly void of any direct mention of Christ. One might compare this phenomenon to the second century dialogue *Octavius* by M. Minucius Felix; although it is a defense of Christianity, "the doctrine of God is approached from familiar Romanized forms of Platonic, Stoic and Epicurean theism. There is no Christology; even the name of Jesus Christ does not once occur." (G. Rendall, ed. and trans., *Minucius Felix*, in the *Loeb* series (London, 1931), 312. Similarly, two poems which were considered Christian mystical allegories in the early Byzantine period, the biblical *Song of Songs* and *Hero and Leander*, do not mention Christ or God.

spirituality, giving pictorial expression to the divinity of Christ and the Virgin, with its introduction of the splendor of the imperial court, seen in the garb of the saints, and with its continuation of the Hellenistic tradition, exemplified in the figures of the angels." In the Dioscorian poetry, there is also a blend of Hellenistic, imperial, and Christian motifs.<sup>25</sup> Another but more particular correspondence is that the Virgin is holding upon her lap the young but mature-looking Jesus, dressed in gold-hatched ochre garments.<sup>26</sup> This representation is echoed by the Dioscorian verse, which appears in two surviving poems: ὦ θεῖον ὄντως κ[αὶ ἀ]κριβῶς χ[ρ]υσοῦν γένος (H.3.1, 5.40). The icon representation shows Christ as both child and mature man in one person; this mingling, common in Byzantine icons, is perhaps echoed by the Dioscorian verse in which the golden man, the savior of the cities, is carried by a personified queen Thebes: χρύσειον ἄνδρα φέρουσα, τέον ῥητῆρα πόληων (H.2.26; cf. H.5.8).<sup>27</sup>

A further correspondence may be seen in the icon's representation of God's hand, which is extended down from heaven and radiating light upon the Virgin. The raised and the extended hand is an important motif in early Byzantine icons.<sup>28</sup> Another sixth-century example of the hand of God

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<sup>25</sup>MacCoull's commentaries to the individual poems mention many of these; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 57-146

<sup>26</sup>See also the golden Christ Child in the Roman fresco of A.D. 528 (figure 7).

<sup>156</sup>These are an echo, though faint, of the Apocalyptic vision of the υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσοῦν (Apc. 1:13).

<sup>28</sup>The sixth-century icon of Christ (B.1; Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 13-15) in the Justinian monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai shows his right hand raised in blessing. In the Berlin diptych (figure 5; Weitzmann, *Icon*, 44-45), Christ's right hand is raised, as is the right hand of St. Peter behind him, the right hand of the archangel Michael behind the seated Virgin, and the right hand of the Christ Child. Also in the Sinai icon of the Virgin described above, the Christ Child has his right hand raised in blessing (while his left hand holds a scroll).

stretching down from heaven can be seen in a mosaic in the church of San Vitale at Ravenna; the hand here stretches down to Abel and Melchisedec, who are surrounded by Moses and Isaiah. Also in the Basilica of Saint Apollinarius at Classe, consecrated in 549, the apse mosaic shows God's hand stretching down from heaven above a jeweled cross and Saint Apollinarius (figure 9). So also in Dioscorus' poetry, the extended hand is a motif. In poem H.3, addressed to John, the poet says: χεῖραν ἐμ[οῖ] ἀ[τάνυσσον ἐμὴν] πενίην ἀπολύειν (verse 24); and he repeats the first half-verse: χεῖραν ἐ[μ]οῖ ἀ[τ]ά[νυσσον] (verse 25).<sup>29</sup> Poem twelve offers a variant: σωροτέρην ἀτάνυσσον ἐμοὶ παλάμηφιν ἐάων (H.12B.14; cf. H.6.28); and poem thirteen offers a wider application: πᾶσι πον(ε)ιομένοις [ἐλε]ήμο[να] χεῖρ' ἀτανύσσεις (verse 14).<sup>30</sup>

What these verses are supposed to signify on a literal level is not clear. Maspero suggested that they were unique, unabashed requests for payment.<sup>31</sup> On a metaphorical level, this image of the extended hand may refer to a sign of blessing, as seen in the icons.<sup>32</sup> Alternatively, it may refer

<sup>29</sup>Both verses are restored on the basis of H.4.16. Note the technique of parallelism.

<sup>30</sup>Dioscorus' self-image in τῷ σῶ ὄρεξον οἰκέτη ὄλβου χεῖρα (H.9.20 = 5.62) corresponds to the mystic John's self-image: ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ (Apoc. 1:1).

Wipszycka (p. 534) suggested that the phrase χεῖρ' ἀτανύσ[σ]ησ at H.6.28 be read: χεῖρα τανύσ[σ]ησ. Dioscorus, however, made frequent use of the verb ἀτανύω; see LSJ Suppl., s.v.

<sup>31</sup>"Il quémande des susides sans déguisement, pour prix de sa poésie : et puisqu'on le voit en user si souvent, il faut bien croire que le procédé lui réussissait : Τῷ σῶ ὄρεξον οἰκέτη ὄλβου χεῖρα (III, 20)." Maspero, "Un dernier poète grec d'Égypte," 467; see H.9.20. "Ὀλβος has a root meaning of *happiness* or *bliss*, and usually applies to worldly happiness; cf. *Od.* 3.208, 4.208, 6.188, 14.206; *Il.* 16.596. "Ὀλβος is a very common request in the prayers of the Homeric and Orphic hymns.

<sup>32</sup>The idea of *straining* inherent in the word τανύω ( and ἀτανύω) may be emphasizing the distance between Christ and the mystic, and which becomes ever more

to a spiritual hand offering help. This last suggestion is supported by two literary sources possibly used by Dioscorus. In the *Metaphrases in Psalmos* by Pseudo-Apollinarius, the verb τανύω is frequently used in reference to God offering His strength and mercy to man. Compare the Dioscorian hexameter verse (πᾶσι πον(ε)ιομένοις [ἐλε]ήμο[να] χεῖρ' ἀτανύσσεις) with the following hexameter verse from the *Metaphrases*: σὴν ἐλεημοσύνην, βασιλεῦ, ποθέουσι τανύσσαις (35.11).<sup>33</sup> The suggestion is also supported by Pseudo-Dionysius. In his eighth epistle, he described in detail the mystic vision given to Carpus. In this vision, Carpus sees two men struggling to keep a firm footing at the edge of a chasm. Serpents rise out of the chasm and while lashing at them with their tails and biting with their fangs, they pull at the two men. Then other men appear in the chasm among the serpents, and they too try to pull the struggling pair into the pit. Finally Carpus sees Christ appear in a throng of angels. He is rising from his heavenly throne καὶ ἕως αὐτῶν [the two men] καταβάντα καὶ χεῖρα ἀγαθὴν ὀρέγειν (*Ep.* 8, Ritter 191.12-13). Dioscorus' variation on his own motif uses the same verb as Pseudo-Dionysius: Τῷ σῶ ὄρεξον οἰκέτη ὄλβου χεῖρα (H.9.20).<sup>34</sup> Finally, the two ideas—Christ or God 1) extending a hand to bless and 2) extending a hand to help—are not incompatible;<sup>35</sup> and Dioscorus

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apparent to the mystic as his love grows. This acute awareness of this separation (even in a mystic ecstasy) was a motif in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa; see W. Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955), 196ff.

<sup>33</sup>A. Ludwich, ed., *Apolinarii Metaphrasis Psalmorum* (Leipzig, 1912).

<sup>34</sup>If Dioscorus was using ὄλβος to denote spiritual bliss, he had a precedent in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus; Gregory described Christ as ὀλβιόδωρος (*Carm.* 2.1.38.9, M.37.1326A). Viljamaa noted metrical similarities between Dioscorus' and Gregory's poems—in their trimeters (p. 86) and false quantities (p. 87).

<sup>35</sup>The extended hand of God can also offer honor. See the ninth-century Coptic icon of

may be alluding to both the icon representations and the literary sources.

The most important correspondence between the icon of the Virgin Enthroned (figure 8) and the Dioscorian encomia is that the Sinai icon is representing incorporeal spirits as though they were government officials. This is exactly what has been suggested as the allegory of the Dioscorian poems. The type of allegory seen in the Sinai icon is common in the other icons of the early Byzantine period. For example, also from the middle of the sixth century comes an ivory diptych carved in Ravenna by an artist from Constantinople or his local apprentice (see figure 5). The left panel of the diptych (when one faces it) shows Christ with long hair and beard and is probably representing him in the Old Testament rôle of the *Ancient of Days*, as described in Daniel 7:1-28. Here Daniel is having a vision (which is directly related to the visions in the Apocalypsis Joannis) that is explained by an angel. In the vision, the saints are being attacked ἕως τοῦ ἐλθεῖν τὸν παλαιὸν ἡμερῶν, καὶ τὴν κρίσιν ἔδωκε τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῦ ὑψίστου, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς ἐδόθη καὶ τὸ βασίλειον κατέσχον οἱ ἅγιοι (Dan. 7:22). In the icon, perhaps echoing the *kingdom* motif in the vision, Christ is seated on a consular chair in an elaborate palace setting and is holding a huge jewel-studded book of Scriptures. This representation of Christ shows clearly three facets of the mystical allegories in the icons. First, an incorporeal mystic vision is being represented corporeally, imitating the literary representation which Daniel created. Second, the subject is made to resemble a government official; Christ, the *Ancient of Days*, is portrayed as a consul. And the third facet is

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St. Mercurius (B.49; Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 78-79), in which God extends a hand which both emits rays of blessing upon Mercurius and holds a crown of martyrdom. This imagery would certainly be considered by devout Copts as representing an ὄλβου χεῖρα (H.9.20), where the bliss is not earthly but heavenly.

the secular medium, the consular diptych. "The more secular appearance of these panels," explains Weitzmann, "is due to the marked influence of contemporary ivory consular diptychs, in which the consul sits upon the so-called *sella curulis* instead of a high-backed throne, and before a similar, highly decorative arch derived from palace architecture."<sup>36</sup> Christ is flanked by the saints Peter and Paul; and it should again be emphasized that the artist was not attempting to record an historical episode in the life of Christ, but to represent allegorically a spiritual, noetic situation and incorporate elements of Daniel's allegorical representation. What is noteworthy with respect to Dioscorus' Hellenistic motifs is that the palace architecture in the background shows what appear to be representations of pagan deities.<sup>37</sup> On the other half of the diptych, the Virgin also sits on a consular chair and is surrounded by the same palace architecture. She is flanked by two angels, both in military garb.

An early Byzantine icon which presents a surface level of meaning that is martial-imperial is the representation in Ravenna of Christ as imperial general (see chapter 2, figure 4). In the Archiepiscopal Chapel at Ravenna can be seen a restored painting dating originally from between 494 and 519. The beardless, youthful Redeemer is wearing armor, a skirt, and an

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<sup>36</sup>Weitzmann, *Icon*, 44.

<sup>37</sup>Sarapis and Isis? This identification is not at all certain. The woman's right breast is bared and she is carrying a torch; on her head are either horns or a crescent moon. Thus Selene is also a possibility.

The Coptic mural of St. Sisinnios in full military regalia spearing Alabasria (Bawit, Chapel XVII, W.) also has many pagan figures—Greek and Egyptian—in the background. See A. Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology: The Art of the Christian Egyptians from the Late Antique to the Middle Ages* (Boston, 1978), 256-58.



imperial mantle;<sup>38</sup> he is holding upon his shoulder a long thin cross as though it were a spear. In his other hand he is holding open a codex; across the double leaves is written: EGO SUM VIA VERITAS ET VITA. One foot is standing upon the neck of a subdued lion,<sup>39</sup> and the other upon the neck of a serpent. This allegorical representation is reminiscent of an Apocalyptic motif (Apoc. 19:11-16; cf. 1:16) and is echoed by Dioscorus' frequent references to his addressees as στρατηγός and στρατιάρχος. For example, Dioscorus wrote: πά[ν]τη δέος πέφυκεν ἀσπίλου δίκης / τοῦ [ὄβριμω]τάτου στρατηγοῦ εὐμενοῦς.<sup>40</sup> In the encomium to Athanasius, the addressee as στρατιάρχος is "upon the enemies' necks" (ἐπ' ἀχένη δυσμενέεσσιν H.4.11). This half-verse is repeated in poem twelve, where the poet wishes the addressee a life "without envy,<sup>41</sup> brought by itself to fulfillment,<sup>42</sup> upon the enemies' necks" (ἄφθονον αὐτοτέλεστον ἐπ' ἀχένη δυσμενέεσσιν verse B.13). The mystic significance of the term αὐτοτέλεστον is obvious.<sup>43</sup>

One of the closest iconographic parallels to the allegory proposed for

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<sup>38</sup>See the color photograph in G. Bovini, *Eglises de Ravenne* (Novara, 1960), 69; cf. the description by R. Farioli, *Ravenna romana e bizantina* (Ravenna, 1977), 75.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. the discussion in chapter 2 of the allegorical significance of the Dioscorian verses: στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι / . . . / δαμάζοντα τοὺς λέοντας (H.28.13-15).

<sup>40</sup>H.5.55-56; cf. H.5.61, 2.28, al.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. Aristophanes *Fr.* 196; Nonnus *Paraphrasis in Joannis Evangelium* 3.119.

<sup>42</sup>A very frequent word in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*; see W. Peek, ed., *Lexicon zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnos* (Hildesheim, 1968-1975), s.v. αὐτοτέλεστος. See also Nonnus *Paraphrasis in Joannis Evangelium* 1.39: καὶ λόγος αὐτοτέλεστος ἔσαρκώθη, θεὸς ἀνὴρ.

<sup>43</sup>Αὐτοτελής is used four times by Pseudo-Dionysius for God, twice in conjunction with μονοειδής. This latter term is used ten times by Pseudo-Dionysius to describe different aspects of God, and is used at least twice in the encomia by Dioscorus (H.3.41, 6.8). See also L. MacCoull, "μονοειδής in Dioscorus of Aphrodito: An Addendum," *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* 25 (1983): 61-64.

Dioscorus' encomia can be seen in the monumental icon of Saint Peter at Sinai (B.5; see figure 6).<sup>44</sup> This encaustic icon from the second half of the sixth century was painted probably at Constantinople, but possibly at Alexandria.<sup>45</sup> The large icon, showing strong Classical influences, shows an almost life-size half-figure of Saint Peter in the pose, clothing, and setting of a Byzantine consul. Behind Saint Peter is a niche whose ornaments are very Classical: a golden bead and reel, a crimson frieze, a grey cyma (a wave moulding with double curvature), and a gilded cornice on golden consoles. Above this setting are three medallions, whose golden circles mirror the large gold nimbus which surrounds the face of Peter; in these medallions are the faces of Christ, Mary, and a youthful John the Evangelist. The similarity between the Peter icon and the ivory diptych of the consul Anastasius (A.D. 517) is striking, and was explained by Weitzmann as follows:

This relationship is not merely formal but has a deeper significance. It will be observed that the similarity between the two monuments extends to the rank order of the persons represented in the medallions. Christ takes the place of the emperor in the ivory, the Virgin that of the empress—this is perhaps the reason why the Virgin is at the left side of Christ instead of the right—and John, the co-disciple, if our interpretation is correct, takes the place of the co-consul. Now also the emphasis of St. Peter's attributes becomes more understandable; he clutches the keys in his right hand as the consul the mappa, and in his left he holds the cross-staff as the consul does the scepter. The basic idea of the icon seems then to be that St. Peter holds the highest office under the reign of Christ and the Virgin, with the assistance of a co-

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<sup>44</sup>For a thorough description, analysis, photographs, and a bibliography, see Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 23-26; plates 8-10, 48-51. See also idem, *Icon*, 54-55.

<sup>45</sup>Kitzinger, however, is sceptical of this dating. He prefers to date this icon to c. 700 and to a revival of Justinian-style painting. E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making. Main Lines of Stylistic Development in Mediterranean Art: 3rd-7th Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 120.

administrator, and to convey this idea the artist obviously borrowed from imperial iconography a compositional scheme whose meaning was fully understood in the sixth century.<sup>46</sup>

The compositional scheme of the encomium was also thoroughly familiar in the sixth century; and it is probable that Dioscorus' expected an erudite audience to see clearly the variations, the mystical motifs, and the allegorical significance of his encomia.<sup>47</sup>

Thus there are significant similarities between the proposed allegory of the Dioscorian poems and that of the Christian icons of the early Byzantine period. Both have a surface level of meaning where the subjects are presented as government officials. Both have a deeper level of meaning which relates to a spiritual and not an historical situation. Both use the same motifs: the extended hand, the golden child-man, pagan gods and goddesses, precious stones and metals, etc. And both employ secular mediums: the consular diptych, for example, among the icons; and the "Menandrian encomium" in the Dioscorian poetry. There is also an important similarity in the emphasis on hierarchy. The ranking of the addressees by Dioscorus according to higher and lower political offices may represent, on a metaphorical level, the hierarchy in heaven.

The concept of a celestial hierarchy was expounded in detail by Pseudo-Dionysius, whose mystical theology will be reviewed below. This same celestial hierarchy was referred to, either directly or indirectly, by many

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<sup>46</sup>Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 24-25.

<sup>47</sup>It is perhaps significant that in the two encomia addressed to John, the poet describes him as young—ἄστεα κουρίζων διελήλυθες οὐ κατὰ κόσμον—as is traditional in the iconography of John the Evangelist and Christ; H.2.23, 3.38. See the discussion of this verse below.

other mystical writers.<sup>48</sup> The concept of a celestial hierarchy was also important in Christian icons. Not only did it influence the allegorical representations of Christ, Mary, the saints and angels as emperor, general, empress, consul, and imperial guard; the concept of hierarchy also influenced the arrangement of figures and objects in an icon. Diez and Demus, in their examination of the Christian icons at Hosios Lucas,<sup>49</sup> made the following conclusion concerning the ranking of figures:

The placing according to rank as a visualized hypostasis of the hierarchy no less than for plane composition, is of fundamental significance for hieratic painting.<sup>50</sup>

One must be careful to distinguish between that which is hierarchical and that which is hieratic. The concept *hierarchy* applied to artwork relates to indications of social, political, or spiritual status: crowns, consular chairs, red shoes, position in a group, etc. *Hieratic* relates to the magian significance of figures, objects, or decorations. Hieratic art is theurgic. By the correct choice, representation, and arrangement of figures and objects on a canvas or wall, the artist attempts to tap into spiritual realms for the purpose of using spiritual forces for one's own ends on earth.<sup>51</sup> Hieratic art uses hierarchical symbolism to express spiritual relationships.

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<sup>48</sup>R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris, 1954), 68-81.

<sup>49</sup>"The mosaics in Hosios Lucas show the culmination of that style of Byzantine painting which we might call the hieratic. This style could only have matured in the centre of the empire at the seat of ecclesiastical power and learning. Yet H. Lucas [southeast of Delphi] is the earliest extant work of a comprehensive character on such a scale." Diez - Demus, 24. The mosaics were created probably at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 26-31.

<sup>51</sup>The hieratic style seems to have reached its culmination in the tenth and eleventh centuries at Hosios Lucas and Daphni. These icons, according to Diez and Demus, were "esoteric-mystical" and contained a "secret language" which was "purposely unintelligible to the uninitiated." See Diez - Demus, "Origin and Evolution of the Hieratic Style," chap. in *Byzantine Mosaics in Greece*, 24-36.



Fig. 5. Christ and Virgin. This ivory diptych was probably made at Ravenna by artists from Constantinople in the middle of the sixth century, and is now in Berlin. Christ is depicted as the *Ancient of Days* from the mystical dream of Daniel. It was strongly influenced by contemporary consular diptychs; note the consul's chair, the palace architecture, and the (apparently) pagan figures in the background.

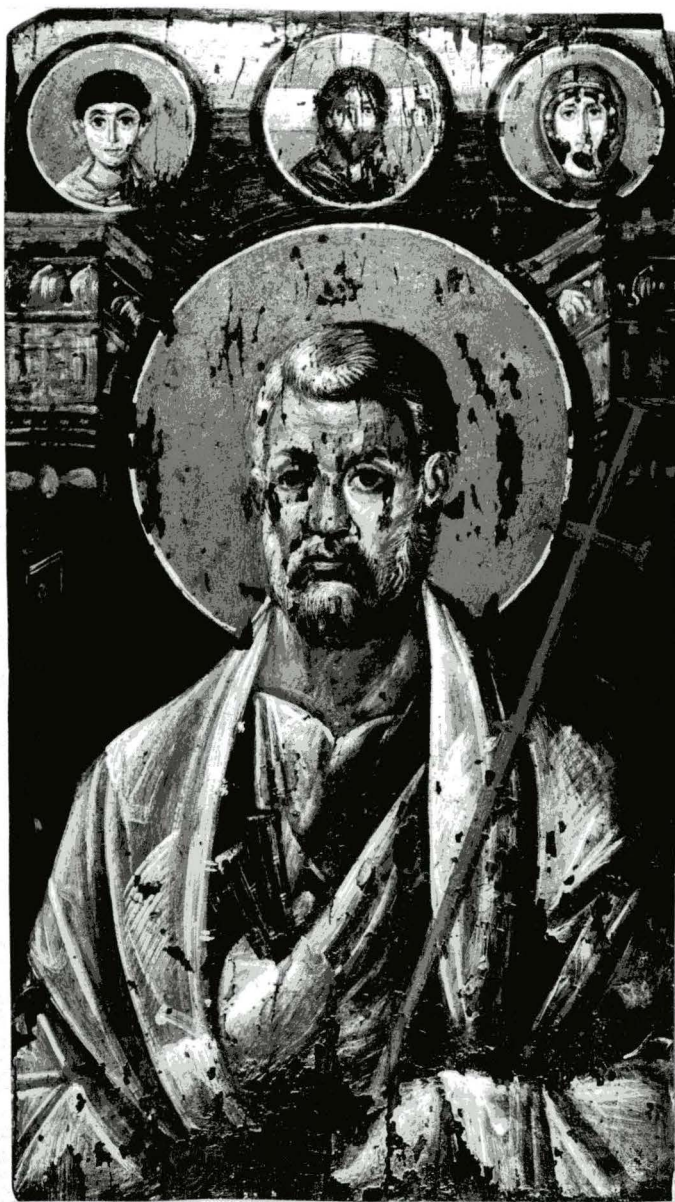


Fig. 6. St. Peter. This almost life-size encaustic icon was made in Constantinople or Alexandria in the second half of the sixth century, and is now at Sinai (B.5). It depicts St. Peter as a Byzantine consul; the medallions represent (probably) John the Evangelist as his co-consul, Christ as the emperor, and the Virgin as the empress. Like the consul who was usually portrayed holding a scepter and *mappa*, St. Peter is holding a cross staff and keys. Note the palace architecture.

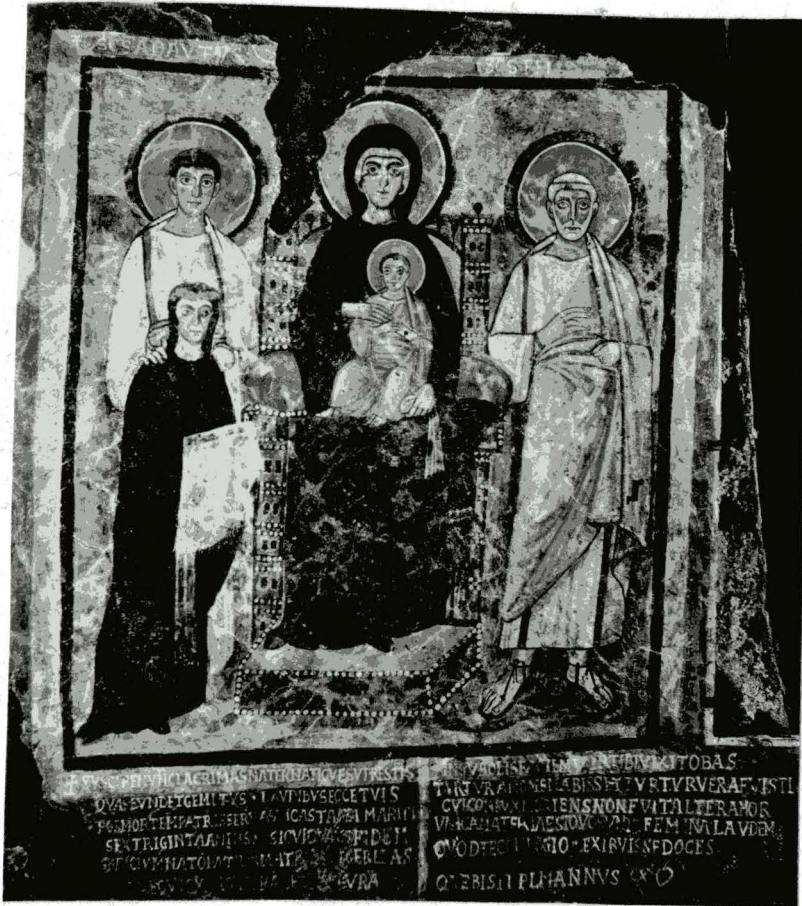


Fig. 7. Virgin Enthroned. This fresco was painted in the Commodilla Catacomb at Rome in A.D. 528. The Virgin is flanked by St. Felix (at her left) and St. Adauctus. The throne is adorned with jewels and the adult-looking Christ Child is wrapped in golden garments.

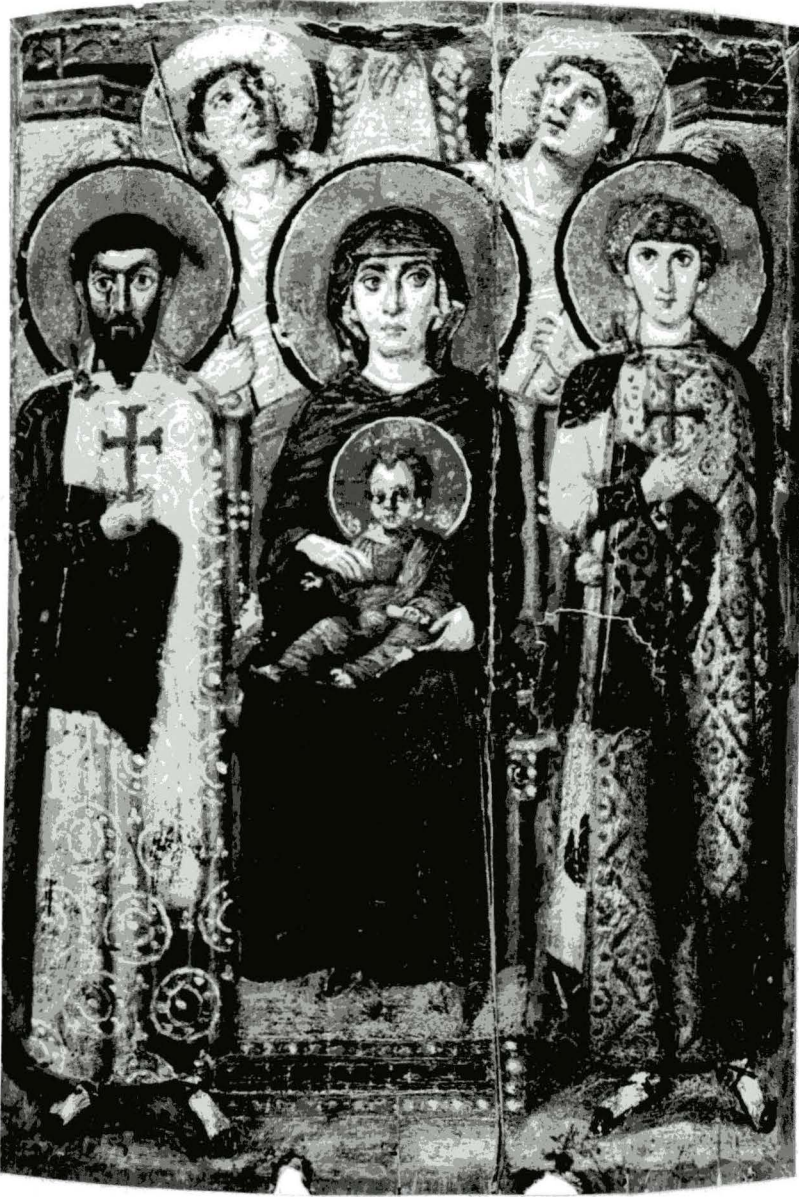


Fig. 8. Virgin Enthroned. This encaustic icon was probably made in Constantinople during the sixth century, and is now at Sinai (B.3). Perhaps it was given as a gift by Justinian to the monastery. The Virgin is flanked by St. Theodore Stratelates (at her right) and St. George, both dressed in the ceremonial garb of imperial guards. The haloes of the four central figures are gold, and the mature-looking Christ Child is wrapped in golden garments. The Virgin is wearing red shoes, an imperial prerogative. Note the hand of God extending down and radiating light.



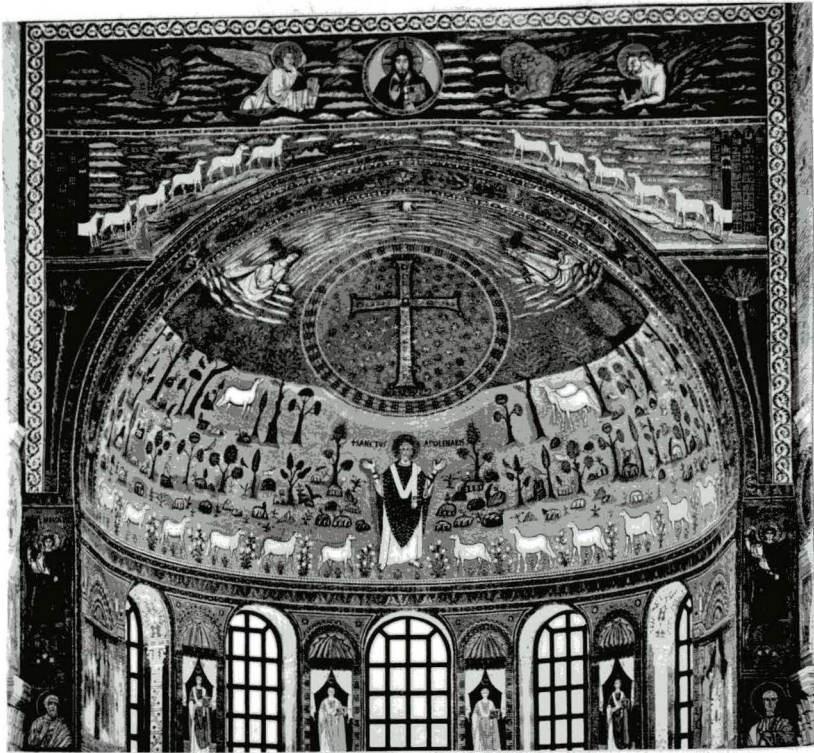


Fig. 9. The Basilica of Saint Apollinarius at Classe, four kilometers southeast of Ravenna, was consecrated on May 9, 549. The mosaic in the apse probably dates from this period. Note the hand of God stretching from heaven (above the cross). Moses (at the cross's right) and Elijah (at the cross's left) are depicted as they appeared on Mount Tabor to the three apostles, who are represented as three sheep (below the cross). The theophany of Christ is depicted as a timeless event and corresponds to the allegorical representation of the apotheosis of Apollinarius below the cross.

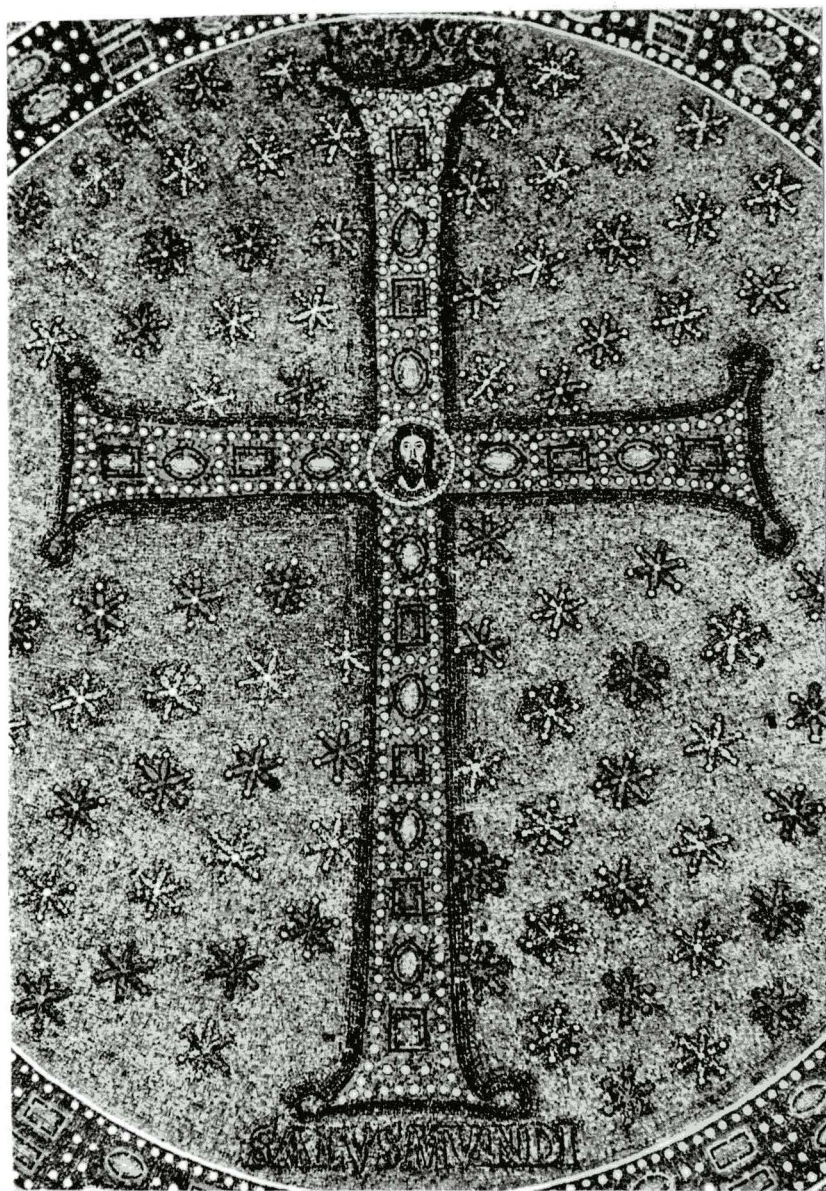


Fig. 10. Detail of the apse mosaic in the Basilica of Saint Apollinarius at Classe. The heavily jeweled golden cross floats in a field of 99 stars. Above the cross is the inscription  $\text{ΙΧΘΥΣ}$  ( $\text{ἸΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡ}$ ) and below the cross  $\text{SALVS MVNDI}$ , both of which inscriptions stress Christ's role as savior. At the lateral tips of the cross are the Greek letters  $\text{Α}$  and  $\text{Ω}$ . Cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F and *Apocalypsis Joannis* 21:6.

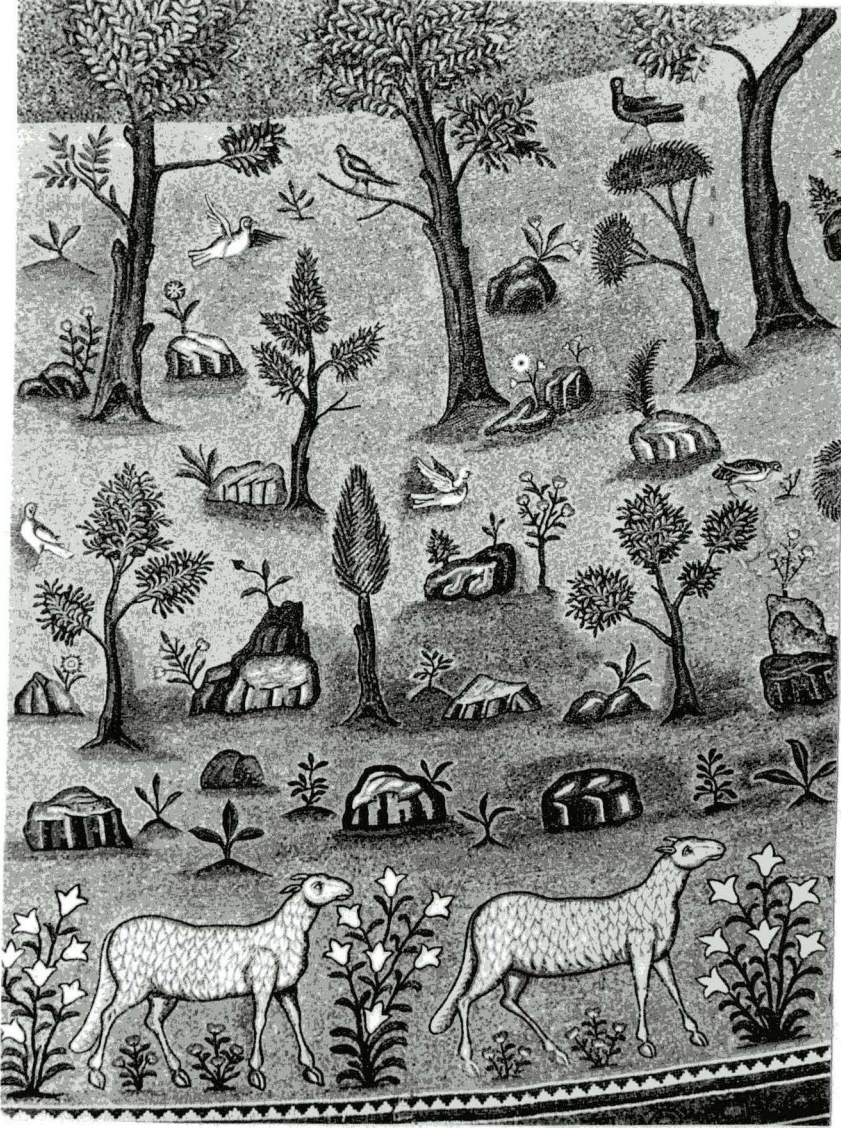


Fig. 11. Detail of the apse mosaic in the Basilica of Saint Apollinarius at Classe. Note the detailed depiction of the renewed creation. Cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso F and *Apocalypsis Joannis* 21:5-6.

### Encomia of the Early Byzantine Period and Menander Rhetor

During the early Byzantine period, encomiastic literature was popular primarily for two reasons. First, an encomium could help promote its author's station in the highly bureaucratic Byzantine government. A well-written panegyric speech or poem was an indication of the author's education<sup>52</sup> and of his willingness to serve the recipient's needs. Second, encomiastic speeches and poems became for both Christians and pagans the treasuries of a Hellenistic culture<sup>53</sup> which was threatened both by Christian opposition (as shown openly by Romanus the Melodist)<sup>54</sup> and by barbarian invasions.<sup>55</sup> Despite its popularity, encomiastic literature in late Antiquity became standardized. Perhaps it was the mundane motivation for much of it, or the development of new attitudes toward secular administrators—whatever reasons had led to the stagnation, by the early Byzantine period

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<sup>52</sup>"Public orators of the late empire sought to demonstrate in all their works their grasp of classical literature, the canonized *biblia* which formed the staple of education. They and their teachers therefore hunted assiduously in the classics. If they needed a lofty, religious tone for a great ceremonial, Plato was the obvious model. For a marriage, one turned first to Sappho. Homer, traditionally the first inventor of rhetoric, offered motifs for all sorts of occasions." D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, eds., *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), xii. Encomia were often presented orally at a banquet or festival; thus the encomiast, if not a professional orator, became temporarily a "public orator."

<sup>53</sup>"The educational system taught men not only to venerate the classical authors but to regard them as models to be imitated, and a contemporary poet or author was the more highly esteemed the closer he approximated to the ancients. No higher praise could be given to a Latin poet than to say that he equaled or even surpassed Virgil, or to a Greek orator than to declare him a modern Demosthenes: and such praises were to be taken in the literal sense that their objects reproduced the diction and style of their models." A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602, A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Norman, Oklahoma, 1964), 1007.

<sup>54</sup>*On Pentecost* (Matons 49 = Maas-Trypanis 33), strophe 17. see J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977), 184-85. See also Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 1005-07.

<sup>55</sup>Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964), 611ff., 656-57, 1027ff.

the form of secular encomium had become set and the phrases conventional.<sup>56</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that Russell and Wilson refer to this genre as "this very banal and conventionalized branch of literature."<sup>57</sup>

Because much of this literature from the early Byzantine period was not very creative, was composed by poets otherwise anonymous, and was intended for specific occasions, very few Greek encomia from this period have survived. Aside from a small number of poems preserved only on fragmentary papyri, Viljamaa included in his study of early Byzantine Greek encomia the prefaces by Agathias to his *Cycle*, George the Grammarian's anacreontic poems, John of Gaza's anacreontic poems and *Ecphrasis*,<sup>58</sup> Paul the Silentiary's *Description of the Church of St. Sophia* and *Description of the Ambon*, and three large encomiastic epigrams (*Anth.Gr.* 15.9 [Cyrus], 9.210, 9.656).<sup>59</sup> Viljamaa found that these surviving encomiastic poems were remarkably similar in the topics which they covered and in the way that they covered them (what he called the "disposition of themes"). They were also very similar in their phraseology and literary allusions.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Hagiographic encomia, because of the influence of different traditions, a different ethos, and different objectives, need to be considered as a different genre.

<sup>57</sup>Russell-Wilson, xviii.

<sup>58</sup>"The work of John of Gaza has its place in the history of Greek poetry because it is the first known ecphrasis to describe allegorical representations [the allegorical mural painting in the winter baths of Gaza]." C. Trypanis, *Greek Poetry, From Homer to Seferis* (Chicago, 1981), 402. Cf. R. McCail, "The Erotic and Ascetic Poetry of Agathias Scholasticus," *Byzantion* 41 (1971): 244-45.

<sup>59</sup>For the complete list, see Viljamaa, 34-35.

<sup>60</sup>Speaking of the poetic encomia on the papyri, Viljamaa summarized his findings (p. 3): "their language, content and form are conventionally phrased, and the fragments bear many resemblances to one another."

Another important observation which Viljamaa made was that these encomia closely follow the instructions of Menander Rhetor. Two partial treatises from Menander survive, and these reveal not only that his handbook was a formulation of encomiastic literature as it appeared in the early fourth century (when the treatises were probably composed) and probably before,<sup>61</sup> but also that they served as a guide for future generations of encomia, both prosaic and poetic. Menander's popularity in Egypt can perhaps be gauged by the papyrus SB XII 11084 from fifth- or sixth-century Hermopolis. This papyrus contains a letter sent to a certain Theognostos by his brother Victor, who asks urgently for the return of the treatises by Menander on encomia (Μενάνδρου τέχνην ἐν τάχι . . . καὶ μεθόδους καὶ ἐγκώμια ἐν τάχ[ει]).<sup>62</sup> Menander's treatises were not the only handbook on writing encomia; but they were certainly the most popular during the Byzantine period.<sup>63</sup> McCail observed such close correspondences between—on the one hand—Menander's guidelines and examples and—on the other hand—the hexameter encomium P.Gr.Vindob. 29788C, that McCail

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<sup>61</sup>Russell-Wilson note: "Now both the elements of the encomium scheme (though not its precise form) and much of the mechanism are of proved antiquity; the presence of the Scheme of Four Virtues in Plato, and perhaps earlier, is significant. . . . Hence Theocritus 17 displays the correspondences with Menander which Cairns expounds (100 ff.), and which he says indicate 'the general reliability of Menander as a witness for the state of the generic patterns many centuries before he lived.'" Russell-Wilson believe that some of the correspondences between Menander Rhetor and Hellenistic poetry may "be explained as a consequence of early rhetorical teaching" (pp. xxxii-xxxiii).

<sup>62</sup>See the text, translation (German), bibliography, and discussion in J. Hengstl, ed., *Griechischen Papyri aus Ägypten als Zeugnisse des öffentlichen und privaten Lebens* (Munich, 1978), 227-29; cf. E. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (Oxford, 1971), 114.

<sup>63</sup>"There is no doubt that he was known in Byzantine times as the best authority on the topics with which they deal"; Russell-Wilson, xi. "The 'authority' on epideictic in Byzantine times was known to be Menander, and it looks as if both the treatises we possess were attributed to him"; *ibid.*, xxxvi. See also Viljamaa, 14.

suggested several restorations based upon Menander.<sup>64</sup> Viljamaa (p. 22) notes that: "Julian's and Procopius' speeches observe the rules of the *encomium* of the emperor so closely that one could imagine them holding Menander's tract before their eyes when composing their speeches."<sup>65</sup>

The close correspondences between Menander and the poetic encomia of the end of the fifth and the sixth centuries, and the difficulties involved in working with the surviving encomia have guided me to use in this chapter the two remaining treatises of Menander as indications of the form and phraseology of the encomiastic tradition at the time of Dioscorus. There is no doubt that Dioscorus was offering variations to the traditional form and content of the genre. Viljamaa, although including Dioscorus in his study of early Byzantine encomia, points out that with respect to meter, disposition of themes, and iambic prologues, the poems of Dioscorus "require separate evaluation."<sup>66</sup> They clearly belong to the tradition of secular encomia, yet their variations distinguish them. The following section will show how these variations attach the poems to another tradition, that of Christian mysticism.

### **Evidence of a Mystical Level of Meaning**

The following evidence will not focus on any particular encomium,

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<sup>64</sup>McCail, "Hexameter Encomium," 40 and passim.

<sup>65</sup>Most of the material in the two surviving treatises focuses on the writing of prose encomia; yet the two methods—prose and poetic—were not far apart. Not only did Menander give examples which were taken from poetry, but often the same writers composed both prose and poetic encomia and used many of the same techniques in both. The proximity can be seen between Priscian's poetic and Procopius of Gaza's prose encomium; Viljamaa (p. 22) noted that: "Priscian's *Laudes Anastasii* is an actual encomium which can be compared, passage by passage, with Procopius of Gaza's prosaic panegyric to Anastasius."

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 86, 124, 69.

but rather on the corpus of encomia found in Dioscorus' archive and composed and written by him. His corpus of encomia is homogeneous in style, language, and tone. In fact, Dioscorus repeats remarkably often his own verses and half verses. This practice has helped to restore certain poems where the papyri were worn, faded, or broken. The full significance of his repetitions has not been studied; yet it and the homogeneity of the Dioscorian encomia justify—for the purposes of this study—examining the poetry as a whole rather than examining isolated poems.

The elements below are presented in the order of their significance for understanding the mystical level, the more significant first. In order to avoid repetitiveness, only a few exemplary phrases will be examined in detail.

### *The Cicada*

The image of the cicada in encomia H.5 and H.7 is a good example of an encomiastic convention modified by Dioscorus to point to a mystical level of meaning.<sup>67</sup> The metaphor at H.5.15-16 is the briefer of the two:

τέττιξ τύτθ[ος ἔ]ην, καὶ ὄρ[γαν]όν ἐστι μ[ελί]σσης·

καὶ θεὸν αὐτ[ὸν] ἄειδε πα[νάφ]θιτον α[ . . . . . ]την.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>See also the cicada imagery in Dioscorus' verse letter, *P.Berol.* 13894, verses 16-17: ἐστὶν δὲ μικρὸν ὄρνεον τῷ σώμ[α]τι / τέττιξ, ἀνύμνει τὸν θεὸν τὸν φέρ[τ]ερον. MacCoull argued that it was addressed by Dioscorus to his teacher John Philoponus, a Christian Neoplatonist; "Dioscorus of Aphrodito and John Philoponus," *Studia Patristica* 18 (Kalamazoo, 1987): 164ff. Although her argument is attractive and is supported by Neoplatonic elements throughout his oeuvre, MacCoull's identification of the addressee of this letter (and of Dioscorus's teacher) remains speculative.

<sup>68</sup>Note the alliteration of τ, θ, and δ in τέττιξ τύτθος and in the entire verse 16; and note the trochaic rhythm created by τέττιξ τύτθος ἔην καὶ and καὶ θεὸν αὐτὸν. Both these techniques attempt to recreate onomatopoeically the sound which the insect makes. Because the song of the cicada seems to be unceasing, the cicada can be thought to be singing that God Himself is imperishable (πα[νάφ]θιτον as predicate adjective). The phrase πανάφθιτον ἦμαρ was used by Antipater Sidonius (ii B.C.) in his epigram about Sappho to denote eternity: πῶς



Menander Rhetor in his discussion of the *lalia* (ἡ λαλιά an informal prose encomium) suggested that the speaker ἀπολογήσασθαι καὶ διαθεῖναι τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐπὶ παρόδου, ἣν μέλλει ποιεῖσθαι, πολλάκις μὲν ἠθικῶς μετριάζοντα, ὅτι τέττιξ μιμεῖται τοὺς ψῆδικούς τῶν ὀρνίθων (391.11-14).<sup>69</sup>

Dioscorus seems to have used the cicada image for the purpose Menander suggested: to create an appearance of modesty (μετριάζοντα) and thereby win the favor of the audience (διαθεῖναι τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐπὶ παρόδου).<sup>70</sup> This purpose is apparent in Dioscorus' adjective τύτθ[ος]; the image of *smallness* is intensified by the contrasting image of θεὸν αὐτ[ὸν], which connotes largeness.

Dioscorus also made his cicada correspond to the Menandrian cicada by specifying the insect's musicality.<sup>71</sup> That the insect was melodious was not a literary concept invented by Menander Rhetor or Hellenistic encomiasts; it had a long poetic tradition. The insect's melodiousness was praised already by Homer, when he called king Priam and the elders upon the walls ἀγορηταὶ ἐσθλοὶ and compared them to the cicadas: οἳ τε καθ' ὕλην / δενδρέῳ ἐφεζόμενοι ὅπα λειριόεσσαν ἰεῖσι (*Il.* 3.151-52). Hesiod mentioned

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οὐκ ἐκλώσασθε πανάφθιτον ἡμᾶρ ἀοιδῶ / ἄφθιτα μῆσαμένα δῶρ' Ἑλικωνιάδων; (*Anth.Gr.* 7.14.7-8)

<sup>69</sup>I have adopted the reading τέττιξ, which was preferred by Russell and Wilson; they saw τοὺς ψῆδικούς τῶν ὀρνίθων in apposition to a plural τέττιγας (the variant reading) as not satisfying the sense of ἀπολογία. "On the other hand, it would meet the case perfectly well if he represented himself as a small, but sweet-voiced creature . . . inferior to 'singing birds.'" For this discussion and an outline of the history of the cicada image, see Russell-Wilson, 299.

<sup>70</sup>"Dioscorus very likely derived the figure most immediately from Menander Rhetor—a device of modesty"; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 94 note 62. See also Viljamaa, 124 and note 27.

<sup>71</sup>Musicality and modesty were not the only attributes to which writers pointed; for *silence*, see Zenobius 1.51; *concupiscence*, see Ambrose *Ep.* 28.5. See the discussion below.

the melodiousness of the cicadas as they sit in the trees in summer (*Works and Days* 582ff.). Outside of poetry, Plato in one of his dialogues (*Phaedrus* 259ff.) called attention to their melodiousness; as they sang from the trees in the midday heat, the character Socrates created a myth around their musicality. When one considers this tradition of musicality, it is not surprising that in lyric poetry the cicada was compared to the poet himself. This association was begun already by Archilochus;<sup>72</sup> and Callimachus continued this association in his *Aetia* (1.29-36):

[“τεττίγων ἐνὶ τοῖς γὰρ αἰείδομεν οἱ λιγὺν ἦχον

[ . . . . θ]όρυβον δ’ οὐκ ἐφίλησαν ὄνων.”

θηρὶ μὲν οὐατόεντι πανεῖκελον ὀγκήσαιτο

[ἄλλος, ἐγ]ὼ δ’ εἶην οὐλαχὺς, ὁ περόεις,

ἅ πάντως, ἵνα γῆρας ἵνα δρόσον ἦν μὲν αἰείδω

[προίκιο]ν ἐκ δίης ἡέρος εἶδαρ ἔδων,

αὐθι τὸ δ’ ἐκδύοιμε, τό μοι βάρος ὅσσον ἔπεστι

τριγλώχιν ὀλοῶ νῆσος ἐπ’ Ἐγκελάδῳ.<sup>73</sup>

Considering the poetic tradition and the interpretation by Russell-Wilson of

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<sup>72</sup>For Archilochus, see fr. 223 (West). For the cicada as metaphor of the poet, see also: MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 94 comment to verse 15; C. A. Trypanis, ed., *Callimachus: Aetia, Iambi, Hecale and Other Fragments*, in the Loeb series (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 8-9 note a. For bibliographies about the cicada in ancient literature see: MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphroditos and John Philoponus," 168 note 19b; Rory B. Egan, "Jerome's Cicada Metaphor (*Ep.*22.18)," *CW* 77 (1984): 175 note 2.

<sup>73</sup>When Callimachus says that the cicada lives on divine air and dew-drops, he is relying upon a popular misconception which was suggested already by Socrates' myth. According to Plato's account, when the Muses and song first made their appearance in the world—Socrates tells Phaedrus—some men were so enthralled that they sang without pausing for food and drink; nor did they notice the approach of death. ἐξ ὧν τό τεττίγων γένος μετ’ ἐκεῖνο φύεται, γέρας τοῦτο παρὰ Μουσῶν λαβόν, μηδὲν τροφῆς δεῖσθαι γενόμενον, ἀλλ’ ἄσιτόν τε καὶ ἀποτον εὐθύς ἄδειν, ἕως ἂν τελευτήσῃ, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἔλθον παρὰ Μούσας ἀπαγγέλλειν τίς τίνα αὐτῶν τιμᾶ τῶν ἐνθάδε (*Phaedrus* 259.c 2-6).

the image in Menander Rhetor, it is probable that the cicada in H.5.15-16 is a metaphor for the poet Dioscorus. Yet because of the lacunae in the text, this cannot be established with certainty. In the metaphor's reappearance in H.7.5-7, however, the poet makes clear that he is associating himself with the cicada:

τοῖον ἔπος κατέλεξον ἕως παρεμύθετο θυμός  
 ὄ[τ]τι τέττιγξ πολύυμνος ἔχει δέμας ὄπλ[ - - - ]  
 νυκταδίη μελεδῶνι θεὸν κατ' ὄρεσφι λιγαί[ν]ει.  
 κλυτὸς εὐκλείης βασιλεὺς θεὸ[ς ὕμ]νον ἀκούει. (H.7.4-7)

The same traditional quality of melodiousness is also evident.

Here and in poem H.5, however, the cicada is singing about God. This elaboration of the image is not Menandrian; and in the surviving Greek (and Latin) pagan poetry, there may not be any direct parallel.<sup>74</sup> In Christian poetry, however, the association between the cicada's song and God had an early origin. Paul Antin, in a survey of the cicada in Christian literature, observed that as early as Clement of Alexandria, the cicada was a symbol of the Christian singing in a new mode "qui porte le nom de Dieu."<sup>75</sup> Synesius, for example, in a Neoplatonic Christian hymn about the

<sup>74</sup>In *Anacreontea* 34, as elsewhere, the cicada is loved by the Muses and Phoebus (verses 12-13); but the cicada does not sing about them.

<sup>75</sup>Cited by Antin as from "Protrept. 1 et 2, trad. des Sources chrét." He also refers the reader to "S. Grégoire de Nazianze, Ep. 175. P.G. XXXVII." Paul Antin, *Recueil sur saint Jérôme*, vol. 45 of *Latomus* (Bruxelles, 1968), 283-90. Antin's remark is based upon Clement's account of the festival at Delphi in *Protrepticus* 1.1.2-3 (and the bibliographical note by Claude Mondésert, ed., *Clément d'Alexandrie: Le Protreptique*, Sources chrétiennes [Paris, 1949], 53-54). Eunomus the Locrian was playing the cithara and singing about the death of the Pythian serpent. When one of his strings snapped, one of the cicadas who had been accompanying the musician put himself in place of the string so that Eunomus might continue singing. The event was cast in a bronze statue at Delphi. Clement's response to this legend was that: Αἶδει δέ γε ὁ Εὐνόμος ὁ ἐμὸς οὐ τὸν Τερπάνδρου νόμον οὐδὲ τὸν Κηπίωνος, οὐδὲ μὴν Φρύγιον ἢ Λύδιον ἢ Δώριον, ἀλλὰ τῆς καινῆς ἀρμονίας τὸν αἶδιον νόμον, τὸν φερώνυμον τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν, τὸ Λευιτικόν, « νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθες ἀπάντων » (*Prot.*

soul's striving for God, tells himself: Κλύε καὶ τέττιγος ᾠδὴν / δρόσον ὀρθρίαν πiónτος (9[1].45-46).

What is most striking, however, in Dioscorus' use of the image in H.7, and what seems to be without parallel in any extant Greek or Latin literature before Dioscorus, is that the cicada is singing not in a tree but at night from a mountain. Paul Antin noted only one appearance of the cicada at night—before Dioscorus—and that is in a letter by St. Jerome (*Ad Eustochium*, 22.18): "Esto cicada noctium. Lava per singulas noctes lectum tuum, in lacrimis stratum tuum riga." Rory Egan, in his interpretation of this same passage, concluded that St. Jerome was *not* implying that the cicada sings at night:

In Mediterranean countries these insects infest trees from which they draw their sustenance in the form of phloem and xylem. Excess juices ooze out from the holes which they puncture in the plants while the insects themselves ingest great quantities of the sap which they almost immediately excrete in the form of a sweet, viscous substance known as 'honey-dew.' This activity of the cicada continues at a prolific level, not only during the day as the insect sings, but also during the night when it is silent. One result of it all is that the leaves and branches of the trees as well as the ground and anything else underlying the trees can be covered with the liquid. It is surely this phenomenon which accounts for the widespread notion that cicadas feed on dew. But more to the point here, it is the same phenomenon that inspired Jerome's unusual metaphor in which he compares Eustochium to the cicada which bedews its roost at night.<sup>76</sup>

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1.2.4). Clement specified that his Eunomus was playing in a new mode τὸν φερόνυμον τοῦ θεοῦ. It is not specified that the cicada replaced the string of Clement's musician, but it is understood from the context. Clement assured his readers that the cicadas, even at Delphi in the Classical period, were singing not about Apollo and the dragon, but about the one true God: Ἦιδον δὲ ἄρα οὐ τῷ δράκοντι τῷ νεκρῷ, τῷ Πυθικῷ, ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ τῷ πανσόφῳ αὐτόνομον ᾠδῆν, τῶν Εὐνόμου βελτίονα νόμων (*Prot.* 1.1.2; cf. the comment by Mondésert, p. 53).

<sup>76</sup>Egan, 175-76.

The interpretation by Egan neatly solves the Jerome ambiguity; but it does not help solve the image in Dioscorus, where—if the reading is accurate—the cicada not only sings to God at night, but is singing on a mountain top: *νυκταδίη μελεδῶνι θεὸν κατ' ὄρεσφι λιγαί[ν]ει.*<sup>77</sup>

The mystical treatises by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Gregory of Nyssa may help interpret the imagery. Both these authors present darkness (and night) and the mountain as symbols of the mystic ecstasy. Of the two images, the mountain is the easier symbol to understand; it represents the difficult climb toward spiritual perfection and enlightenment. Walther Völker observed: "Beide [Gregor und Pseudo-Dionysius] sehen im Sinai das ὄρος τῆς θεογνωσίας, setzen an den Anfang des Aufstieges die ethische Reinigung, betonen das unermüdliche

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<sup>77</sup>In the papyri, ὄρος usually referred to the *desert mountains*; but it was also used for the *desert*; and quite often—even in the documents of Dioscorus—ὄρος meant a *monastery* in the desert. See Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, s.v. ὄρος; vol. 3, section 21 ("Christlicher Kultus"), s.v. ὄρος.

MacCoull (*Dioscorus*, 104) translates the verse: "Like the songful cicada who has a chitinous [i.e., bony] body and sings in his nightly care even to the ears of God." She seems to have replaced the mountain imagery with the image of *ears*. (ὄρεσφι is the Epic genitive and dative, singular and plural of ὄρος.) MacCoull's only comment is (p. 104 comment to verses 5-6): "Again the Christianized image of the pastoral cicada, combining Menander Rhetor's device of modesty with a Callimachean or Anacreontic *topos* while giving the whole a Christian twist: θεόν as in *P.Berol.* 13894.18." For another questionable translation by MacCoull, see M. Dickie, "Dioscorus and the Impotence of Envy" *BASP* 30 (forthcoming); see also E. Wipszycka, review of *Dioscorus of Aphrodito. His Work and His World*, by L. MacCoull, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 48 (May-June, 1991): 529-36.

Bell and Crum's discussion of this verse mentions only the uncommon use of μελεδῶν; H. Bell and W. Crum, "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," *Aegyptus* 6 (Milan, 1925): 179.

There is also the possibility that κατ' ὄρεσφι qualifies θεόν and not the cicada. Such an interpretation, however, does not solve the problem of the cicada singing in his nightly care.

Aufwärtsstreben und stellen ans Ende den Gang ins Dunkel."<sup>78</sup> In addition to Moses' climb up Sinai, the vision which was given to Peter, James, and John—interpreted by Pseudo-Dionysius as a mystic ecstasy—took place on top of a mountain, traditionally Mount Tabor (Mt. 17:1-8).

The mystic significance of the image *night* is more difficult to understand because it is paradoxical. Because the motif of light is pervasive in his writings, Pseudo-Dionysius is considered "ein beredter Anwalt einer Mystik des Lichtes. Schildert er die göttliche Vollkommenheit, so beginnt er mit dem Satze: ἡ θεία μακαριότης . . . πλήρης δὲ φωτὸς αἰδίου (CH 19.3-5)."<sup>79</sup> He described the mystical experience as πρὸς τὸ ὑπέρθρον φῶς ἔνωσις (DN 117.1). Yet in three discussions of Moses' climb up the mountain, Pseudo-Dionysius developed a theory of the divine night, the θεία νύξ.<sup>80</sup> This theory was analyzed by H. C. Puech, who arrived at the following conclusions.<sup>81</sup> The divine darkness is a complex symbol. It can stand for ἄγνοια and have negative connotations, in as much as God is the φῶς νοητόν which wants to drive all πλάνη from the soul of the devout. This would correspond to Gregory of Nazianzus' use of the image: εἰ γὰρ σκότος ἡ ἄγνοια καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία, φῶς ἂν εἴη ἡ γνῶσις (Or. 30.20; cf. Or. 32.15). It can also signify a protective barrier around τὰ τῆς θεολογίας μυστήρια, relating to God's impenetrable mystery. In other places, however, the Dionysian

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<sup>78</sup>W. Völker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden, 1958), 215.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>80</sup>*MTh*, Ep. 1, and Ep. 5.

<sup>81</sup>"La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique," *Études carmélitaines* 23 (Paris, 1938): 33-53.

darkness seems to be identical with the light; it only seems like darkness because of man's limited power of spiritual vision.<sup>82</sup> Though similar to the symbol for the ignorance of sin, in the context of the mystic ecstasy darkness and night represent a more perfect vision of God's mysterious essence. This same paradoxical interplay of light and dark is found in Gregory of Nyssa. Völker observed throughout Gregory's writings (as throughout Pseudo-Dionysius' writings) a *Mystik des Lichtes*: "Den Berg der Seligpreisungen kann er nicht besser charakterisieren als mit der Wendung: τὸ πνευματικὸν ὄρος τῆς ὑψηλῆς θεωρίας . . . ἀπανταχόθεν . . . τῆ τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ φωτὸς ἀκτῖνι περιλαμπόμενον (*Beat.* 1.1, M.1193B)."<sup>83</sup> Yet Gregory of Nyssa seems to have been the first to introduce a theory of the Divine Night. According to Jean Daniélou, Gregory saw in the experience of darkness "la forme la plus élevée de la contemplation." Daniélou concludes: "C'est l'originalité de Grégoire d'avoir exprimé ce caractère [la ténèbre] de l'expérience mystique à ses plus hauts degrés."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Puech, 36-39. Völker explained the symbol as follows: "Das Dunkel ist mit Gottes überhellem Licht identisch, es wirkt nur für die menschliche Kurzsichtigkeit als solches, ist es an sich aber nicht. Bei der Auslegung der Sinai-Besteigung geht Moses jedoch in das Dunkel hinein, das Gottes Wesen verhüllt, ohne daß über das Verhältnis von Licht und Finsternis reflektiert würde. Hier gehört es also zur göttlichen Sphäre; in beiden Fällen wird Gottes Erhabenheit gewahrt" (Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 211-12, and cf. 212 note 1).

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 210-11.

<sup>84</sup>J. Daniélou, "Mystique de la Ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, ed. M. Viller, II (Paris, 1953): 1873. Völker observed: "Im allgemeinen äußert sich Gregor über das Geheimnis der 'dunklen Nacht der Seele' sehr zurückhaltend, nur in der elften Homilie zum Hohenliede hat er den Schlier etwas gelüftet: ὑπὸ τῆς θείας νυκτὸς περιέχεται, καθ' ἣν ὁ νομφίος παραγίνεται μὲν, οὐ φαίνεται δὲ . . . , ἀλλ' αἴσθησιν μὲν τινα δίδωσι τῆ ψυχῇ τῆς παρουσίας, ἐκφεύγει δὲ τὴν ἐναργῆ κατανόησιν (*Hom.* 11 in *Cant.* 5.2, M.1001B). Die Seele, die alles Äußere verläßt, die leer von allen Vorstellungen ist, sieht sich dem unermesslichen Ozean Gottes gegenüber, ist vom Abgrund verschlungen, vom Dunkel der göttlichen Unbegreiflichkeit umfungen. [Cf. H.5.43-44, 6.15, 9.10-11 and the discussion below.] Aber so gewiß sie Gottes Wesen nicht schauen kann, so gewiß hat sie doch ein ahnendes Gefühl von der göttlichen Gegenwart, vom geheimen Berührtwerden, was eine

The suggestion of a mystic significance to the images of *mountain* and *night* in Dioscorus becomes more compelling when one considers that Dioscorus, by showing the cicada out of its natural habitat and habits, was emphasizing the poet's ἔκστασις. It was shown above that the cicada in poetry was often associated with the poet, and this is probably the case in Dioscorus' poems. The belief that poets were in an elevated state of consciousness—an *ecstasy*—is certainly as old as Homer; and the belief probably goes back into the pre-literate Greek society.<sup>85</sup> The concept of the divinely inspired poet was emphasized by late Neoplatonists.<sup>86</sup> Proclus, in his sixth essay in the commentary *In Platonis Rem Publicam*, explicated the nature of the poet (*In Rep.* 1.177.7-196.3) and found three levels of poetry corresponding to the three levels of life possible for the soul. Although all three levels of poetry can be found in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the highest level is most characteristic of Homer.<sup>87</sup> The lowest level of poetry corresponds to the lowest life of the soul; this kind of poetry, according to Lambertson's paraphrase, has "the properties of amplifying the emotions to

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höhere Gnaden-gabe is als die Schau im Spiegel der Seele oder gar in den Werken der Schöpfung. Deshalb spricht Gregor von einem hellen, einem leuchtenden Dunkel (ἐν τῷ λαμπρῷ γνόφῳ)." Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 207-08.

<sup>85</sup>For a study of divinely inspired poets in illiterate societies, see N. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy* (Cambridge, 1952).

<sup>86</sup>Proclus (c. A.D. 410 - 485) is our best surviving source for late Neoplatonic attitudes. For Proclus' own sources, see A. Friedl, *Homer-Interpretationen des Neuplatonikers Proklos* (Inaugural diss., Würzburg, 1932), 59-65. It is important for us to keep in mind that Dioscorus was possibly a pupil of John Philoponus, himself a pupil of Ammonius. Both these teachers were influenced, although not agreeing in all particulars, by the Athenian school of Proclus. See L. Westerink, ed., *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962), x-xiii; MacCoull, "Dioscorus of Aphroditos and John Philoponus."

<sup>87</sup>A. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen, 1980), 163.



huge proportions, of shocking the audience and manipulating the dispositions of their souls, and of projecting a false image of reality (*In Rep.* 1.179.15-32)."<sup>88</sup> The creators of this kind of poetry are dependent upon sense-perception or imagination. The middle level of poetry corresponds to the intermediate life of the soul, where the soul sets νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη as the first principles of its activity. The poetry that belongs to this level is γινώσκουσα μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν ὄντων καὶ τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἔργων τε καὶ λόγων ὑπάρχουσα φιλοθεάμων (*In Rep.* 1.179.6-8). It is didactic poetry; and Anne Sheppard suggested that the verses of Theognis and perhaps of the Presocratic philosophers fell under this category.<sup>89</sup> The highest level of poetry, according to Sheppard's paraphrase (p. 163), corresponds "to the highest of three types of life, that in which the 'one in the soul' is united with the gods. Inspired poetry conveys truths about the divine world in allegorical form."<sup>90</sup>

By introducing his description of the three kinds of poetry with a discussion of the three lives of the soul, Proclus showed that his emphasis was on the quality of experience of *the poet*. The poem was a sort of performance art, which communicated the poet's quality of experience

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<sup>88</sup>Lamberton, 192. See also Sheppard, 162-202.

<sup>89</sup>Sheppard, 163.

<sup>90</sup>When Proclus describes the ἀρίστην καὶ τελεωτάτην life of the soul, his influence on Pseudo-Dionysius' description of the mystic ecstasy is apparent. Proclus said: συνάπτεται τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ζῆ τὴν ἐκείνοις συγγενεστάτην καὶ δι' ὁμοιότητος ἄκρας ἠνωμένην ζωὴν, οὐχ ἑαυτῆς οὐσαν, ἀλλ' ἐκείνων, ὑπερδραμοῦσα μὲν τὸν ἑαυτῆς νοῦν, ἀνεγείρασα δὲ τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐνιαίας ὑποστάσεως καὶ συνάψασα τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον, τῷ ἐκεῖ φωτὶ τὸ ἑαυτῆς φῶς, τῷ ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν πᾶσαν καὶ ζωὴν ἐνὶ τὸ ἐνοειδέστατον τῆς οἰκείας οὐσίας τε καὶ ζωῆς. (*In Rep.* 1.177.16-23) For an analysis of the Pseudo-Dionysian description of the mystic ecstasy, see Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 174-217.

directly to the audience and made them participants in it.<sup>91</sup> The song of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.266-366) and the deception of Zeus (*Il.* 14.153-351)<sup>92</sup> showed that Homer αὐτὸν ἐνθουσιάζειν σαφῶς καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐκ τῶν Μουσῶν κατοκωχὴν τὰ τοιαῦτα διατιθέναι μυθολογήματα (*In. Rep.* 1.193.14-16).<sup>93</sup> Thus if Dioscorus' *mountain* and *night* images were pointing to a mystical level of meaning, he was in correspondence with late Neoplatonic mystical thinking when he showed a cicada, traditional symbol of the poet, in mystic ecstasy.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Lamberton, 189. The divinely ecstatic experience produced the following kind of poetry: ἡ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀκροτάτη καὶ πλήρης τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐνιδρύουσα τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς αἰτίοις τῶν ὄντων, κατὰ τινὰ τε ἔνωσιν ἄρρητον εἰς ταῦτὸν ἄγουσα τῷ πληροῦντι τὸ πληρούμενον, καὶ τὸ μὲν αὐλῶς καὶ ἀναφῶς ὑποστρωννύουσα πρὸς τὴν ἔλλαμψιν, τὸ δὲ προκαλουμένη πρὸς τὴν μετάδοσιν τοῦ φωτός, « μιγνυμένων δ' ὄχετῶν πυρὸς ἀφθίτου ἔργα τελοῦσα » κατὰ τὸ λόγιον. . . αὕτη δὴ οὖν μανία μὲν ἐστὶν σωφροσύνης κρείττων ὡς συνελόντι φάναι, κατ' αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ θεῖον μέτρον ἀφορίζεται. (*In Rep.* 1.178.11-26) The "conduits in touch with the imperishable fire" are symbols, parables, and allegories. The *Oracula Chaldaica*, from which Proclus took the above citation, are an example of this type of poetry. Homer's epics contain predominantly this type of poetry. See: *In Rep.* 1.195.13-196.13. Lamberton commented (p. 194): "Perhaps we should give him [Proclus] the benefit of the doubt and assume that he viewed the 'inspired' poetry of Homer as the most important and characteristic element . . . because he was basing his observation on the quality he perceived in Homer and not on a line count."

Yet echoing Origen's description of the allegorical level of Scripture, Proclus suggested that Homer's myths are appropriate only for those ready for instruction into higher realms of experience (*In Rep.* 1.76-77); their allegorical meaning is best reserved for the initiate (*In Rep.* 1.79.5-18). According to Sheppard's interpretation (p. 163), allegorical poetry "can be dangerous if not properly interpreted; but to those who understand it, it is instructive in the highest possible way."

<sup>92</sup>"The passages are taken to represent a reality far removed from their apparent meaning [*In Rep.* 1.193.26-194.11]. The *lack* of resemblance between the action described—the fiction—and the truth behind its 'screen' is accepted as a criterion of value" (Lamberton, 190).

<sup>93</sup>Proclus described Homer not only as ἐνθουσιάζων, and ἐν κατοκωχῇ, but also as ἀναβακχεύομενος (*In Rep.* 1.159.1).

<sup>94</sup>Lamberton (p. 194 note 121) compared the above description of Homer to Nonnus' description of himself: Ἄξιατέ μοι νάρθηκα, τινάξατε κύμβαλα, Μοῦσαι, / καὶ παλάμη δότε θύρσον ἀειδομένου Διονύσου (*Dionysiaca* 1.11-12). For a discussion of later mystic poets (esp. William Blake), see E. Underhill, *Mysticism*, rev. ed. (Strand, 1930), 234ff.

To summarize, in H.7 Dioscorus presented an image which was traditional in pagan poetry and encomia. His elaborations of the image, however, are startling and, on the literal level, absurd: cicadas do not sing hymns to God on mountains at night:

ὄ[τ]τι τέττιγξ πολύμνος ἔχει δέμας ὄπλ[ - - - ]  
 νυκταδὴ μελεδῶνι θεὸν κατ' ὄρεσφι λιγαί[ν]ει.  
 κλυτὸς εὐκλείης βασιλεὺς θεὸς[ς ὕμ]νον ἀκούει. (H.7.5-7)

While the cicada's hymn to God was already a traditional image in Christian literature, the other additions can only be explained by the fact that in Christian mystic literature, the mountain and the night were important symbols for the mystic ecstasy. The cicada was often used by lyric writers as a symbol for the poet;<sup>95</sup> Dioscorus, by showing his cicada in an abnormal and elevated (ecstatic) state, was in correspondence with the late Neoplatonic theory that some poets composed while in an elevated state of consciousness. What they composed were mystical allegories. Dioscorus was comparing himself to the cicada (cf. verses 4-5: τοῖον ἔπος κατέλεξον ἕως παρεμύθετο θυμός / ὄ[τ]τι τέττιγξ πολύμνος);<sup>96</sup> thus it seems possible that Dioscorus was suggesting that he as poet was in a mystic ecstasy and composing mystical allegory.

### *The Source of the Nile*

The literal ambiguities of the cicada image suggest that Dioscorus at

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<sup>95</sup>The literary cicada already had many traditional characteristics corresponding with the mystic. Cf. *Anacreontea* 34 .17-18: ἀπαθής, ἀναιμόσαρκε, / σχεδὸν εἰ θεοῖς ὅμοιος. Although Dihle interpreted this anacreontic as an allegory describing the Stoic sage, there also exist correspondences between this cicada and the mystic. A. Dihle, "The Poem on the Cicada," *HSPH* 71 (1967): 107-13. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this anacreontic.

<sup>96</sup>He also uses the same verb—λιγαίνειν—for himself and the cicada; see H.5.12.

verses H.7.5-7 was pointing to a mystical level of meaning.<sup>97</sup> This interpretation may help explain why Dioscorus said that his addressees were the source of the Nile.

The sources of the Nile were not a literary cliché to the same extent as the cicada; but, as pointed out by MacCoull, they were a popular topic in the schools of Alexandria. In poem H.13, Dioscorus wrote (verses 2-4):

Κόλλουθε, χθόνα πᾶσαν ἐπέδραμεν οὔνομα σεῖο.  
οὔνομα σῆς γενεῆς πανεπέδραμε πείρατα Νείλου,  
κυδαλίμων πατέρων ἀπὸ ρίζης ὀλβιστήρων.<sup>98</sup>

Concerning these verses, MacCoull comments: "The sources of the Nile, a conundrum in the ancient world, were discussed in the schools of sixth-century Alexandria; Olympiodorus *in Meteor*."<sup>99</sup> It is questionable whether

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<sup>97</sup> It was a fallacy of Neoplatonic literary criticism to conclude that anomalies on the literal level *prove* an allegorical level; irregularities may *suggest* that a deeper meaning has interfered with the superficial, but more evidence is necessary to prove the existence of an allegory. See Lamberton, 158-59.

<sup>98</sup>Note the parallelism between the end of verse 2 and the beginning of verse 3. Parallelism was a decorous feature of ancient Egyptian poetry; and it was a feature which distinguished Hebraic poetry from prose. The anastrophic parallelism here echoes Old Testament and Johannine usage rather than Egyptian; this is not surprising since Dioscorus' poetry shows a familiarity with the psalms—which are replete with parallelism—and their Homeric paraphrase, *Metaphrases in Psalmos* by Pseudo-Apollinarius. For parallelism in Egyptian poetry, see A. Erman, ed., *The Ancient Egyptians: A Sourcebook of their Writings* (New York, 1966), lx-lxii; for parallelism in Hebraic poetry, see L. Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics* (Rome, 1988), 48-63; J. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* (New Haven and London, 1981). Cf. the Gospel of Saint John 1:1-5. For Dioscorus' biblical sources, see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 61.

Note also that although Dioscorus' meter was quantitative and not tonic, the accents of both verses two and three form a dactylic hexameter line. Dioscorus did make considerable use of accent placement, but—as with most of his stylistic features—not with fixed regularity.

<sup>99</sup>*Dioscorus*, 98; she gives as a source: W. Stuve, ed., CAG XII.2 (Berlin, 1900), 105.25-28, 109.3-8, 132.14-15. For criticism of MacCoull's treatment of the opening verse of this poem, see Wipszycka, 529-36.

here the poet was referring to the *mouth*, to the *source*, or to the perimeters of the river in flood (which seems the preferable translation). MacCoull's interpretation of *source* ("The fame of your lineage has reached as far as the sources of the Nile") was probably derived from the Nile imagery at H.3.40-43 and H.5.25-26, where there may be a reference to the *source* of the Nile.<sup>100</sup> At H.3.40-43 Dioscorus wrote:

ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος, αἰὲ δὲ παροῦσαν ἀρωγὴν  
 ἀχράντου Τριάδος μον[ο]ειδ[έ]ος ἔ[λ]λαχε δῶρον.  
 ἐκ σέθεν ἡγητεΐρας ἀ[θ]έσφατον [έ]πλετο ὕδωρ,  
 Νεῖλος ἀρουραβά[τ]ης ἐπεθ[ύ]σατο δ' αὐλακι γαίης.

The poet narrates: "In the land of the All-Sovereign [i.e. God or Christ],<sup>101</sup> he received as an eternally present help, the gift of the pure, simple Trinity." Turning to speak directly to the addressee (apostrophe), the poet says: "From you the leader came the indescribable water, and the Nile flowing in (between?) the fields rushed in the channel of earth."<sup>102</sup> Similar imagery is

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<sup>100</sup>The preferable interpretation of H.3.42-43, as above, is that Dioscorus is referring to the flood waters and the addressee is equated with the river itself.

<sup>101</sup>Cf. H.5.4: ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος; see the discussion below.

<sup>102</sup>The translation of ἐπεθ[ύ]σατο preferred by LSJ, which discusses this verse (s.v. ἐπιθύω), is *rushed*. In addition, Dioscorus may be suggesting the image of *burning incense* (cf. LXX 3 Reg. 12:33), which would compliment the temple imagery discussed below. See MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 142: "The Nile that covers Egypt's fields, that is poured out as an offering in the furrows of the earth."

Compare this verse with Proclus' description of mystical allegory, which accomplishes the work of channels conveying imperishable fire: μινυμένων δ' ὄχετων πυρὸς ἀφθίτου ἔργα τελοῦσα (*In Rep.* 1.178.17-18). As usual, if Dioscorus used this passage as a source, he avoided verbal parallels; such avoidance of clearly recognizable verbal parallels was part of his attempt to create a *παραπέτασμα* to conceal his mystical level of meaning. In the correct poetic environment, the image was enough for the τέλειος to make the connection. See the introduction.

One must ask if there wasn't also some sexual imagery intended: ἐπεθ[ύ]σατο δ'

found in H.5.25-26:

ἐκ σέθεν ἡγητείας ἐπέδραμε πείρατα γαίης

Νεῖλος ἀρουροβάτης·

"From you the leader, the Nile flowing in (between?) the fields rushed to the ends of the earth." No matter if the images in these last two poems are attempting to depict the hidden source of the Nile, the Nile in flood, or both, the water is coming from the addressee (ἐκ σέθεν).

That the Nile river flowed out of the addressees John (H.3) and Callinicus (H.5) is an absurd image. It does make sense, however, on a mystical level. In the Gospel of Saint John, Christ described himself as a source of living water: Εἰ ἤδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι, Δός μοι πεῖν, σὺ ἂν ἤτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἅν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν (4:10). Christ also described his believers as containing springs of water which leaps into eternal life: ὃς δ' ἂν πῖν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὗ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὴ διψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώვიον (4:14). This same imagery is expanded by two biblical mystic visions, one seen by John (of the Apocalypsis Joannis) and the other seen by the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. In the former, an angel reveals to John the river of life flowing through the New Jerusalem: Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον, ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου.<sup>103</sup> ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκείθεν ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα . . . καὶ πᾶν

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αἶλακι Γαίης. Νεῖλος would then be equivalent to Oceanus, the river which surrounded the world and which (*Od.* 11.13ff.) separated the world of the living from the world of the dead. The sexual imagery corresponds with the mystical imagery suggested above (see the introduction for the allegorical interpretation by Prudentius of the impregnation of Sarah).

<sup>103</sup>The Lamb is a traditional symbol for Christ.

κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι (22:1-3).<sup>104</sup> The river does not flow directly out of Christ, but rather out of his and his father's throne (ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου); and it nourishes the fruitful banks, where grow the trees of life (ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκείθεν ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα). Earlier in the vision (21:22), John observed that there was no temple in the New Jerusalem, because God and Christ are the temple: ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἔστιν καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον. *For its sanctuary is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.*<sup>105</sup> In the Old Testament vision, the river of life does not flow out of Christ or his throne, but rather from under the Temple threshold. By the time the stream has traveled four thousand cubits from the Temple, it has swollen to an uncrossable river.<sup>106</sup> It continues flowing all the way to the sea, whose waters are made wholesome by it. The fish in it are as plentiful as in the Mediterranean (ὡς οἱ ἰχθύες τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς μεγάλης). And on its banks, the trees miraculously always bear fruit, because the water comes ἐκ τῶν

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<sup>104</sup>Cf. Dioscorus' verse (H.3.10, 5.54, etc.): οὐ γὰρ θεωρήσεις κακουργικὴν ἔτι. (Θεωρία is Pseudo-Dionysius' favorite term for the mystic vision.)

<sup>105</sup>In the Apocalypse, the recognition that the Lamb is the source of the water of life marks the spiritual stage immediately before mystical union with Christ. Charles Giblin observed: "The Lamb (*to arnion*) appears in 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3. . . . The sixth (22:1) and climactic seventh (22:3) instances speak of 'the (one) throne of God and of the Lamb' in such a way that the sixth points to the throne as the source of the water of life, and the seventh entails face-to-face worship of God." C. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, Minn., 1991), 204 note 148.

<sup>106</sup>Καὶ εἰσήγαγέ με ἐπὶ τὰ πρόθυρα τοῦ οἴκου [= ναοῦ], καὶ ἰδοὺ ὕδωρ ἐξεπορεύετο ὑποκάτωθεν τοῦ αἰθρίου κατ' ἀνατολάς, ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ οἴκου ἔβλεπεν κατ' ἀνατολάς, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ κατέβαινε ἀπὸ τοῦ κλίτους τοῦ δεξιοῦ ἀπὸ νότου ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον [cf. Dioscorus' term (H.3.43): ἐπεθ[ύ]σατο]. καὶ ἐξήγαγέ με κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν . . . καὶ διεμέτρησεν χιλίους ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ, καὶ διήλθεν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ὕδωρ ἀφέσεως· καὶ διεμέτρησεν χιλίους, καὶ διήλθεν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ὕδωρ ἕως τῶν μηρῶν· καὶ διεμέτρησεν χιλίους, καὶ διήλθεν ὕδωρ ἕως ὀσφύος· καὶ διεμέτρησεν χιλίους, καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο δελεῖν, ὅτι ἐξύβριζεν τὸ ὕδωρ ὡς ροῖζος χειμάρρου, ὃν οὐ διαβήσονται. (Ezk. 47:3-5)

ἀγίων.<sup>107</sup>

There are several significant correspondences between the image in Dioscorus' encomia and the images of the river of life in the mystic visions and in Christ's statement. The water of the Nile is long and deep; its banks are fertile; and it was considered the source of life for the Egyptians. So also in the Apocalypse and in Ezekiel, the river is long and deep, its banks are fertile, and it is the source of eternal life. The source of the Nile was mysterious. Dioscorus claimed that the river (or the flood water) flowed from John and from Callinicus. This corresponds to Christ's statement that the river of life flowed from him and his believers.<sup>108</sup> It is quite possible therefore that the ambiguous image in Dioscorus was meant to refer to a mystical level of meaning. This interpretation is supported by the term ἀ[θ]έσφατον; the water *cannot be described by words*.<sup>109</sup> That Dioscorus was suggesting a mystic vision is also made possible by the two verses which precede the image in the poem to John: "In the land of the All-Sovereign he received as an eternally present help, the gift of the pure, simple Trinity."<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἀναβήσεται ἐπὶ τοῦ χείλους αὐτοῦ ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν πᾶν ξύλον βρώσιμον, οὐ μὴ παλαιωθῆ ἔπ' αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ μὴ ἐκλίπη ὁ καρπὸς αὐτοῦ· τῆς καινότητος αὐτοῦ πρωτοβλήσει, διότι τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῶν ἐκ τῶν ἀγίων ταῦτα ἐκπορεύεται. (Ezk. 47:12).

<sup>108</sup>Cf. the Dioscorian metaphor for peace: πάντα γὰρ εἰρήνη θεόπνευστος ῥέει *For peace, divinely inspired, flows everywhere* (H.9.4).

<sup>109</sup>Literally: *Beyond even a god's power to express, unutterable; or not according to a god's utterance, awful*. Cf. LSJ, s.v. The adjective can also mean *vast* (Od. 11.61, 13.244, 20.211) or of *great beauty* (Hes. Op. 662; Emp. 134.4).

This calls to mind Pseudo-Dionysius' and Gregory of Nyssa's so-called "negative theology," which teaches that God cannot be comprehended or described. According to these two authors, the "negative theology" was an essential element of the mystic vision.

<sup>110</sup>μονοειδής is used at least twice in the encomia by Dioscorus (H.3.41, 6.8); it is used ten times by Pseudo-Dionysius to describe different aspects of God. See also L. MacCoull,



*To Measure the Sea*

When Dioscorus uses an image which expresses the impossibility of measuring the sea, he seems not to be following Menander's suggestion but to be alluding to a Christian patristic tradition. When Menander Rhetor gave instructions for writing a proem to the *basilikos logos* (ὁ βασιλικὸς λόγος the imperial oration), he advised that the speaker should mention the difficulty of the task.<sup>111</sup> It then appears as if Menander suggested a simile: ὡσπερ δὲ πελάγους ἀπείρου τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς μέτρον οὐκ ἔστι λαβεῖν.<sup>112</sup> The text, however, is probably corrupt and the simile a later addition. There are two important reasons which warrant a deletion here. Russell and Wilson suspect the image as non-Menandrian because "there is something inept about τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς especially if we recall the proverbial τῆς θαλάττης χόες (Pl. *Tht.* 173 D; Themist. *Or.* 7.97C; etc.), where the point concerns measuring the volume of the sea. Deletion should be seriously considered."<sup>113</sup> The simile is also suspect because Menander's emphasis was

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"μονοειδής in Dioscorus of Aphrodito: An Addendum," *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* 25 (1983): 61-64.

<sup>111</sup>One must take into consideration that in the encomia discussed in this section (H.5, H.6, H.9) Dioscorus on a literal level was not praising an emperor; from Heitsch's collection, only poem H.1 has been assigned by critics to an emperor, Justin II. Most of his other encomia have been labeled by Viljamaa (p. 134) as corresponding to *πρεσβευτικοὶ λόγοι*; these are speeches by an ambassador on behalf of a city in trouble (see Menander Rhetor 423.6-424.2). Many of the poems also contain features of the *ἐπιβατήριος λόγος*, which type includes encomia by a city to an arriving *archon* (Menander Rhetor 377.32-382.9); and other poems include features of the *προσφωνητικὸς λόγος*, an encomium of praise by an individual to an *archon* (Menander Rhetor 414.31-418.4). A feature which distinguishes Dioscorus' encomia is that they cannot easily be put into any category; individual poems combine characteristics of several kinds of encomia.

<sup>112</sup>Menander Rhetor 368.23-369.1.

<sup>113</sup>Russell-Wilson, 273 comment to 368.23ff.

not the *impossibility* of the task but the *difficulty*. He suggested that the speaker continue with a phrase such as: ὅμως δὲ οὐδὲν κωλύει καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐγχειρῆσαι πρὸς δύναμιν (369.12-13).

The image of measuring the sea occurred often in ancient literature, where it represented knowledge impossible to obtain. One early occurrence of the image can be found in Herodotus:<sup>114</sup>

οἶδα δ' ἐγὼ ψάμμου τ' ἀριθμὸν καὶ μέτρα θαλάσσης,  
καὶ κωφὸν συνίημι καὶ οὐ φωνεῦντος ἀκούω. (Herodotus 1.47.1)

This is the beginning of the oracular answer ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ by the Pythia to the messengers of Croesus. Paraphrases of the above response have been found in Plutarch, Porphyry, Origen, and Suidas, and mention has been made by Maximus Tyrius, Tertullian, and John Chrysostom. When Dioscorus, therefore, in three poems uses images related to measuring the sea, he is using a familiar literary image. When, however, he uses the images specifically as a metaphor to convey the idea that it is impossible to name the virtues of the addressees, he may be alluding to the image's use not by the Pythian oracle but by the Cappadocian Fathers. Dioscorus wrote:

εἴ τις δυνήσεται ἀριθμεῖν ἀστέρας  
ἢ τοῖς κυάθοις τῆς θαλάττης ρεύματα,  
ναὶ που πάντως καὶ γὰρ δυνήσεται μετρεῖν  
τὰς ἀρετὰς σοῦ, δέσποτα. . . .

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<sup>114</sup>H. W. Parke and D. E. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle*, vol. 2: *The Oracular Responses* (Oxford, 1956), 23-24.

ἡ γὰρ θάλαττα σῶν ἀρετῶν [πε]ριώσι[ος].<sup>115</sup>

(H.9.10-15; cf. H.5.43-46)

For verse H.9.13, poem H.5 has τὰς ἀ[ει]μ[νή]στ[ου]ς ἀρε[τὰς] σ[ο]υῶ, [δέσ]ποτ[α]. Poem H.6 contains a similar image; but the expression is brachylogical:

τομήεις γενόμην· πόθεν ἤλυθον ὕμνοπολεῦσαι  
 τοσσατὴν ἀρετὴν, ἅπερ ἀστέρες ἄκριτοι ἦσαν,  
 ἢδ' ἀλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο τὰ κύματα τ' ἔξονομῆναι; (verses 13-15)

"I have become bold. How is it that I came to create a hymn about such virtue—as the stars are countless—or to name the waves of the unplowable sea?" In these metaphors the poet is expressing the impossibility of counting, naming, and measuring the virtues of the addressee.<sup>116</sup> Compare Gregory of Nazianzus (d. c. 390):

Θαλάττης δὲ, εἰ μὲν μὴ τὸ μέγεθος εἶχον θαυμάζαιεν, ἐθαύμασα ἂν τὸ ἡμερον, καὶ πῶς ἴσταται λελυμένη τῶν ἰδίων ὄρων ἐντός· εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸ ἡμερον, πάντως τὸ μέγεθος. . . . Ἐιχουσί τι λέγειν οἱ φυσικοὶ, καὶ σοφοὶ τὰ μάταια, καὶ κυάθῳ μετροῦντες ὄντως τὴν θάλασσαν, τὰ τηλικαῦτα ταῖς ἑαυτῶν ἐπινοίαις; (*Oratio* 28, M.36.64 C)

Τὰ μάταια which are τηλικαῦτα ταῖς ἑαυτῶν [τῶν σοφῶν] ἐπινοίαις are like ladles of water in contrast to the truly unfathomable greatness and gentleness of the glory of God, symbolized by the sea. Gregory of Nyssa (d.

<sup>115</sup>Note the alliteration which connects the crucial ideas: ἀστέρας . . . ἀρετὰς; note also the alliteration of τ sounds in verse eleven: ἢ τοῖς κυάθοις τῆς θαλάττης ρέματα.

<sup>116</sup>For the biblical metaphors of countless stars and sand (used to describe Abraham's progeny), see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 119 comment to verse 10. A more thorough discussion is by J. Keenan, review of *Dioscorus of Aphrodito, His Work and His World*, by L. MacCoull, in *BASP* 25 (1988): 176-77.

394) used an image somewhat different (κοτύλη in place of κύαθος), but more precise at indicating the impossibility of naming God's virtues: πᾶς λόγος ὁ περίληψίν τινα καὶ ἐρμηνείαν τῆς ἀορίστου φύσεως διὰ τῆς ὀνοματικῆς σημασίας ἐπαγγελλόμενος ὁμοίος ἐστὶ τῷ διὰ τῆς ἰδίας παλάμης πᾶσαν ἐμπεριλαμβάνειν οἰομένῳ τὴν θάλασσαν. ὃ γάρ ἐστι χειρὸς κοτύλη πρὸς πέλαγος ὅλον, τοῦτο πᾶσα δύναμις λόγων πρὸς τὴν ἄφραστόν τε καὶ ἀπερίληπτον φύσιν (*Contra Eunomium* 3.5.55, Jaeger 180.9-10).<sup>117</sup> It is possible that Dioscorus is alluding to the metaphors in the writings of the two Gregories; and thereby he is suggesting that his addressees on a deeper level of meaning are somehow related to God.<sup>118</sup>

If Dioscorus on a recondite level of meaning is addressing saints and ultimately the presence of Christ in the saints (see the discussion below), then his expressions that it was impossible to count, measure, or name the virtues of the addressees, correspond to an essential premise in Christian mysticism. This premise is that the virtues of God (and Christ and the Holy Spirit) cannot be comprehended by the faculty of reason and thus cannot be described directly in words; Christ can, however, be experienced by the soul during a mystic ecstasy, and this information can be conveyed to others through symbols, parables, and allegories.<sup>119</sup> Völker observed that for Gregory of Nyssa, the way to prepare for the mystic experience is not through a naming of God's virtues, but through a realization that God's

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Basil, *Hexaëm. Hom.* 7.1, M.29.149A: ἢ ταῖς κοτύλαις πειρᾶσθαι τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς θαλάσσης ἀπομετρεῖν.

<sup>118</sup>Dioscorus' addressees are Callinicus (H.5) and perhaps Athanasius (H.6); the third addressee has not been determined.

<sup>119</sup>It is a matter of degrees rather than absolutes: Christ's essence can be more fully comprehended by the soul than by the faculty of reason or by the senses.

characteristics and virtues cannot be named:

Diese Erkenntnis hat man besonders beim Studium der Schrift zu beachten, die zwar von göttlichen Sinnen, Händen, Fingern, Armen rede, aber alles nur δι' αὐνίγματος ausspreche, menschlicher Schwachheit angepaßt (Eun. I 622, Jaeger 196, 25ff.). Hierauf gründet sich die Notwendigkeit der allegorischen Exegese, deren tragender Grund eine bestimmte Lehre vom Gott-Mensch-Verhältnis ist. So führt anscheinend auch das Studium der Namen nicht zum Ziele.<sup>120</sup>

The mystic should first negate the qualities which traditionally are not associated with God: God is not evil, not quick to anger, not selfish, not weak. The mystic then proceeds to negate epithets which traditionally are associated with God: God is not good, not patient, not loving, not strong. The object is consciously to realize that God in his essence is beyond sense-perception, and so beyond human words which are bound to time and space. What does bring the mystic closer to the goal—the mystical union<sup>121</sup>—is not the contemplation of what God is, but of what God is not; and this is what is referred to as a "negative theology." One of the best examples of the early Byzantine understanding of the negative theology is found in Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise *De mystica theologia*. Near the close of this treatise, the author praises God with the words: οὔτε ἀλήθεια ἔστιν οὔτε βασιλεία οὔτε σοφία, οὔτε ἐν οὔτε ἐνότης, οὔτε θεότης ἢ ἀγαθότης (*MTh* 149.7-9). Pseudo-Dionysius also discusses the impossibility of naming the virtues of God in *De divinis nominibus*, where He is ἀλογία καὶ ἀνοησία καὶ ἀνωνυμία (*DN* 109.14-15) and τῆς ὑπεραρρήτου καὶ ὑπεραγνώστου μονιμότητος (*DN* 126.9). Dioscorus in poems H.4 and H.6 almost certainly makes reference to this negative theology when he, combining his and

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<sup>120</sup>Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 39.

<sup>121</sup>For a general discussion of the mystical union, see my introduction.

Pseudo-Dionysius' favorite prefixes (παν- and ὑπερ- respectively), states his addressee's indescribable transcendence with the words: παντοίων ἐπέων πανυπέριτος ἔπλεο μῦθος (H.4B.9, H.6.17).<sup>122</sup> And the mystic consciousness of God's indescribability and immeasurability may be the basis of Dioscorus' use of the imagery of the uncountable stars, the unnameable waves, and the immeasurable sea.

There seems, however, to be a contradiction. The metaphors discussed above show clearly that Dioscorus thought his addressee's virtues were beyond counting, measuring, and naming. Yet Dioscorus does praise the addressee with words. This contradiction is related to the statement at H.7.1-4 (quoted below), where there is little doubt that Dioscorus is comparing himself to Homer, the μελοπο[ιὸς ἄ]ριστος.<sup>123</sup> This statement seems to follow Menander's suggestion that the encomiast should say that proper treatment of the subject requires poets better than the present speaker, such as Homer or Orpheus (Ὁμήρου τῆς μεγαλοφωνίας or Ὀρφέως τοῦ Καλλιόπης).<sup>124</sup> Dioscorus, however, had no doubts about his ability to write poems worthy of his addressees. He wrote (H.12A.2):

κάλλιστά σοι πρέπει, δέχο[υ], ὦ δέσποτα·  
 ὑμῶν τὰς ἀξίας λέγειν οὐ β[ά]σκανος,  
 ῥήτωρ ἄριστος εἰ μὴ εὐφυῆς πανύ.

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<sup>122</sup>The addressee of H.4 is Athanasius; the addressee of H.6 is undetermined.

<sup>123</sup>See MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 104 comment to verse 1.

<sup>124</sup>When Menander Rhetor suggests that the encomiast mention Homer and Orpheus (369.8-12), it seems to be with the intent that the encomiast contrast himself to their outstanding abilities. For mention of Calliope in the encomiastic poems of the early Byzantine period, see Viljamaa, 106.

When Dioscorus does use a metaphor which recalls Homer, he seems to be comparing his own talents to Homer's:

Εἰ μελοπο[ιὸς ἄ]ριστος ἐπ' εὐνομίησιν ἀοιδῆς  
 ἴστατο μητιῶν, γέρας ἠλίκον ὕμνοπολεύων  
 σῆς ἀρετῆς, παντάριστε, παναυγέος ἠδὲ τ' ἀρίστης,  
 τοῖον ἔπος κατέλεξον ἕως παρεμύθετο θυμός. (H.7.1-4)

Here, contrary to the suggestion by Menander, Dioscorus seems to express confidence about his ability to create τοῖον ἔπος.<sup>125</sup> This confidence poses two questions. First, if he was not following encomiastic usage, why then did Dioscorus compare himself to Homer? Second, on a symbolic level how can his assurance about creating a poem of praise worthy of his addressee relate to his assurance that the addressee is beyond verbal description?

Both these questions can find a solution in late Neoplatonic mystical thought. In the discussion of Homer and the Neoplatonic levels of poetry,<sup>126</sup> it was pointed out that Proclus and the late Neoplatonists thought that Homer sometimes was at a mystic level of consciousness when he composed his poetry, and that much (but not all) of his poetry was transcendent in meaning and allegorical in nature. The mystic poet recognizes that when he is on the level of sense-perception he cannot describe God; but when his soul is ὑπερδραμοῦσα μὲν τὸν ἑαυτῆς νοῦν, ἀνεγείρασα δὲ τὸ ἄρρητον σύνθημα τῆς τῶν θεῶν ἐνιαίας ὑποστάσεως καὶ συνάψασα τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον, τῷ ἐκεῖ φωτὶ τὸ ἑαυτῆς φῶς, the poet can

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<sup>125</sup>Dioscorus does show humility, however, in other encomia; see the discussion below.

<sup>126</sup>See my introduction.

describe God in symbols, parables, and allegories.<sup>127</sup> Thus, like Homer the mystic poet, Dioscorus could praise God with words, but the descriptions are symbolic. With sensual and rational words and images, Dioscorus was trying to describe what he realized was beyond the senses and beyond reason. In effect, the seeming contradiction between the poet's Homeric prowess<sup>128</sup> and his inability to measure the virtues of his addressee (μετρέϊν /

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<sup>127</sup>See W. Kroll, ed., *Proclus Diadochus: In Platonis Rem Publicam Comentarii*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1899; repr. Amsterdam, 1965), 177.18-21.

Dioscorus' praises generally echo the hymn of Moses and the Lamb, which is sung by the saints in John's mystic vision:

Μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστά τὰ ἔργα σου,  
 κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ·  
 δίκαιαι καὶ ἀληθιναὶ αἱ ὁδοὶ σου,  
 ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν·  
 τίς οὐ μὴ φοβηθῆι, κύριε,  
 καὶ δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου;  
 ὅτι μόνος ὄσιος,  
 ὅτι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἤξουσιν  
 καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου,  
 ὅτι τὰ δικαιώματά σου ἐφανερώθησαν.

(Apoc. 15:3-4)

Positive terms of praise are heard in the same vision, when the angels and elders sing that the Lamb is worthy λαβεῖν τὴν δύναμιν καὶ πλοῦτον καὶ σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύον καὶ τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν καὶ εὐλογίαν (Apoc. 5:12). Although John stated that he "heard and saw" these visions (Apoc. 22:8), it is traditionally understood that John's descriptions were an allegorical expression of things ὑπερκόσμου and ἀόρατα. For a discussion of the spiritual senses, see A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford, 1981), 67-69.

<sup>128</sup>When Dioscorus expresses his frailty, on the metaphorical level he may be expressing his human frailty (H.5.13-14): μέτριος οὐκ ἐνόησα τόσον κλέος, μ[ῆ]τις [ἀ]νάκ[των] / ἴλλαθί μοι τρομέοντι, τεὸ[ν μέλος ὄφρα βοήσω.] See also H.2.14-15, 5.11-12, 6.13-18, 7.1-6; Viljamaa, 124.



τὰς ἀρετὰς σοῦ, δέσποτα) or to write a hymn about them (ὕμνοπολεῦσαι / τοσσατὴν ἀρετὴν) is an indication of a mystical level of meaning.

*The Bridegroom and the Reflection of the Sun*

When Menander Rhetor discussed how the physical characteristics (φύσις) of the emperor should be described in an encomium (ὁ βασιλικὸς λόγος), he suggested using the image of light: μετὰ τὴν γένεσιν ἔρεῖς τι καὶ περὶ φύσεως, οἷον ὅτι ἐξέλαμψεν ἐξ ὠδίνων εὐειδῆς τῷ κάλλει καταλάμπων τὸ φαινόμενον ἀστέρι καλλίστῳ τῶν κατ' οὐρανὸν ἐφάμιλλος (371.14-17).<sup>129</sup> In an encomium prepared for a governor's arrival (ὁ ἐπιβατήριος λόγος), the encomiast should give a vivid portrayal of the bad treatment of the inhabitants by the former governor and the improved conditions under the new; he should then elaborate with a simile or metaphor such as: ὥσπερ νυκτὸς καὶ ζόφου τὰ πάντα κατειληφότες αὐτὸς καθάπερ ἥλιος ὀφθεῖς πάντα ἀθρόως τὰ δυσχερῆ διέλυσας (378.21-23).<sup>130</sup> Dioscorus in his encomium to Romanus follows the suggestion to use light and sun imagery, although the encomium is addressed neither to an emperor nor to a governor;<sup>131</sup> yet he uses the imagery in such a way that it points to and supports a mystical level of meaning.

Dioscorus calls Romanus a νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης πανομοίον Ἡελίῳ

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<sup>129</sup>Russell-Wilson (p. 83) translated the second half of this passage as: "dazzling the visible universe, rivalling the fairest star in the sky"; see their discussion of τὸ φαινόμενον, p. 276 comment to 371.16.

<sup>130</sup>See also the sun-imagery at Menander Rhetor 378.10-12 and 381.16-18.

<sup>131</sup>See my article, "Dioskoros of Aphrodito and Romanos the Melodist," *BASP* 27 (1990): 103-07. Cf. H. Bell, "An Egyptian Village in the Age of Justinian," *JHS* 44 (1944): 29; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 68-72.

(12B.5).<sup>132</sup> The sun image is echoed later in verses 18-19: πόθεν ἤλυθον εὐκλέα μορφῆς / ὑμνεῦσαι Ἴαδονιν πεφιλημένον ἠδ' Ἰάκινθον. Hyacinthus was the beloved of Phoebus Apollo, who was often identified with Helius. The imagery of sun and light as it is used in these verses, although at first appearing to follow the encomiastic tradition, upon closer examination is quite startling. There are two obvious incongruities. 1) No mention has been made in the iambic prologue (part A) or the hexameter body (part B) about a marriage or νύμφη.<sup>133</sup> Why then does the poet suddenly call Romanus a νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης?<sup>134</sup> 2) The light imagery used to describe the addressee switches suddenly from comparing him to one partner of a love affair, the ἐραστής (πανομοίον Ἡελίῳ suggests that the addressee is similar to Apollo), to comparing him to the other partner, the ἐρώμενος (Ἴαδονιν πεφιλημένον ἠδ' Ἰάκινθον). Adonis and Hyacinthus, two mortals, were both loved by divinities, one by Aphrodite (cf. Ovid *Met.* 10.519ff.) and the other by Apollo (Ovid *Met.* 10.162-219, Apollodorus 1.3.3, and Pausanias 4.19.3-5).

A possible explanation for the unprepared and unexplained appearance of the epithet νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης is that the bridegroom imagery does not have a logical meaning on the literal level. It is either a metaphorical expression—that is, Romanus as *bridegroom of splendor* may

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<sup>132</sup>Cf. the metaphor for John at H.3.37 and for Dorotheus at H.14.1: Αἰγύπτου Φαέθῳ νέος.

<sup>133</sup>Contrast the Dioscorian epithalamia H.21-24, in which both a bridegroom and bride are mentioned; H.25 is in too poor a condition to provide any clues about the naming of a bridal pair. Romanus the Melodist (if the identification is correct) was never married. For a thorough examination of the biographic and hagiographic information about the saint, see Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance*, 159-98.

<sup>134</sup>This phrase can be translated in two ways. The bridegroom is either married to splendor, or he himself is splendorous. See R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, part 1, 4th ed. (Leverkusen, 1955), section 414.2 c, e.

mean simply that Romanus is splendid—or it finds its significance on an allegorical, spiritual level of meaning. Christ, using a parable format (which is similar to allegory)<sup>135</sup> described himself as a bridegroom: ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν εἶπεν ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λέγων, Ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ (Mt. 22:1-2).<sup>136</sup> And Christ as bridegroom of the soul became a motif in Christian mystic literature. This motif was used already by Origen (*Cant.* 3, M.13.147D) and developed extensively by Gregory of Nyssa in his commentary to the Song of Songs.<sup>137</sup> The suggestion that the Dioscorian bridegroom has mystical significance is supported by Dioscorus' simile: νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης πανομοίον Ἡελίῳ. John in describing his mystic vision said that God is the sun and Christ the lamp of the New Jerusalem: ἡ πόλις οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης ἵνα φαίνωσιν αὐτῇ, ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἄρνιον (Apoc. 22:23).<sup>138</sup> And at the very beginning of the vision, John said that Christ's face was similar to the sun: ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου . . . καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ (Apoc. 1:13-16). Also, Pseudo-Dionysius in his mystical treatises compared God to

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<sup>135</sup>For a comparison of parable with allegory, see J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1976), 252-57.

<sup>136</sup>See also Mt. 22:3-14. Cf. Apoc. 21:9, where an angel refers to the Lamb as bridegroom; Apoc. 19:7-9, where the saints celebrate the marriage of the Lamb; Apoc. 22:17, where Christ implies that He is the bridegroom. In these last three instances, traditionally the bride represents the Church; cf. Eph. 5:21-33. In the Old Testament, the representation of Israel as the wife of Yahweh is common; see Os. 1:2ff.

<sup>137</sup>See Louth, 55-57, 82-83; Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 191, 208-09, 221-22.

<sup>138</sup>The metaphor is repeated at Apoc. 22:5: καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν χρεῖαν φωτὸς λύχνου καὶ φωτὸς ἡλίου, ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς φωτίζει ἐπ' αὐτούς, καὶ βασιλεύουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

the sun:<sup>139</sup> οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς θείας ἀγαθότητος ἐμφανῆς εἰκῶν, ὁ μέγας οὐτις καὶ ὀλολαμπῆς καὶ ἀείφωτος ἥλιος, κατὰ πολλοστὸν ἀπήχημα τὰγαθοῦ καὶ πάντα, ὅσα μετέχειν αὐτοῦ δύναται, φωτίζει καὶ ὑπερηπλωμένον ἔχει τὸ φῶς . . . (DN 147.10-13).<sup>140</sup> Perhaps Dioscorus, on a recondite level of meaning, was saying that Christ is a perfect reflection of the Father.<sup>141</sup> It is uncanny but in keeping with Dioscorus' broad erudition that when he calls the addressee νυμφίον ἀγλαίης πανομοίον Ἡελίῳ, the verse corresponds to a *chairetismos* used in the Eleusinian mystery rites and quoted by Firmicus Maternus: χαῖρε νυμφίε, χαῖρε νέον φῶς. Maternus commented: *Nullum apud te lumen est, nec est aliquis qui sponsus mereatur audire. Unum lumen est, unus est sponsus : nominum horum gratiam Christus accepit.*<sup>142</sup>

The second incongruity associated with light imagery is the metaphor Ὑάκινθος in verse nineteen, which creates an abrupt shift in the representation of the addressee. The addressee is represented in verse five as an ἐραστής; because he is πανομοίον Ἡελίῳ, he can be equated with

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<sup>139</sup>In Pseudo-Dionysius' descriptions of God, all three members of the Trinity were usually implied: Τοῦτο μὲν οὖν καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις ἐξετασθὲν ἡμῖν ἀποδέδεικται τὸ πάσας αἰεὶ τὰς θεοπρεπεῖς ἐπωνυμίας οὐ μερικῶς, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῆς ὅλης καὶ παντελοῦς καὶ ὀλοκλήρου καὶ πλήρους θεότητος ὑπὸ τῶν λογίων ὑμνεῖσθαι (DN 122.6-8). Yet distinctions were made. See the whole of chapter 2 in *De divinis nominibus* (Suchla 122.1-137.13); and see Paul Rorem's discussion of Pseudo-Dionysius' trinitarian concept in *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto, 1984), 60-61.

<sup>140</sup>This is part of his extensive passage (DN 147.2-150.14) comparing God to the light. The comparison by Pseudo-Dionysius of God to the sun echoes the comparisons by Plotinus and Proclus.

<sup>141</sup>Cf. H.2.18: χάρματι λαμπετόοντ' ἀ[μ]αρύ[γ]ματα οἶα Σελήνη.

<sup>142</sup>Firmicus Maternus *De errore profanarum religionum* 19.1. See G. Heuten, ed. and trans., *De errore profanarum religionum*, by Julius Firmicus Maternus (Brussels, 1938), 89, 179-80, 199. For the metaphors of light and bridegroom as they were applied to Christ in early Christian poetry, see J. Thierry, *Christ in Early Christian Greek Poetry* (Leiden, 1972), 2, 14-19.

Apollo, the lover of Hyacinthus. This identification as a lover is strengthened by the adjacent metaphor: Ἔρωτα / νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης . . . Then in verse nineteen, when the addressee is compared to Ἰάκινθος, he is being represented as the ἐρώμενος in the same myth. The change is emphasized by the adjacent metaphor: ὑμνεῦσαι Ἄδονιν πεφιλημένον ἠδ' Ἡάκινθον; Adonis was the ἐρώμενος of Aphrodite. The change is emphasized further by the poet by placing both key metaphors, Helios and Hyacinthus, as the final words in their respective verses (and sentences). On the literal level, this shift of metaphors is absurd; the poet cannot in so short a space of verses (thirteen verses separate the metaphors) describe the addressee as two different characters in the same erotic myth. To compare this technique to other myths, it would be as if the addressee were compared to Orpheus then Eurydice, Achilles then Penthesileia.

Such an abrupt shift, however, is not uncommon in the genre of mystic visions. The end of the Apocalypsis Joannis, for instance, shows such a change. John finishes the narration of his vision (Apoc. 22:8-20) by first repeating his name and testifying that he saw and heard what he has just described (Κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα). He then bows to worship the angel who has shown him the New Jerusalem (ἔπεσα προσκυνῆσαι ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου); but the angel forbids his prostration ("Ὁρα μή. σύνδουλός σου εἰμι), and directs John's worship to God (τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον). The angel continues speaking; but one soon becomes aware that in fact it is Christ speaking through the angel—although John indicated no change of speakers:

Ἴδού ἔρχομαι ταχύ, καὶ ὁ μισθός μου μετ' ἐμοῦ ἀποδοῦναι ἐκάστῳ, ὡς τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ. . . . Ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς ἔπεμψα τὸν ἀγγελόν μου μαρτυρῆσαι

ὕμῖν ταῦτα ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ρίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ, ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωῖνός.

Then John responds with a liturgical refrain: Καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν, "Ἐρχου."<sup>143</sup> It is John's loss of distinction between the angel and Christ which may provide a clue to Dioscorus' abrupt change in describing his addressee.<sup>144</sup> On a recondite level of meaning, the poet in a mystic ecstasy is perhaps describing Christ when he says: ἴδον . . . νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης πανομοίον Ἡελίω. Dioscorus is describing St. Romanus, however, when he says: πόθεν ἦλυθον εὐκλέα μορφῆς / ὑμνεῦσαι "Ἄδονιν περιλημμένον ἠδ' Ἰάκινθον. St. Romanus, like the angel in the Apocalypse, has perhaps been the conveyor of the vision of Christ;<sup>145</sup> and in verse nineteen, Dioscorus is showing the love of Christ (and of himself) for Romanus by comparing it to Apollo's love for Hyacinthus.

That Christ is the subject of verse five is suggested by the contrasting mythological pair in verse four. Dioscorus says (verses 4-5): ἄλλον "Ὀμηρον ἴδον καὶ **Ἄρεα ἠδὲ τ' Ἐρωτα** / νυμφίον ἀγλαΐης πανομοίον Ἡελίω. The

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<sup>143</sup>"The spirit and bride"; or by hendiadys: "the spirit of the bride." I interpret this phrase as John identifying himself both with the Spirit who speaks through the prophets and also with the Church; cf. the Μαρινα θα of 1 Cor. 16:22.

<sup>144</sup>For the lack of distinction in John's account, see A. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images, The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Albany, 1986), 73-75. One must be careful, however, not to distinguish too precisely between God and the saint or angel when portrayed in a mystic vision. Pseudo-Dionysius warned against those who state αὐτόθεν ἀμέσως ἐγγενέσθαι τισὶ τῶν ἁγίων θεοφανείας . . . ταύτας δὲ τὰς θείας ὁράσεις οἱ κλεινοὶ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐμυσοῦντο διὰ μέσων τῶν οὐρανίων δυνάμεων (CH 22.1-11). And Pseudo-Dionysius pointed out (CH 24.2) that Christ Himself was called an angel by Isaiah: ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει, ἴδετε φῶς μέγα· οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χῶρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου, φῶς λάμψει ἐφ' ὑμᾶς. . . . καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Μεγάλης Βουλῆς Ἄγγελος (Is. 9:1-5).

<sup>145</sup>The poem is reminiscent of John's vision, when he saw ἓνα ἄγγελον ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ (Apoc. 19:17). John did not see Christ in the angel, but the angel was bearing Christ's message (to the birds). The angel carrying Christ's message is described as standing in the sun because it is a symbol of God's presence.

most obvious relationship which Ares has with Eros is that they are absolute opposites: one connotes brutal war; and the other, passionate love.<sup>146</sup> This stark contrast is reminiscent of the list of contrasts at the close of the Apocalypse, where after John repeats his own name, Christ says: ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ἽΩ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος (Αποκ. 22:13). It is this contrasting pair of Ares and Eros which is the bridegroom of the next verse. Thus perhaps on a deeper level of meaning, the contrasting pair and the bridegroom represent Christ. That Romanus is the subject of verse nineteen is suggested by the other element in the metaphor: ἄλλον Ὅμηρον ἴδον καὶ Ἄρεα ἠδὲ τ' Ἐρωτα. The other Homer, perhaps, is Romanus the Melodist.<sup>147</sup>

### *Proskynesis and Shining Tracks*

The final verses of poem H.8 contain a striking image:<sup>148</sup> νῦν δὲ φαιινῶν / [σοῦ πρ]οκυλ[ιν]δόμει[ν]ος πόδας ἵχνων, ὕψος Ἄρειον (H.8.11-12). The addressee of this poem and his political office have not been identified;

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<sup>146</sup>The pair is also reminiscent of Demodocus's song of Ares and Aphrodite in book 8 of the *Odyssey* (verses 266-366). This particular song was very important to late Neoplatonists' allegorical interpretations of Homer. According to Proclus, who analyzed this song in detail (*In Rep.* Kroll, vol. 1, 141.4-143.16), the bard Demodocus was a self-portrait of Homer in the mystical state; and the song is a mystical allegory. According to Proclus, Hephaestus was the true creator of the world and had created the cosmos out of opposing elements (symbolically, he had chained the couple together). See Lamberton, 189, 226-30.

The *militia amoris* was also a standard metaphor in Latin love poetry. See, for example, Ovid *Amores* 2.

<sup>147</sup>Romanus criticized Homer, who represented pagan genius in contrast to true spiritual genius inspired by the Holy Spirit; see *On Pentecost* (Matons 49 = Maas-Trypanis 33), strophe 17.

<sup>148</sup>Gertrude Malz, in her *editio princeps*, thought that there was the possibility—although there is no evidence—of another column of verses; G. Malz, "Three Papyri of Dioscorus at the Walters Art Gallery," *AJPh* 60 (1939): 172. She included a photograph of the poem.

whoever he is, however, the poet is offering him abject worship. The image is arresting for several reasons, including the variations on a common formula in petitions. An example of the formula can be found in a petition written by Dioscorus in 567 on behalf of the Aphroditans. Dioscorus wrote to the duke: ὅθεν ἀόκνως προκυλινδούμενοι ἤκαμεν παρὰ πόδα τῶν ἀνεπάφων ὑμῶν ἰχνῶν (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 page 1, lines 8-9).<sup>149</sup> One significant variation in the poem is the word πόδας, which is accusative plural. The verb προκυλινδέομαι requires a genitive object. If Dioscorus had wanted πόδας to be the object, he would have needed a preposition as above (παρὰ πόδας). As the verses stand (if the readings and restorations are correct), the object of [πρ]οκυλ[ιν]δόμ[ε]ν[ος] is φαιινῶν [σοῦ] ἰχνῶν.<sup>150</sup> A similar formula is, in fact, found in a fifth-century papyrus addressed to the emperor: προκυλινδούμενος τῶν θείων ὑμῶν καὶ ἀχράντων ἰχνῶν (*Chrest.Wilck.* 6.8).<sup>151</sup> Thus Dioscorus' verses should be translated: "prostrating myself before your shining tracks." What does one do with πόδας? Without a preposition, the only choice seems to be to take the word as an accusative of respect: "Prostrating myself as to my feet." On a literal level, this translation is meaningless. However, the term πούς was often used metaphorically to refer to a foot of poetry.<sup>152</sup> Thus Dioscorus seems to be saying metaphorically: *With my poetry, I fall in worship before your*

<sup>149</sup>Cf. Bell, "An Egyptian Village," 33ff.; MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 26ff.

<sup>150</sup>For the ending ὄμενος see LSJ, s.v. προκυλινδέομαι.

<sup>151</sup>A cult of emperor worship still existed in the fifth century; in the sixth century, emperor worship was rapidly losing popular support. L. Barnard, *The Graeco-Roman and Oriental Background of the Iconoclastic Controversy* (Leiden, 1974), 76-79.

<sup>152</sup>See, for example, Aristophanes *Ranes* 1323: ὀρᾶς τὸν πόδα τόν'; (where Aeschylus is calling attention to the metrics of a particular verse). See the citations in LSJ, s.v. πούς.



*shining tracks.*

Another reason that this phrase is striking is the catachresis, the transferred epithet φαεινῶν. One would expect *falling before the tracks of your shining feet* rather than "falling before your shining tracks." This unusual image may be simply the result of a transferred epithet, which was a common technique in, for example, the *Aeneid*. It is also related to a formulaic phrase in petitions: τῶν ἀνεπάφων ὑμῶν ἰχνῶν.<sup>153</sup> In none of the surviving petitions, however, are the tracks described as *shining* (φαεινός). The usual adjective, ἀνέπαφος, here means *impartial* or *unprejudiced*.<sup>154</sup>

The Dioscorian variation of the adjective may relate to the mystical teachings of Pseudo-Dionysius. The angels imitate the secretiveness of the Deity by concealment of τῶν νοερῶν ἰχνῶν (CH 57.6-10). The mystic pursuing divine illumination is like a hunter following the spiritual tracks of the angels. When the mystic imitates the saints who have preceded him, he is described by Pseudo-Dionysius as following their divine tracks: ἐπιβὰς δὲ τοῖς θείοις ἴχνεσι τοῦ ἀθλητῶν πρώτου δι' ἀγαθότητα (EH 77.20-21). Pseudo-

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<sup>153</sup>See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 page 1, lines 8-9, quoted above. A similar phrase was used by Dioscorus in a petition to the duke on behalf of the monks from his father's Monastery of the Christbearing Apostles: προσπίπτομεν τοῖς εὐκλεέσι καὶ ἀνεπάφοις ὑμῶν ἴχνεσι (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003.14). Cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67005.8, 67007.7; III 67279.5; *P.Lond.* V 1677.9.

For elements of allegory in Dioscorus' prose petitions, see A. Kovelman, "From Logos to Myth: Egyptian Petitions of the 5th-7th Centuries," *BASP* 28 (1991): 135-52. Kovelman concluded (pp. 148-49): "A Byzantine sees in himself an allegory of a character from an epic or a drama. In the history of his native village he sees the repetition of the history of humankind. . . . One can discern the crucified Jesus in the guiltlessly killed resident of Aphrodito, Jeroboam in the rioter Kollouthos, Midianites in the herdsmen of the village of Phthla. In his private life the Byzantine finds either the passions and deeds of a saint or the adventures of a hero in a romantic novel. This method of identification and allegory makes it possible for a man to elevate himself above his former level and to stand firmly grounded just when the ground is slipping from under his feet."

<sup>154</sup>Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. ἀνέπαφος.

Dionysius does not describe the tracks as shining, but as *intellectual* (νοεροί) and *divine* (θεοί). To replace these abstract concepts with the image of φαεινός, however, would be in harmony with Dionysian and biblical symbolism. Thus Dioscorus, in addition to incorporating a petition commonplace, may have been suggesting through his variations that as a mystic poet he was following the example of a saint, or through the writing of allegorical poetry he was following the hidden but nevertheless illuminated tracks of an angel. The ultimate goal, however, was not the angel or saint (the Apocalypsis Joannis strictly forbids the worship of angels). The ultimate goal was worship of Christ (ὕψος Ἄρειον) through the intermediary angel or saint; the angels and saints, like the apostles of Apollos' monastery, were Christ-bearing (τοῦ ὄρουσ τῶν χριστοφόρων ἀποστόλων καλουμέ(νου) Φαραο(ῦ)το[ς] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003.5).

### *Eros*

Dioscorus' encomia (excluding his epithalamia) are remarkably replete with eros cognates and terms related to eros. It was mentioned above that in poem H.12B Dioscorus calls the addressee Ἔρωσ (H.12B.4). In this encomium, the motif of eros is emphasized; there are allusions to the erotic myths of Apollo and Hyacinthus and of Aphrodite and Adonis, and verse two of the hexameter section contains eros cognates in both an active and a passive sense: ὦ βαθέης σοφίης πολυήρατον εὐχος ἐρώτων (H.12B.2). In two other encomia, Dioscorus desires an icon of the addressee's πολυήρατον εἶδος (H.2.17, 5.21; cf. the epithalamium H.21.17-18).<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>Cf. Dioscorus' anacreontic, where he says: Στρατηγὸν νέον ἔραμαι, / ποθοβλήτην Ἡρακλέα. I have translated these verses as: "I am in love with the new general, / who shoots me with desire, that Heracles." I have found no explanation for the feminine ending of

Such an emphasis on eros is not apparent in the instructions for encomia given by Menander Rhetor. In a λόγος ἐπιβατήριος, the city should be portrayed as a woman greeting the arriving governor; but she should use words no more loving than: μετὰ μικρὸν ἀναθήσομεν εἰκόνας, μετὰ μικρὸν ποιηταὶ καὶ λογοποιοὶ καὶ ῥήτορες ἄσσουσι τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ διαδώσουσιν εἰς γένη πάντων ἀνθρώπων (381.18-21). In fact, Menander seems to prefer that any expression which might suggest eros should be avoided in an encomium.<sup>156</sup> In his instructions for the προπεμπτικὴ λαλιά, Menander states that the young encomiast should praise the physical beauty of his male friend, but he should avoid scandal by praising his friend's self-restraint: τὴν διαβολὴν ἐκφύγῃς τὴν ἐκ τοῦ κάλλους, ἀπέργασαι τὸ ἦθος σεμνότρον, λέγων ὅτι κοσμεῖ τὸ εἶδος τῇ τῶν ἠθῶν ἐγκρατεία (398.19-21).<sup>157</sup> The only development of the theme of erotic desire in Menander is in his instructions for invitations; when inviting a governor to a festival in one's city, the encomiast should compare the inhabitants to women struck by the arrows of mad love, who cannot bear not to see their beloved:

ὦ πάντων ἀρχόντων ἄριστε, καὶ τοῦτό σοι τῶν ἐρώτων σημεῖον ἔσται,  
πέπομφε πάλιν καλοῦσα καὶ δεύτερον, οὐδεμίαν ἡμέραν ἐνεγκεῖν

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ποθοβλήτην, except as a poetic indication of the increasing intoxication of the narrator; see my discussion in chapter 2.

<sup>156</sup>Even in his instructions for the epithalamium (an encomium delivered at a wedding), Menander advises that the encomiast praise the physical beauty of the bridegroom, but that he should exercise caution in praising the beauty of the bride—to avoid any suspicion of eros. The instructions for the epithalamium and the κατευναστικὸς λόγος (the bedroom speech) are surprisingly sparse in mentioning eros (aside from the few words to the god Γάμος 405.1-2). The bridegroom is encouraged to have sex with the bride because of the expense involved in the marriage (406.9), because it is a test of his courage and strength (406.11, 410.12-14), and because children, who are benefactors of the state, are the product (411.17). Sex is compared to athletic contests (406.14-18) and to war (406.24).

<sup>157</sup>The word ἠθῶν is suspect; Russell-Wilson suggest replacing it with ἡδονῶν.

δυνηθεῖσα, ἀλλ' ὡσπερ οἱ μανικῶν τόξοις πληγέντες ἐρώτων οὐκ ἀνέχονται  
 μὴ τοὺς ἐρωμένους ὄραν, οὕτως ἐπὶ σοὶ ἐκχυθεῖσα ἡ πόλις μικροῦ μὲν  
 ἅπασα ἐκινδύνευεν εἰσδραμεῖν. (Men.Rh. 428.19-25)

The tone here is not unlike Dioscorus' own; yet on the literal level none of Dioscorus' poems is an invitation. Thus Dioscorus' erotic vocabulary seems to be a departure from the encomiastic tradition.

Dioscorus' emphasis on eros cognates in his encomia, however, relates to Pseudo-Dionysius' erotic vocabulary in his descriptions of God. In *De divinis nominibus* Pseudo-Dionysius explicates the mystical significance of the characteristics attributed to God by the Scriptures. After the discussions of God<sup>158</sup> as ἀγαθός and ἀγαθότης (Suchla 143.9-147.1), as ἥλιος and φῶς (Suchla 147.2-151.1), and as καλός and κάλλος (Suchla 151.2-152.6), he discusses the terms ἔρωσ and ἐρώμενος (Suchla 155.8-162.5) as they apply to God.<sup>159</sup> He defines God's love and the love for God as erotic (ἐρωτικός),<sup>160</sup> although this term itself is seldom used by Scripture. In God's love affair with his creation, God plays both sides of the relationship. He is ἀγαπητὸν μὲν καὶ ἐραστὸν and he is ἔρωτα δὲ αὐθις καὶ ἀγάπην (Suchla 160.5-6). God's love is all-encompassing and leads God out of himself: τῷ καλῷ καὶ ἀγαθῷ τῶν πάντων ἔρωτι δι' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἐρωτικῆς ἀγαθότητος ἔξω ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται (Suchla 159.10-11). And his love is returned by all: πᾶσιν οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἐφετὸν καὶ ἐραστὸν καὶ ἀγαπητὸν (Suchla 155.8).

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<sup>158</sup>Pseudo-Dionysius wants us to understand all members of the Trinity, except where distinctions are explicitly made: Οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἐνοῦν τῷ λόγῳ καὶ διακρίνειν σπεύδομεν, ὡς αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἡνωταὶ καὶ διακέκριται (DN 130.12-13; cf. 128.8-129.11).

<sup>159</sup>They are found in the Scriptures less often than ἀγάπη, but terms associated with erotic love were applied to Christ; see DN 157.9-17 and Suchla's critical apparatus.

<sup>160</sup>DN159.16; and see the entire paragraph 159.9-20.

The discussion of God's erotic love is extensive. Since Pseudo-Dionysius anticipated an objection to his use of the term *erotic*, he began with the explanation that words are not as important as the spiritual realities they seek to portray.<sup>161</sup> Words are dependent upon the senses, and both words and senses are inadequate to convey the spiritual essence of God.<sup>162</sup> The γραμματικός who focuses on words stays attached to the perceptual world.<sup>163</sup> Far wiser is the one who uses words to guide himself to the spiritual truths beyond expression; and for Pseudo-Dionysius, ἔρωξ is a better guide than ἀγάπη.

According to Pseudo-Dionysius, it is God's eros which initiates the mystic's quest for a deeper union. As Völker points out: "der göttliche Eros das Trachten nach Gott entzündet: πρὸς ζῆλον ἐγερτικὸν τῆς ἐφέσεως αὐτοῦ τῆς ἐρωτικῆς (DN 159.16)".<sup>164</sup> And God's erotic love causes the ecstatic

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<sup>161</sup>For a good review of the Neoplatonic discussions about the functions and limitations of words, see Lamberton, 164-73.

<sup>162</sup>Ὡσπερ οὐκ ἔξον τὸν τέσσαρα ἀριθμὸν διὰ τοῦ δις δύο σημαίνειν ἢ τὰ εὐθύγραμμα διὰ τῶν ὀρθογράμμων ἢ τὴν μητρίδα διὰ τῆς πατρίδος ἢ ἕτερόν τι τῶν πολλοῖς τοῦ λόγου μέρεσι ταῦτὸ σημαίνοντων (DN 156.10-13). Pseudo-Dionysius' discussion about the nature of words in relation to mystic realities may help explain why Dioscorus seldom uses phrases taken from Scripture or from the Christian Fathers. Dioscorus uses biblical and patristic images, but creates them with words suited to the surface-level of the poem, which genre in the early Byzantine period was more Hellenistic than Christian. See Alan Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 194-95. In contrast, Gregory of Nyssa's *Encomium in Sanctum Stephanum Protomartyrum* is a prose encomium employing a predominantly Christian vocabulary.

<sup>163</sup>According to Pseudo-Dionysius, those who demand from mystical treatises exact verbal correspondences with Scripture are: οὐκ ἐθελόντων εἰδέναί, τί μὲν ἢ τοιάδε λέξις σημαίνει, πῶς δὲ αὐτὴν χρῆ καὶ δι' ἑτέρων ὁμοδυνάμων καὶ ἐκφαντικωτέρων λέξεων διασαφῆσαι, προσπασκόντων δὲ στοιχείοις καὶ γραμμαῖς ἀνοήτοις καὶ συλλαβαῖς καὶ λέξεσιν ἀγνώστοις μὴ διαβαινοῦσαις εἰς τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῶν νοερόν, ἀλλ' ἔξω περὶ τὰ χεῖλη καὶ τὰς ἀκοὰς αὐτῶν διαβομβουμέναις. (DN 156.5-10)

<sup>164</sup>Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 199; see also his discussion about the angelic *Erkenntnisweise*, pp. 200-05.

experience, the *unio mystica*: "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐκστατικὸς ὁ θεῖος ἔρωσ οὐκ ἑῶν ἑαυτῶν εἶναι τοὺς ἐραστάς, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐρωμένων (DN 158.19-159.1).<sup>165</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, however, was not the first to describe God's mystic love as erotic. Völker found that Pseudo-Dionysius was following a tradition evident in patristic literature:

Daß von Gott alle Initiative ausgeht, hat bereits Clemens gelegentlich bemerkt, wenn er die Seele der Schau gewürdigt werden läßt (καταξιουμένη),<sup>166</sup> was mit DN 1, 5, M.593B: ἡξιωμένοις . . . ἀγγέλοις übereinstimmt. Seine Worte: ἀγωγὸν δὲ τὸ ἐραστὸν πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίαν (Strom. VII 10, 3, III 9, 9f.), muten ferner wie ein Vorspiel zu den areopagitischen Ausführungen über die Macht des Eros an, der im Menschen den unstillbaren Drang nach Gott entzündet. Davon hat auch Gregor etwas gewußt, wenn er bei Moses dem Ekstatiker die Haltung eines Liebenden rühmend hervorhebt: ἐρωτικῆ τινι διαθέσει πρὸς τὸ φύσει καλὸν τῆς ψυχῆς διατεθείσης (Moses II, I M.401D). So schließt sich alles zu einer Einheit zusammen, und Dionys zeigt sich auch hier von einer Richtung beeinflusst, deren wesentliche Gedanken bereits bei Clemens anklingen, sich bei Gregor v. Nyssa steigern, bis sie bei ihm ihre volle Reife erlangt haben.<sup>167</sup>

Dioscorus' unusual emphasis upon eros cognates perhaps relates to this mystical tradition. Perhaps on a deeper level of meaning it is Christ who is both Eros and the βαθέης σοφίης πολυήρατον εὐχος ἐρώτων (H.12B.2, 4).<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>Roerem translates this passage as: "This divine yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved"; *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 92.

<sup>166</sup>*Strom.* VII 68.4, III 49.16f.

<sup>167</sup>Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 199-200.

<sup>168</sup>Although it is perhaps the Christian mystical tradition that ultimately guided Dioscorus' erotic imagery, his encomia also echo Plato's *Symposium*, which shows eros as the guide to the mystical union and which terms the mysteries surrounding the mystical ascent as τὰ ἐρωτικά (210e4). Plato was a source for Pseudo-Dionysius, and it is difficult to distinguish whether Dioscorus may have borrowed Platonic concepts directly or indirectly. Yet Dioscorus' motifs of physical beauty (H.5.24, 12B.18-19) and full-of-virtue (H.2.15, 5.5; cf. the epithalamium H.21.21, 25) suggest some direct influence. Menander Rhetor used extensively this dialogue and the *Phaedrus* for his section on writing hymns to gods; see esp.

*In the Land of the All-Sovereign*

A unique and recurrent phrase in the Dioscorian encomia is: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον (H. 2.4, 3.40, 5.4, 13.6, 6.23 with minor variations). As to the phrase's significance, MacCoull states: "Here the word is applied to the emperor, not the deity" (*Dioscorus*, 66 comment to H.6.23). This interpretation is unsupported; and it seems insupportable in light of the evidence where παμβασιλεύς denotes God or Christ.<sup>169</sup> The term is used to denote Christ and God in Dioscorian prose petitions.<sup>170</sup> When the term appears in the petitions, even MacCoull concludes that it denotes God. From *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003, a petition to the duke from monks who term themselves hermits (ἐρημίται) connected to the monastery of Apa Apollos, MacCoull offers the following translation of line 12: "that supplications and intercessions be perpetually and incessantly made to God the παμβασιλεύς [a word we find in Dioscorus's poetry]."<sup>171</sup> There is no doubt that the word refers to Christ when Dioscorus closes the petition *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097 verso D with the following oath: ἐξορκίζω κ[ατὰ] τοῦ ζόντος Θε(ο)ῦ οὐ(ρα)νοῦ (καὶ) π[αντο]κρ(άτορος) π[αμ]βασ[ιλ]έως Χ(ριστο)ῦ (line 79).<sup>172</sup>

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334.7-21. An important difference between Plato on the one hand and Dioscorus and Pseudo-Dionysius on the other, is that for the latter two Ἔρως is not only the guide but also the ultimate goal: Διὸ καὶ Παῦλος ὁ μέγας ἐν κατοχῇ τοῦ θείου γεγονὼς ἔρωτος καὶ τῆς ἐκστατικῆς αὐτοῦ δυνάμεως μετειληφὼς ἐνθέφ' στόματι· « Ζῶ ἐγώ », φησίν, « οὐκ ἔτι, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός ». . . . καὶ ὅλως τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἐστὶ τὸ ἔραστον καὶ ὁ ἔρως καὶ ἐν τῷ καλῷ καὶ ἀγαθῷ προϊδρνται (*DN* 159.4-19).

<sup>169</sup>For the use of the term to denote an absolute monarch, see LSJ, s.v. παμβασιλεύς.

<sup>170</sup>Cf. Maspero, *P.Cair.Masp.* I Index IV, s.v. παμβασιλεύς (Θεός); Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, section 21, s.v. παμβασιλεύς.

<sup>171</sup>MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 30-31; the brackets are MacCoull's.

<sup>172</sup>See also *P.Lond.* V 1674.83-84, where the Aphroditans confirmed the truth of their

The term is also used to denote God in the poetry which influenced Dioscorus. In Nonnus' hexameter paraphrase of the Gospel of Saint John, for example, John the Baptist shouts: οἶμον ὀφειλομένην ἰθύνατε παμβασιλῆος (1.85). And Jesus accuses the non-believing Hebrews (Ἑβραῖοι) with the words: οὐδε τοκῆος / φίλτρον ἐπουρανίῳ φυλάσσετε παμβασιλῆος (5.161-62). The term appears over fifty times as an epithet for God in the pre-Nonnian *Metaphrases in Psalmos*. In addition to the term's use in the Dioscorian petitions and in the poetry of the period, it was used to denote Christ in the Coptic liturgy. A. Buckel, having examined the epithet's appearance in the Coptic liturgy, concluded that with respect to the word's reference to Christ: "Es sich um eine ägyptische Eigenart handelt."<sup>173</sup> Finally, when the term appears in the Dioscorian poetry, the reference to God is sometimes made explicit. Such specific references occur twice in poem H.4: ἐκ θεοῦ παμβασιλῆος ἐπεὶ θέμιν ἔλλαχεσ ἀλκήν, / ἐκ θεοῦ παμβασιλῆος ἀοίδιμον οὔνομ' ἄειρες (H.4.8-9).

Thus when Dioscorus wrote in his encomia that ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον, he was possibly stating metaphorically that the poet had entered a state of mystic ecstasy. Ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος may refer to the spiritual realm of τῆς οὐρανίας ἱεραρχίας, with which the poet in ecstasy is momentarily brought into contact. In other poems, Dioscorus emphasized the distance of the realm of the παμβασιλεύς from the realm of speech: ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος (H.5.4); and its distance from the world of care and responsibility: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον ἔκτοθι

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statements by a written oath to God and Christ, the King of Kings: μάρτυρα γὰρ καλοῦμεν τὸν δεσπό(την) Θε(ε)ὸν καὶ βασιλέα βασιλευόντων Χριστόν.

<sup>173</sup>Die Gottesbezeichnungen in den Liturgien der Ostkirchen (Würzburg, 1938), 62.



τ[έ]κνων (H.6.23). Pseudo-Dionysius stressed that communication in the spiritual realm was different than that used among men. Thus the mind which seeks union with God must turn away not only from the world but also from itself:

Καὶ ἔστιν αὐθις ἢ θειοτάτη θεοῦ γνῶσις ἢ δι' ἀγνωσίας γινωσκομένη κατὰ τὴν ὑπὲρ νοῦν ἔνωσις, ὅταν ὁ νοῦς τῶν ὄντων πάντων ἀποστάς, ἔπειτα καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀφείδῃ ἔνωθῆ ταῖς ὑπερφασίν ἀκτίσιν ἐκεῖθεν καὶ ἐκεῖ τῷ ἀνεξερευνητῷ βάθει τῆς σοφίας καταλαμπόμενος. (DN 198.12-15)

In fact, Pseudo-Dionysius' final statement—'Ἐκεῖ τῷ ἀνεξερευνητῷ βάθει τῆς σοφίας—is echoed by a Dioscorian verse discussed above: ὦ βαθέης σοφίης πολυήρατον εὐχος ἐρώτων (H.12B.2).

### *Have Mercy Upon Me Who Trembles*

A common motif in the Dioscorian encomia is the image of the poet trembling in fear or awe: ἴλλαθι μοι τρομέοντι (H.5.14; cf. H.2.14, 21.24).

While such a phrase is appropriate for an encomium, it should be pointed out that this phrase makes a distinctive contribution to the proposed mystical level of meaning. Fear is the normal reaction to a spiritual vision. For a familiar biblical example of fear in the face of a mystic vision, see Luke's portrayal of the vision sent to the shepherds:

καὶ ἄγγελος κυρίου ἐπέστη αὐτοῖς καὶ δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς, καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ ἄγγελος, Μὴ φοβεῖσθε. (Lc. 2:9-10)

The soothing of that fear is the sign of a holy rather than a diabolical vision. St. Antony's instructions about how to distinguish a good from an evil vision make this concept clear:

Ἐὰν δὲ καὶ, ὡς ἄνθρωποι, τινὲς φοβηθῶσι τὴν τῶν καλῶν ὄπτασίαν,

ἀφαιρουῦσιν οἱ φαινόμενοι τὸν φόβον παρ' αὐτὰ τῇ ἀγάπῃ· ὡς ἐποίησε  
Γαβριήλ τῷ Ζαχαρία . . . . Ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φόβος ἐκείνων οὐ κατὰ δειλίαν  
ψυχῆς, ἀλλὰ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς τῶν κρειττόνων παρουσίας. Τοιαύτη μὲν  
οὖν ἡ τῶν ἀγίων ὀπτασία. (Athanasius *Vita Antonii*, M.26.896A-B)

That the addressee eases the fear of Dioscorus is evident in the three poems cited above; in each poem, the poet prays to have his fear calmed so that he can continue singing the addressee's praises, which the poet then does.<sup>174</sup>

### *In an Unworldly Way*

A frequent and apparently nonsensical motif in the Dioscorian encomium is: ἄστεα κουρίζων διελέλυθες οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (H.2.23; cf. H.1.10; 3.38, 50; 21.26).<sup>175</sup> The phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον<sup>176</sup> was probably familiar to Dioscorus' audience because of its use in an important scene in the *Iliad*. Thersites' words against the kings are described as οὐ κατὰ κόσμον: ὃς ἔπεα φρεσὶ ἦσιν ἄκοσμά τε πολλά τε ἦδη, / μάψ, ἀτὰρ οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, ἐριζέμεναι βασιλευσιν (2.213-14). In the *Iliad*, the phrase means *out of order*, probably in the sense of *impertinent*. In the *Odyssey*, the phrase is used again with respect to speaking impertinently: ὄρινάς μοι θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν / εἰπὼν οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (*Od.* 8.178-79). Dioscorus, however, was not using the phrase with respect to speaking; nor would it have been

<sup>174</sup>Note that Antony used Zacharias as an example; Zacharias is the acrostic in one of the three Dioscorian poems containing his statement of fear (H.2.16-20).

<sup>175</sup>See also H.14.2, where the land (χθόνα) is described as a τιθήνην κατὰ κόσμον. Wipszycka (p. 533) suggested that at all the appearances of the phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον, the editors misread the papyri; the phrase should read εὐ κατὰ κόσμον. This suggestion is difficult to accept.

<sup>176</sup>The phrase means literally: *not according to good order*. In Christian literature, κόσμος was used to refer to this world and its ways in contrast to heaven and spiritually oriented actions; see Jo. 12:31, 13:1, 15:19, 17:14-16.

proper in an encomium to criticize what the addressee did as a youth. Thus a reader of Dioscorus is forced to look for another, non-Homeric interpretation.

A search for a more suitable meaning brings one to a similar phrase in the New Testament. Compare the statement by Christ in the Gospel of Saint John (14:27): Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν. οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν. If Dioscorus is using the word κόσμος in the same way, the addressee in the Dioscorian poem may have done something miraculous, something divine in his youth: *As a young man you went through the cities not according to this world.* In fact, one is led to wonder if the addressee, on a deeper level of meaning, is Christ. Christ's other-worldliness—that is, his divine nature—would have been especially important to Dioscorus if Dioscorus was a Monophysite.

If the phrase οὐ κατὰ κόσμον is meant to suggest that on a deeper level of meaning the addressee is Christ—which is very speculative—the statement that the addressee was young as he went through the cities (ἄστρα κουρίζων διελήλυθες) relates to the early Byzantine iconography of Christ, which often depicts him as a young man (cf. figure 4). The emphasis on his youth may also relate to the miraculous connotations of οὐ κατὰ κόσμον (*not according to the laws of this world*). That is, not only did Christ have a divine nature and perform miracles as he went from city to city (both of which would be οὐ κατὰ κόσμον), but in the iconography he often appears to be perennially young. A fifth-century mosaic representation in the baptistry of the Aryan Cathedral at Ravenna shows typical representations of John the Baptist and Christ. The former is represented as an older bearded

man, while Christ is youthful and beardless;<sup>177</sup> historically, they were the same age (Lc. 1:41-42).

*Thebes Is Raised to Heaven*

At H.2.24-26 the poet turns his attention from the addressee to a walled Thebes (Θήβη τειχιόεσσα) which has been raised up to Olympus (ἀείρεο δ' ἄχρις Ὀλύμπου). This is a striking image. One reason for its vividness is that the standard epithet for Thebes (in Egypt) was not *walled Thebes* but *Thebes of the hundred gates*: οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας / Αἰγυπτίας, ὅθι πλείστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κείται, / αἴθ' ἑκατόμυλοὶ εἰσι (*Iliad* 9.381-83). Despite the variation, the Dioscorian verses could fit into the encomiastic level of meaning as a hyperbolic metaphor for the good fortune or the joy of the city. Yet the image also seems appropriate to and certainly supports the proposed mystical level of meaning in Dioscorus' poetry. In the *Apocalypsis Joannis*, the walls of the New Jerusalem are emphasized several times: Δεῦρο, δείξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου. καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχουσαν . . . τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν (21:9-12); καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς ἑκατὸν τεσσεράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου (21:17). In late Antiquity, the Christian heaven was commonly represented by Olympus.<sup>178</sup> Thus when Dioscorus envisions the walled Thebes rising all

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<sup>177</sup>See Farioli, 134, 136. Compare the sixth-century icon from Sinai (now in Kiev; B.11) of St. John the Baptist. Although the long shaggy beard and hair and the dark bags under his eyes are meant to communicate the rigors of the hermit's life, they certainly give him the appearance of being very old; and yet John died before Christ. See Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 32-35; plates 14, 57.

<sup>178</sup>See Cameron, *Claudian*, 193.

the way to Olympus, his description may be a variation of John's description of the walled Jerusalem coming down from heaven. The Dioscorian elaboration—ἐν κονίησι πεσοῦσα / ὀρθώθης πολὺ μᾶλλον, αἰίρειο δ' ἄχρισ Ὀλύμπου—emphasizes the messianic mission by which Christ raised the devout from death to a share in his divinity.<sup>179</sup>

### *The Hierarchy*

Poem H.3 is addressed to τὸν κλυτὸν Ἰωάννην ἱκελ[ον] ἔ[παρ]χο[ν ἀν]άκ[τ]ων (verse 32). Poem H.5 begins: Ὑμνον ἀναστήσαιμι χοροστ[ασί]ης σέο δ[ό]ξης, / τοῦ πολυκυδήεντος Καλλινίκ[ου στρα]τιάρχου. And poem H.7 is labelled by Dioscorus as: Εἰς τὸν [ . . . Δ]όμνινον τὸν καγκελλάριον τῶν ἐπάρχων [ἐγκώμια] μετὰ ἀκροστοιχίδος. It has already been suggested that on a second level of meaning the addressees represent angels or saints. If so,

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<sup>179</sup>The suggestion of a correspondence here between Dioscorus' Thebes and the New Jerusalem is supported by the apocalyptic vision in Dioscorus' other poems:

Θήβη πᾶσα χόρευσον, εἰρήνην δέχου·  
οὐ γὰρ θεωρήσεις κακουργικὴν ἔτι,  
οὐ βαρβάρων δέος, φιλοπραγμόνων κρίσιν.  
πάντη γὰρ εἰρήνη θεόπνευστος ῥέει. (H.9.1-4)

And the variant:

[Θ]ήβη πᾶσα χόρ[ευσον, εἰρήν]ην δέχου·  
[οὐ] γὰρ θεωρήσει[ς] κα[κουργικ]ήν ἔτι,  
πάντη δέος π[έφ]υ[κεν ἀσπίλ]ου δίκης  
νέο[υ] Σ[ό]λων[ος] . . . (H.3.9-12; cf. H.5.53-55, 10.1-3, 11.1-3)

The new Solon of spotless justice could be, on a metaphorical level, Christ. In the Apocalypsis Joannis, it is Christ's δίκη which establishes peace for the advent of the New Jerusalem: Καὶ εἶδον τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠνεφωμένον, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἵππος λευκὸς καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ' αὐτὸν [καλούμενος] πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, καὶ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ κρίνει καὶ πολεμεῖ. (Apor. 19:11)

what is the significance of these various administrative offices?<sup>180</sup> The mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius may provide the key.

One of the most important motifs in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius is the concept of a strict spiritual hierarchy.<sup>181</sup> Only the first triad of angels—the seraphim, cherubim, and thrones—look directly upon God. They in turn reflect this vision to the second triad, which receives it in accordance with the latter's degree of receptivity. They in turn pass on the illumination to the third triad—the principalities, archangels, and angels—who along with the saints are the spiritual sources of divine visions for man.<sup>182</sup> God does not reveal himself directly to man: he works through intermediaries

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<sup>180</sup>Other offices include: *παγάρχων* (title of H.17); *πολιάρχων* (H.8.1; al.), *ἡγεμόν* (H.10.5, al.); *ἡγεμόν* coupled with *δομεστικός* (H.10.10); *στρατηγός* (H.9.5; al.); *ἐξκουβίτωρ* or *ἐξκέπτωρ* (title of H.19); *νομικός* (title of H.18); *διοικητής* (title of H.13); *σιλεντιάριος* (acrostic in *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67184). If this last poem is indeed addressed to Zacharias (per Crönert, MacCoull), then John the Baptist's father, who was made mute by an angel of the Lord (Lc. 1:20-22), may be the addressee on the metaphorical level.

<sup>181</sup>Pseudo-Dionysius ranked the angels into three levels of superiority, each level containing three offices—a total of nine orders, each of which had a special designating title. This strict classification of the orders and the functions appropriate to each was "ein Einteilungsprinzip, das im Christentum bisher unbekannt war und offensichtlich aus Proclus stammt. Wie wenig man aber damals mit diesen Engelnamen anfangen konnte, zeigen gelegentliche Ausführungen bei Cyrill v. Jerusalem und Augustin zur Genüge." Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 123. See his notes for citations from Proclus, Cyril, and Augustine.

<sup>182</sup>René Roques, in his detailed analysis of the hierarchy principle in Pseudo-Dionysius, offered this succinct picture: "Toute divinisation vient d'en haut. Mais les divers ordres ne participent à l'activité théarchique que par la médiation de tous les ordres supérieurs. Dieu ne se révèle jamais sans intermédiaires à notre hiérarchie (CH M.180C). Des hiérarchies célestes, la première seule peut communiquer avec Lui directement (CH M.209C; cf. EH M.537C; CH M.272D). Par elle, la purification, l'illumination et la perfection théarchiques parviennent à la deuxième hiérarchie (CH M.250B/D et 272 D/273A) qui les transmet à son tour à la troisième (CH M.272D/273A). Et au sein de chaque triade, la même loi règle la transmission des opérations théarchiques: le premier rang les reçoit d'abord; le second les reçoit du premier et le troisième du second (CH M.257B/260B, par ex.). Ainsi chaque ordre est le révélateur et le messager de celui qui le précède: le premier révèle Dieu qui lui donne son activité, et les autres, selon leur capacité divine, révèlent les ordres qui les précèdent et qui sont mus par Dieu (CH M.273A)." Roques, 103.

who are arranged in a strict spiritual hierarchy.<sup>183</sup>

Among mortals, there were two hierarchies which corresponded to and were connected to the celestial hierarchy; one was political, the other ecclesiastical.<sup>184</sup> Among the Hebrews of the Old Testament, the political and the ecclesiastical channels were combined and both conveyed the prophecies of the Word.<sup>185</sup> With the incarnation of Christ and the establishment of his Church, the political hierarchy ceased to have any significance in conveying spiritual illumination.<sup>186</sup> Even after the establishment of Christianity as the state religion for the Byzantine empire, the ecclesiastical hierarchy (according to Pseudo-Dionysius) existed separately from all government agencies and was exclusively responsible for transmitting divine illumination (in accordance with each person's receptivity).<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup>"Les intelligences humaines n'échappent pas à cette loi. Qu'il s'agisse de la hiérarchie légale ou de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique, c'est d'abord par la médiation des anges que doit passer toute intervention divine. Par les anges, la loi fut donnée à Moïse (CH M.180B et D). Un ange a purifié les lèvres d'Isaïe (CH M.ch.XIII où Is.VI.6; cf. CH M.305B/C). Un ange encore a conduit le peuple hébreu tout au long de son histoire (CH M.260B)." Ibid., 103.

<sup>184</sup>These hierarchies were the subject of two treatises, *De coelesti hierarchia* (CH) and *De ecclesiastica hierarchia* (EH), and provided the conceptual framework for the rest of the Dionysian corpus. The concept of hierarchy even guided the order of the *Epistulae*; see R. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (Hague, 1969), 64f.

<sup>185</sup>For a fuller discussion of the "hiérarchie légale," see Roques, 171ff.

<sup>186</sup>"La hiérarchie légale est celle de l'Ancien Testament; la hiérarchie ecclésiastique est celle du Nouveau. Mais toutes deux sont régies par les mêmes lois que la hiérarchie céleste (cf. EH M.500C/504A)." Ibid., 104 note 2.

<sup>187</sup>"C'est d'abord l'évêque qui reçoit la purification, l'illumination et la perfection théarchique (EH M.504C/505C). Il la transmet à l'ordre des prêtres (EH M.505C/508A), qui la transmet à son tour à celui des ministres (EH M.508A/B). L'activité théarchique s'étend ensuite aux moines (EH M.532C et suiv., et Ep 8), puis au peuple saint (EH M.532B/C), enfin aux ordres purifiés (EH M.529D/532B). L'ordre de transmission correspond exactement à l'ordre de dignité décroissante des divers rangs." Ibid., 104.

Cf. Athanasius *Vita Antonii* M.26.956B-57, where St. Antony receives letters from the emperor Constantine: Ταῦτα γὰρ μαθόντες Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Αὐγουστος, καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ

What distinguished Pseudo-Dionysius from earlier Christian Fathers was his focus on ecclesiastics, saints, and angels as sources for the divine vision. Man sees God in the rank immediately above—the ranking based on spiritual perfection. The most divine vision available to sense perceptions is the *ιεράρχης*, the bishop.<sup>188</sup> He is the closest spiritually to the saints and angels.<sup>189</sup> He is in charge of perfecting the ranks below him through the brilliance of his life, especially through his practice of the sacraments and his interpretations of Scripture, just as *ἐπὶ τῶν ἡλιακῶν μαρμαρυγῶν αἱ λεπτότεραι καὶ διειδέστεραι τῶν οὐσιῶν πρῶται τῆς εἰσρεούσης αἴγλης ἀποπληρούμεναι τὸ κατὰ πᾶν ἑαυτῶν ὑπερχειόμενον φῶς εἰς τὰς μετ' αὐτὰς ἡλιοειδῶς ἐποχετεύουσιν* (EH 94.5-8). While the bishop is in charge especially of perfection, the priests are in charge of illumination, and the deacons in charge of purification (CH 18.10-20.2.). The ordained triad, by purifying, illuminating, and perfecting, imitates God, becomes godlike, and leads the ranks below to divinity, which are the triple function and purpose

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Κωνσταντίος καὶ Κόνστας οἱ Αὐγουστοί, ἔγραφον αὐτῷ ὡς πατρὶ, καὶ ἠῤυχοντο λαμβάνειν ἀντίγραφα παρ' αὐτοῦ. Ἄλλ' οὔτε τὰ γράμματα περὶ πολλοῦ τινος ἐποιεῖτο, οὔτε ἐπὶ ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς ἐγεγήθει· ὁ αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν, οἶος καὶ πρὸ τοῦ γράφειν αὐτῷ τοῦ βασιλέως. Ὅτε δὲ ἐκομίζετο αὐτῷ τὰ γράμματα, ἐκάλει τοὺς μοναχοὺς, καὶ ἔλεγε· Μὴ θαυμάζετε, εἰ γράφει βασιλεὺς πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ἄνθρωπος γάρ ἐστιν. Antony's disdain of the emperor is obvious. Pseudo-Dionysius' writings ignored secular administrators.

<sup>188</sup>There are some exceptions: a corrupt priest is no priest at all, a corrupt bishop is no bishop at all, etc.

<sup>189</sup>Pseudo-Dionysius supports Scripture in calling bishops "angels" (CH 42.13-43.11) and even "gods": *Εὐρήσεις δὲ ὅτι καὶ θεοὺς ἢ θεολογία καλεῖ τὰς τε οὐρανίας καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς οὐσίας καὶ τοὺς παρ' ἡμῖν φιλοθεωτάτους καὶ ἱεροὺς ἄνδρας καίτοι τῆς θεαρχικῆς κρυφίότητος ὑπερουσίας ἀπάντων ἐξηρημένης τε καὶ ὑπεριδρυμένης καὶ μηδενὸς αὐτῇ τῶν ὄντων ἐμφοροῦς ὀνομάζεσθαι κυρίως καὶ ὀλικῶς δυναμένου. Πλὴν ὅσα τῶν νοερῶν τε καὶ λογικῶν πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν αὐτῆς ὅση δύναμις ὀλικῶς ἐπέστραπται καὶ πρὸς τὰς θείας αὐτῆς ἐλλάμψεις ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀκαταλήκτως ἀνατείνεται, τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν εἰ θέμις εἰπεῖν θεομιμησίᾳ καὶ τῆς θεϊκῆς ὁμωνυμίας ἠξίωται* (CH 43.12-19).



of all the spiritual hierarchies.<sup>190</sup>

Although the ecclesiastics are the most common source of divine illumination for man, Pseudo-Dionysius also described a less common source: the mystical ecstasy. In the otherwise strict hierarchical system there exists some leeway: in moments of mystic ecstasy, the ecclesiastical ranks may be bypassed. In a mystic ecstasy, a devout lay person, a penitent, even a possessed man, may "see" or "hear" or "feel" Christ. The faculty of perception is not the physical senses; but it is the soul, which itself is incorporeal, that perceives the divine presence. Yet rarely does Christ or God appear without celestial intermediaries. In Scripture, such mystic visions are portrayed allegorically by describing a manifestation of Christ or God accompanied by angels or saints, or by the appearance of an angel carrying a message from God.<sup>191</sup>

In Scripture, Christ often described the spiritual plane of existence in parables employing kingdom imagery. In the art of the early Byzantine period, spirits and their relationship to one another and to man were portrayed allegorically by using imperial imagery.<sup>192</sup> Dioscorus may have

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<sup>190</sup>Σκοπὸς οὖν ἱεραρχίας ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις αὐτὸν ἔχουσα πάσης ἱερῆς ἐπιστήμης τε καὶ ἐνεργείας καθηγεμόνα καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐτοῦ θειοτάτην εὐπρέπειαν ἀκλινῶς μὲν ὁρᾶν ὡς δυνατὸν δὲ ἀποτυπούμενος καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ θιασώτας ἀγάλματα θεῖα τελῶν ἔσοπτρα διειδέστατα καὶ ἀκηλίδωτα, δεκτικὰ τῆς ἀρχιφώτου καὶ θεαρχικῆς ἀκτίνος καὶ τῆς μὲν ἐνδιδομένης αἴγλης ἱερῶς ἀποπληρούμενα, ταύτην δὲ αἰθρῆς ἀφθόνως εἰς τὰ ἐξῆς ἀναλάμποντα κατὰ τοὺς θεαρχικοὺς θεσμούς (CH 17.10-18.6).

<sup>191</sup>See CH 20.3-24.4; for exceptions, see esp. CH 22.1-22. The natures of and the distinctions between the various kinds of mystical experiences were not delineated too precisely by Pseudo-Dionysius; for an examination of the evidence, see Völker's monograph. Cf. the different kinds of mystical experiences are discussed by E. Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, rev. ed. (Strand, 1930), 266-451.

<sup>192</sup>The term *imperial* here designates not only the person of the emperor, but also the persons (military or civil) in his administration.

picked the encomium genre because its format was traditionally geared toward praising government officials, and it could both sustain and conceal the general concept of a spiritual empire.<sup>193</sup> In his emphasis on the particular ranks associated with bureaucratic administration, Dioscorus may have been influenced specifically by the celestial hierarchy of Pseudo-Dionysius. That is, by metaphorically labeling his saints and angels as dukes, generals, judges, etc., the poet may have been portraying their spiritual ranks in relationship to one another and to himself. This kind of metaphorical imagery was widespread in Christian iconography even before Pseudo-Dionysius explicated the spiritual hierarchies. The use of government ranks as metaphors in the Dioscorian poems provides a frame for structuring the rest of the mystical elements. For example, how Dioscorus, a mortal, could experience and address saints and angels who were far more elevated in the spiritual ranks—this was explained by Pseudo-Dionysius' concept of the mystical ecstasy and depicted by Dioscorus as a sea voyage or a festive reception for a magistrate.

Why Dioscorus assigned to each saint the particular office which he did—this might be understood by comparing the individual poems to the available hagiographic and iconographic information. Dioscorus, however, may simply have been pointing to the concept of spiritual hierarchies, without intending to delineate too precisely an individual saint's or angel's rank.

### **Evidence of an Allegory**

The above analysis has shown that many Dioscorian images and

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<sup>193</sup>For the importance of secrecy in mystic literature, see the discussion below.

terms suggest a recondite level of meaning which can be considered mystical. Whether Dioscorus' encomia can be called mystical allegory, however, entails two questions: what is a mystical allegory? and do Dioscorus' poems meet that definition? In the introduction, I presented some general definitions of allegory, mysticism, and mystical allegory. It is now possible to refine somewhat the definition of mystical allegory, in order to illuminate specifically the mystical allegories (interpretative and creative) of the fourth through sixth centuries. Dawson's definition of allegory was based in large part on ancient definitions of *allegory* and on the allegorical interpretations of the first and second centuries of the Christian era.<sup>194</sup> For Dawson, allegory meant "to say something other than what one seems to say"; and he qualified this general definition with the requirement that there be some element of narration.<sup>195</sup> When one considers *mystical* allegory, however, there is often a blurring of the narrative element; the lack of chronology and development is supposed to convey the idea of eternal simultaneity. This concept was already recognized by Dawson in his analysis of Valentinus.<sup>196</sup> Another prominent feature of early Byzantine

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<sup>194</sup>For a study of the use of the term ἀλληγορία and its cognates by ancient authors, see especially Pépin, 87-92, and the bibliography at 92 note 45; see also R. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London, 1959), 37ff. For a brief study of allegory in relationship to mysticism, see R. Hoornaert, "Allégorie," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 1 (1937), 310-14.

<sup>195</sup>D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley, 1992), 3-4.

<sup>196</sup>*Ibid.*, 127-82. Dawson accurately observed (p. 133): "Valentinus's allegorical reading attempts to neutralize the sequential, narrative aspects of both the precursor Gnostic myth and the tripartite Christian narrative by calling into question the notion of temporality that necessarily underlies all narrative sensibility. He seeks to purge from Gnostic myth much of its sequential, narrative structure and many of its distinctive characters and events, in order to produce a much more austere account of loss and recovered fullness."

mystical allegories is that they were supported by an external framework of mystical thought. For example, Proclus' allegorical interpretations of passages in Homer were supported by—and lent support to—late Neoplatonic mystical theology, which had been developed over centuries and was dependent upon allegorical interpretations of Plato and the Chaldaean Oracles too. Most mystical allegories, especially the recondite allegories of the early Byzantine period, would be largely incomprehensible unless supported by an external mystical theology.

I posit the following three distinguishing characteristics of writings which were considered mystical allegories in the early Byzantine period.<sup>197</sup>

- 1) They contained at least one level of meaning beyond the literal level.
- 2) The deeper level of meaning was complex, and its constituent elements were interrelated. (This replaces Dawson's characteristic of narration.)
- 3) This internal network was supported by (and lent support to) an exterior, pre-existing structure of meaning, such as the mystical theology of late Neoplatonism or Christianity. This third characteristic is in fact a characteristic of mysticism in general (see the introduction). In addition to these three basic characteristics, one finds the following corollary features. The elements of the deeper level of meaning do not have to form a complete or cohesive picture; the empty spaces can be filled from the external mystical theology. Nor does every verse or line have to carry a deeper level of meaning. This last feature not only is evident in the mystical allegories, but also was discussed by Proclus. There are many verses

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<sup>197</sup>These include the Homeric epics as interpreted by Proclus in his commentary *In Platonis Rem Publicam*; the biblical passages interpreted by Gregory of Nyssa in *Life of Moses* and *Commentary on the Song of Songs*; the *Psychomachia* by Prudentius; and *Hero and Leander* by Musaeus.

or episodes which only develop the literal level, and these increase the mystery and pleasure of a fine allegory.

The present section will attempt to show that Dioscorus did not use mystical vocabulary and imagery to amplify the prestige of a government magistrate; rather, the mystical interpretations of the words and phrases discussed above were interrelated and supported by a developed model of Christian mysticism. The two most important elements of the proposed mystical level of meaning, to which all the elements above are connected, are the mystical ecstasy and the figure of Christ.

### *The Mystical Ecstasy*

It was proposed in the analysis of the cicada imagery above that the poet was experiencing a mystical ecstasy. During this ecstasy, he perceived the celestial, noetic realm, which the poet described symbolically as the land of the All-Sovereign, far from cares and mortal speech. During this ecstasy, he also perceived the angels and saints, who were ranked hierarchically in the kingdom of heaven. As in the mystical allegory by Prudentius, the kingdom perceived by the mystic—that is, the New Jerusalem—was not a future event; it was a stasis which could be eternally present in every person's soul.<sup>198</sup> Dioscorus, perhaps out of a creative, a Monophysite, or a patriotic impulse, symbolized the New Jerusalem as a New Thebes, raised from the dust of death to heaven. The patristic (and especially Dionysian) descriptions of the mystical ecstasy offer innumerable correspondences to these metaphorical elements in the Dioscorian encomia. Thus the concept of mystical ecstasy is both crux of the internal structure and point of contact

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<sup>198</sup>Cf. Augustinus *De civitate Dei*.

with an external structure.<sup>199</sup>

In his descriptions of the mystical ecstasy, Pseudo-Dionysius made two initial points clear: 1) man cannot by himself attain the ecstatic experience—it is entirely a gift from God; but 2) man can prepare for the experience. With respect to the second point, Gregory of Nyssa had stated that a requirement for the mystical ecstasy was freeing oneself from passion; and Pseudo-Dionysius showed the necessity of self-control in his descriptions of the mystical experiences of Moses and Carpus.<sup>200</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius also stressed the necessity of removing oneself from material concerns. Both these requirements—self-control and non-attachment—were pointed out by Völker in his examination of *De divinis nominibus*:

Verlangt wird besonders die Freiheit vom Materiellen und die Lösung von den πάθη und ihrem verderblichen Einfluß, vor allem muß der νοῦς darüber erhaben sein: ἐν ἀπαθει καὶ ἀύλω τῷ νῷ (DN 1, 4, M.592C).<sup>201</sup>

These two requirements also appear in Dioscorus' poetry. In poem H.12, Dioscorus praises the self-control of his addressee:

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<sup>199</sup>The most thorough analysis to date of the mystic ecstasy as described in early Christian (and Jewish) literature can be found in Walther Völker's seven-volume series: *Das Vollkommenheitsideal des Origenes* (Tübingen, 1931); *Fortschritt und Vollendung bei Philo von Alexandrien* (Leipzig, 1938); *Der wahre Gnostiker nach Clemens Alexandrinus* (Berlin, 1952); *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker* (Wiesbaden, 1955); *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita* (Wiesbaden, 1958); *Maximus Confessor als Meister des geistlichen Lebens* (Wiesbaden, 1965); *Scala Paradisi. Eine Studie zum Johannes Climacus und zugleich eine Vorstudie zu Symeon dem Neuen Theologen* (Wiesbaden, 1968).

<sup>200</sup>"Von jeher hat man sittliche Reinheit dafür gefordert; das hat auch Gregor v. Nyssa getan, der das Freisein von Leidenschaften und die Herzenseinfalt als unerläßliche Vorbedingungen ansah (Eun. III 1, 16, S. 7, 10f.; Stephanus 1, III 713B). Dionys folgte ihm. Wenn er im Anschluß an die Sinai-Erzählung den Aufstieg zur Ekstase beschreibt, so stellt er als erstes Gebot auf: ἀποκαθαρθῆναι πρῶτον αὐτὸς κελεύεται (MTh I 3, M.1000C), und vom Visionär Carpus sagt er im achten Briefe: διὰ πολλὴν καθαρότητα νοῦ πρὸς θεοπτεῖαν ἐπιτηδεϊότατος (Ep. 8, 6, M.1097B)." Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 197.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., 197.

σώφρονα δημοτελῆ πανυπείροχον ἔγγυς ἀνάκτων (12B.8);

and of his own city:

[ω . . ]ε δὲ γ[ἀ]ρ ἡμῖν ἡ πόλις σωφροσύνης (12A.9).<sup>202</sup>

Dioscorus' emphasis on σωφροσύνη shows his high regard for it; and by calling his city (Thebes, which symbolically is the New Jerusalem) the πόλις σωφροσύνης, Dioscorus by association claims the virtue for himself. The poet also indicates his removal from his normal concerns and habitat. He says: ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος ἐλήλυθον ἔκτοθι τ[έ]κνων (6.23).<sup>203</sup> Dioscorus is not only far from his children and the many worries which usually accompany his mention of his children, but also the *land of the All-Sovereign* is a land beyond the material world. He writes: ὁ κλυτὸς ἐν μερόπεσσι καὶ ἐν χθονὶ παμβασιλῆος. / ἔμπλεος εἰς πλόον ἦλθον ἀ[μετρ]ήτων ἀρετάων *O renowned both among men who speak and in the land of the All-Sovereign. / Filled with your measureless virtues, I have come to the voyage* (H.5.4-5). There are two distinct worlds presented in this verse: the world of mortals who use speech to communicate, and the world of spiritual beings who (according to Pseudo-Dionysius) communicate without speech. The word of spiritual beings is where the poet must voyage at H.5.5, and where he has arrived at H.6.23. Another image which is related to these

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<sup>202</sup>For a study of Sophrosyne in ancient myth and art, see H. North, *From Myth to Icon: Reflections of Greek Ethical Doctrine in Literature and Art* (Ithaca and London, 1979). In poem H.5, Dioscorus also refers to himself as μέτριος (verse 13; the author is explaining his inability to imagine the immensity of the addressee's glory).

<sup>203</sup> For the mystic significance of τέκνα, cf. Plato *Symposium* 209a1-8: εἰσὶ γὰρ οὖν, ἔφη, οἱ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κυοῦσιν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν, ἃ ψυχῇ προσήκει καὶ κυῆσαι καὶ τεκεῖν· τί οὖν προσήκει; φρόνησίν τε καὶ ἄλλην ἀρετήν--ῶν δὴ εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ ποιηταὶ πάντες γεννήτορες καὶ τῶν δημιουργῶν ὅσοι λέγονται εὐρετικοὶ εἶναι· πολὺ δὲ μεγίστη, ἔφη, καὶ καλλίστη τῆς φρονήσεως ἢ περὶ τὰ τῶν πόλεων τε καὶ οἰκήσεων διακόσμησις, ἧ δὴ ὄνομά ἐστι σωφροσύνη τε καὶ δικαιοσύνη.

is the cicada singing on a mountain at night; here too the poet indicates his removal from worldly concerns and from passion.

During the *Gottesschau* the mystic's situation is *ισάγγελος* and he gazes *ἐν θειοτέρῳ μιμήσει τῶν ὑπερουρανίων νοῶν* (DN 115.3-4). The experience is *ἀγγελομιμήτως* (DN 116.14).<sup>204</sup> In these descriptions of the mystic vision as equal to the angelic, Pseudo-Dionysius was following an Alexandrian and Cappadocian tradition. Völker explains:

Vertritt doch Origenes den Grundsatz: Θεωρῆσαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀγγελικῶς (Joh. Com. XIII 7, IV, 231, 32f.; XIII 16, IV, 240, 18f.), und läßt David den Wunsch aussprechen: ἄγγελος ἄρα ἐπιθυμεῖ γενέσθαι ὁ Δαυὶδ καὶ βλέπειν τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ θεοῦ (Ps. 41, XII 313 Lomm.). Basilius hat das gleiche von Moses ausgesagt (Hexaëmeron Hom. 1, 1, MSG 29, 5C), und wenn Gregor v. Nyssa die Vision des Stephanus beschreibt, faßt er sie als Ekstase auf und bemerkt: πρὸς τὴν ἀγγελικὴν μεταποιηθεὶς χάριν (Stephanus 1, III 713C; Eun. II 69, S. 235, 20ff.). Die ekstatische Gottesschau des Volkommenen ist eine Vorwegnahme der Erkenntnisweise der Engel und dieser daher angeglichen, was eine nähere Betrachtung nur bestätigen wird.<sup>205</sup>

This patristic description of the mystical experience as equal to the angelic vision has much in common with the Dioscorian poetry;<sup>206</sup> but in order to

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<sup>204</sup>In Gregor is von einer engen Berührung zwischen Engeln und vollkommenen Seelen an sich überzeugt, und als er in seiner Lobrede auf Stephanus dessen Vision behandelt, schildert er sie als Ekstase und vergißt nicht zu bemerken: πρὸς τὴν ἀγγελικὴν μεταποιηθεὶς χάριν (*Steph.* 1.3, M.713C). Er stimmt darin ganz mit Basilius überein, der die Schau des Moses der der Engel angeglichen hat. . . . Der Gewährsmann für beiden Brüder ist natürlich Origenes, dessen Ansichten sie aufs genaueste wiederholen. Dieser reiht die Vollkommenen in die Schar der Engel ein (Joh. Com. XIII 16, IV 240, 18) und läßt sie Gott von Angesicht zu Angesicht schauen: *beatiores ille, qui iam non per speculum . . . neque in substantiis corporalibus, sed facie ad faciem Deum videbunt sapientiae illuminatione radiati et merae divinitatis capaces per puritatem cordis effecti* (Num. Hom. 21, 1, VII 200, 21ff.)." Völker, *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 205-06.

<sup>205</sup>Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 201.

<sup>206</sup>In *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67182 (MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 121-23), Dioscorus wrote: ἐξετέλεσεν ἀέθλον ὅσον βίον [ἀ]γγελιωῶνα. It has been suggested that this refers to the monastic life (see MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 122 note 4). This verse also corresponds to Gregory of Nyssa's description of the life of St. Stephan, who for Gregory was a model mystic. According to Gregory, the ἀνθρώπινος βίος (6.11) is exchanged by Stephan τῷ ἄθλῳ (24.4) during τὴν



appreciate fully the correspondences, one must understand how Pseudo-Dionysius pictured the angels' *Gottesschau*. Unlike men who view things in bits and pieces, which bespeaks the nature of perceptual creation, the angels view things in their totality. Pseudo-Dionysius states: οὐκ ἐν μεριστοῖς ἢ ἀπὸ μεριστῶν ἢ αἰσθήσεων ἢ λόγων διεξοδικῶν συνάγουσαι [scil. νοεραὶ δυνάμεις] τὴν θεῖαν γνῶσιν (DN 195.4-5); rather, αἱ νοηταὶ καὶ νοεραὶ τῶν ἀγγελοκῶν νοῶν δυνάμεις τὰς ἀπλᾶς καὶ μακαρίας ἔχουσι νοήσεις (DN 195.3-4). This may explain why Dioscorus in his encomia emphasizes that his perspective is broad. His invitation to dance and to receive peace is addressed to all of Thebes: Θήβη πᾶσα χόρευσον, εἰρήνην δέχου (H.5.53, 3.9, al.). Fear of untarnished justice is πάντη (H.3.11, 5.55, al.). The addressee's control extends over Alexandria and Arcadia as well as over the Thebaid (H.4.13, H.5.30, cf. H.2.2).<sup>207</sup> The addressee's glory shines to Olympus (H.3.36); and the addressee himself touches Olympus: θάλλε μοι, εἰσέτι θάλλεις ἕως ὅτε ψαύσης Ὀλύμπου (H.4.12). The troubles too reveal that the poet possesses a broad perspective; it is the χῶρον ἄ[π]αντα (H.8.8) which the villain ravages. The angel's and mystic's vision is more than broad, it is synoptic. For Pseudo-Dionysius, the angel's τελεστικὴ ἐπιστήμη (CH 28.17) is in contrast to man's normal ἀναλυτικὴ ἐπιστήμη (CH 29.16). Dioscorus'

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ἄθλησιν (8.5) for the crown of martyrdom; but first, ὡς καὶ αὐτοῖς εἶναι τοῖς μαιφόνους ἐν θαύματι, πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγγέλων ἀξίαν τοῦ περὶ τὸ πρόσωπον εἶδους ἀλλοιωθέντος, καὶ εἶδε τὰ ἀθέατα καὶ τὴν ὀφθεῖσαν αὐτῷ χάριν ἐβόησεν . . . « θεωρῶ, λέγων, τοὺς οὐρανούς ἀνεωγότας καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου ἐστῶτα ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ » (29.21-30.2). The references here are to page and line numbers in the excellent edition by O. Lendle, ed. and trans., *Gregorius Nyssenensis, Encomium in sanctum Stephanum protomartyrem* (Leiden, 1968).

<sup>207</sup>"Φαρίης, the land of the Pharos, i.e., Alexandria and the Delta." MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 115 comment to verse 13.

predilection for the prefixes παν- and πολυ-<sup>208</sup> may be indicative not only of the broad but also of the συνοπτική vision of the mystic in ecstasy (see DN 195.8-9).<sup>209</sup> Even the conscious mixing of cultures in the Dioscorian poems may indicate the unified vision of the ecstatic experience.<sup>210</sup> John the *eparchos* (H.3) is the πανάλκιμον Ἡρακλῆα (verse 81), the new Solon (verse 12), the Αἰγύπτου Φαέθων νέος (verse 37), the ὑιέα Δίκης / καὶ Σαραπάμμωνος ὄβρ[ιμω]τάτου (verses 30-31), and the Ἄ[μ]μονα Νείλου (verse 31), who receives the gift of the Holy Trinity (ἀχράντου Τριάδος μον[ο]ειδ[έ]ος verse 41).

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<sup>208</sup>See A. Saija, "Neoformazioni linguistiche in Dioscoro di Aphrodito," *Analecta Papyrologica* 1 (1989): 51-52; W. Crönert, review of "A Greek-Coptic Glossary," by H. I. Bell and W. E. Crum, in *Gnomon* 2 (1926): 659. Viljamaa (pp. 44-45 note 10) attributed Dioscorus' predilection for prefixes to Nonnian influence. Dioscorus' use of παν- prefixes, however, exceeds Nonnus' use. See W. Peek, *Lexicon zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnos* (Hildesheim, 1968), s. v. παμμεδέων - πανυστάτιος; A. Scheindler, ed., *Nonni Panopolitani Paraphrasis S. Evangelii Ioannei* (Leipzig, 1881), *Index Verborum* s.v. παμβασιλῆος - πανυστάτιω.

Dioscorus, combining his (παν-) and Pseudo-Dionysius' (ὑπερ-) favorite prefixes, stated his addressees' immeasurability with these words: παντοίων ἐπέων πανυπέρτατος ἔπλεο μῶνος (4B.9, 6.17).

<sup>209</sup>Concerning the *unified* (not simply *broad*) vision of the mystic in ecstasy, Völker observed: "So erwähnt er [Gregor v. Nyssa] beim Aufstieg des Moses auf den Berg Sinai, daß der Gottesmann nach der Reinigung und Trennung von allem Fremdartigen gehört habe die Klänge τῶν πολυφῶνων σαλπύγων und geschaut habe φῶτα πολλά, καθαρὰς . . . καὶ πολυχότους ἀκτίνας (MTh I 3, M.1000CD). . . . Den gleichen Gedanken führt DN 1, 4, M.592C, nur mit etwas anderen Worten aus. Der Fromme nähert sich dem Göttlichen, indem er es zunächst in der Verhüllung des Symbols zu erfassen sucht, von dort schwingt er sich auf ἐπὶ τὴν ἀπλὴν καὶ ἠνωμένην τῶν νοητῶν θεαμάτων ἀλήθειαν. . . . Mag es auch umstritten sein, wie man die Worte τῶν νοητῶν θεαμάτων zu deuten habe, so viel ist sicher, daß Dionys hier einen Zustand der Vereinfachung im Auge hat, der die mannigfachen, aus der Betrachtung verschiedener Symbole stammenden Eindrücke zusammenfaßt." Völker, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 197-98.

<sup>210</sup>It is a commonplace that the culture in Upper Egypt in the early Byzantine period was a complex mingling of several cultures: Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Christian. That Dioscorus frequently combined these diverse elements in a single short poem, however, may have been a deliberate attempt to express the ecstatic experience as explicated by Pseudo-Dionysius. Bowersock (pp. 66-67) uses Dioscorus' poetry as an example of the smooth blending of cultures in a poem; more study needs to be done in order to determine how exceptional was Dioscorus' blend.

*Christ and His Angels and Saints*

The mystic law expounded by Pseudo-Dionysius that Christ appears through intermediary angels and saints organizes many of the mystical elements of the Dioscorian encomia. Many of the encomia are obviously (on the metaphorical level) addressed to saints, who are named: John (H.2.28; H.3.32),<sup>211</sup> Athanasius (H.4α.2, β.6), Callinicus (H.5.2, 18), etc. Yet many of the epithets and terms of praise go beyond what seems appropriate for an angel or saint. The addressee (on the metaphorical level) is the source of the River of Life, the Bridegroom, completely equal to the Sun, and Eros; and as a young man he went from city to city in an unearthly way (which may reflect the Monophysite emphasis on Jesus' divine nature). In any single poem, the terms of praise fluctuate; that is, in some verses they are appropriate for describing a saint, in others for describing Christ, and then again a saint. These fluctuations can be explained by the theories of Pseudo-Dionysius, in as much as the saint is the intermediary for the vision of Christ.

Pseudo-Dionysius confirms that angels have spiritual superiority over mortals.<sup>212</sup> Angels think like God and with transcendent eyes they look upon God. Through the power of unfailing divine love, they receive the original light; and governed by this illumination, they live a life which

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<sup>211</sup>Is H.2 addressed to John the Baptist, son of Zechariah? Cf. the acrostic (H.2.16-20): Ζαχαρ(ίας).

<sup>212</sup>The best study of angels as they are represented in the Bible and patristic literature is by H. Kühn, *Das Reich des lebendigen Lichtes: Die Engel in Lehre und Leben der Christenheit* (Berlin, 1947).

is purely intellectual.<sup>213</sup> Thus according to the laws of hierarchy, because of their pre-eminent position, it is the angels who receive and provide the revelations of the hidden divinity (*CH* 21.9-11). In brief: δι' αὐτῶν εἰς ἡμᾶς διαπορθμεύεσθαι τὰς ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἐκφαντορίας (*CH* 21.13-14). Before and after the Law was given, it was the angels who prescribed righteous conduct and who relayed and explained divine visions, orders, mysteries, and prophecies.<sup>214</sup> And according to the Scriptures, it was an angel who gave the Law to Moses (*Acta Apostolorum* 7:38, *Epistula ad Galatas* 3:19, *Epistula ad Hebraeos* 2:2).<sup>215</sup> This argument concerning the nature of Moses' divine revelation is especially important for Pseudo-Dionysius, because for him (as for Gregory of Nyssa) Moses' experience on Mount Sinai is the supreme model of the mystical ecstasy.<sup>216</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius gives numerous examples from Scripture of the angels revealing to men τὸ θεῖον τῆς Ἰησοῦ φιλανθρωπίας μυστήριον, including the appearances of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary. And he concludes that Christ himself, while on earth, received his father's commands and comfort only through the angels—in

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<sup>213</sup>ἐν συντονίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀκλινοῦς ἔρωτος ἀνατεινόμενοι καὶ τὰς ἀρχικὰς ἐλλάμψεις ἀύλως καὶ ἀμιγῶς εἰσδεχόμενοι καὶ πρὸς αὐτὰς ταττόμενοι καὶ νοεράν ἔχουσαι τὴν πᾶσαν ζωὴν (*CH* 21.7-9).

<sup>214</sup>ἄγγελοι πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνήγον ἢ τὸ πρακτέον εἰσηγούμενοι καὶ πρὸς εὐθείαν ἀληθείας ὁδὸν ἐκ πλάνης καὶ ζωῆς ἀνιέρου μετάγοντες ἢ τάξεις ἱερὰς ἢ μυστηρίων ὑπερκοσμίων κρυφίας ὁράσεις ἢ θείας τινὰς προαναρρήσεις ὑποφητικῶς ἀναφαίνοντες (*CH* 21.16-20).

<sup>215</sup>The scriptural tradition that the Law was given to Moses directly by God was discussed by Pseudo-Dionysius, who concluded that: διδάσκει δὲ καὶ τοῦτο σαφῶς ἡ θεολογία τὸ δι' ἀγγέλων αὐτὴν [the tablets of the Law] εἰς ἡμᾶς προελθεῖν (*CH* 22.14-15). Cf. *Ex.* 31:18, 34:28; Rorem's comment to Pseudo-Dionysius' argument and the later tradition is that Moses was acting as an angel; Luibheid-Rorem, 158 note 55; cf. *Ex.* 34:29.

<sup>216</sup>*MTh* 143.8-144.15. See also the description of Carpus' mystic vision, in which he sees ἐπὶ τῷ νότῳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπείρων ἀνθρωποειδῶς αὐτῷ παρεστηκότων ἀγγέλων (*Ep* 8 190.9-10).

keeping with his own hierarchical creation and laws.

The rôle of *angel* is not confined to the nine celestial orders. Pseudo-Dionysius explains that Jesus while on earth was an *angel*, as are his successors, the bishops;<sup>217</sup> and the rank of *angels* can be widened even further: Οὐδὲν οὖν ὡς οἶμαι τὸ ἄτοπον, εἰ καὶ τὸν καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεράρχην ἄγγελον ἢ θεολογία καλεῖ τὸν κατὰ δύνάμιν οἰκείαν μετέχοντα τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων ὑποφητικῆς ιδιότητος καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐκφαντορικὴν αὐτῶν ὁμοίωσιν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀνθρώποις ἀνατεινόμενον (CH 43.8-11). In the mystical vision on Mount Tabor, therefore, when the transformed Christ appeared with Moses and Elijah and οἱ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ, ἣν ἠμελλεν πληροῦν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ (Lc. 9:31), the two prophets were acting as ἄγγελοι.

In religious art and thinking of the sixth century, however, the functions of angels were in many ways taken over by saints. This replacement is most evident in the iconography. Weitzmann makes the following observation:

It was quite customary in Early Christian art to represent the Virgin enthroned flanked by angels, e.g. in the Roman icon from St. Maria in Trastevere [figure 2; cf. figs. 1, 5]. Yet there are already instances in the sixth century where two saints are depicted at either side of the Virgin, as e.g. the fresco in the catacomb of Comodilla, dated 528, where St. Felix and St. Adauctus replace the angels [figure 7]. In our icon [figure 8] the angels are not replaced by the saints but simply moved into the background.<sup>218</sup>

The placement in the composition indicated the spiritual status of the angels and saints. The shift of emphasis during the sixth century to saints seems to have influenced Dioscorus' preference for saints as intermediaries

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<sup>217</sup>For Christ as angel, see CH 24.2-4; for the bishop as angel, see CH 42.13-43.10.

<sup>218</sup>Weitzmann, *Sinai*, 20.

of the mystical vision. Yet whether it was a seraph,<sup>219</sup> the angel Gabriel, Moses and Elijah, or St. Callinicus who mediated the divine vision, the central figure of that vision was Christ. Quoting Pseudo-Dionysius, Roque remarks: "Il [Christ] est aussi et d'abord le *principe, l'essence, la puissance* et *l'achèvement de toute hiérarchie*" (EH 63.12ff.). The usual symbolism in Scripture is the figure of Christ surrounded by angels and/or saints. Yet in the Apocalypse, there is an instance where Christ is in the angel and speaks through the angel, without a distinction made by the mystic John (Apoc. 22:8-16; see the discussion of this passage above).

The lack of a clear or consistent distinction between the bearer of the vision and the essence of the vision—that is, between the saint and Christ—is a notable feature in the poems by Dioscorus. This is evident in the first part of poem H.5:<sup>220</sup>

**Verses 1-5.** These are probably addressed to Callinicus; he is mentioned by name in verse 2 (Καλλινίκ[ου στρα]τιάρχου).

**Verses 6-17.** These are probably addressed to Christ. Verse 6 stresses the uniqueness of the addressee's *stock* (γενέθλη), and may on a metaphorical level refer to the uniqueness of Christ's *birth* (cf. *Hymn. Is.* 36). The

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<sup>219</sup>CH 43.20ff.

<sup>220</sup>Technically, poem H.5 is one of Dioscorus' most ambitious. Instead of an iambic prologue to an hexameter body, which was the established convention, Dioscorus placed the hexameter part first and followed it by the iambic. (See the photograph at *P.Cair.Masp.* II, plate 28). Dioscorus also paid particular attention to the placement of his tonic accents; but, as was his usual practice, he avoided any strict symmetry. Note, for example, the following sequences of accented vowels: verse 13, E O O E η α; verse 18, ου A I I A; verse 25, E E I E E I α ι; verse 26, E I A A E I ευ; verse 34, O O I E E; verse 35, E A E A η; verse 37, H H ε α ι A A; verse 39, O O O O υ α. The poetry of Dioscorus is unique and significant for this kind of accent placement.

blameless king (ἄναξ . . . ἀμόμων)<sup>221</sup> sent him as στρατάρχος; note that the same office is given to both Christ and St. Callinicus. Christ is compared to Heracles, because he gave freedom to all (Jo. 8:31-38).<sup>222</sup> He is the μ[ῆ]τις [ἀ]νάκ[των]—that is, *Sapientia*.<sup>223</sup>

**Verses 18-24.** These are probably addressed to Callinicus. In verse 18 Callinicus is mentioned by name, and there is no necessity to change the subject until perhaps verse 25.

**Verses 25-38.** These are probably addressed to Christ. Verses 25-26 speak of the addressee as the source of the Nile, probably referring to the River of Life imagery in the New Testament (Jo. 7:37-39; see the discussion above). In verse 31, he loves all and is most loved by all: πάντα φιλῶν καὶ πᾶσι φιλαί[τατο]ς, ὅτι ῥέ[ζε]σκ[ε]ς.] And this is immediately followed by a verse emphasizing peace: εἰρήνη ταμίη θ[εοί]κε[λος] ἦνθε[ε] πάντα. Both these verses are effective on the literal level as well. Verse 33 is interesting not only for its biblical tone, but also because in the same verse, the poet refers to the addressee as a single and a plural subject: κλεπταδίην ἑδαμάσσα[τ]ε πε[ι]ρασμοῖ]ς σέο θ[ε]σμῶν.

**Verse 39.** The hexameter part of the poem ends with a statement about eternal life—διπλόον ἀμφ[ι]βόητον ὅσον χρόνον ὑμμι χαρ]άσσει—and probably refers to the saint.<sup>224</sup> Verse 39 echoes verse 3 (ἀμοίρ[α]τον ἐς χρόνον ἔλθοις; addressed to the saint) and thereby forms a ring structure,

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<sup>221</sup> Ἀμόμων is never used by Homer to refer to a god; LSJ, s.v.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. the discussion of Heracles in chapter 2.

<sup>223</sup> See my introduction for a discussion of *Sapientia*'s role in the mystical union (as described by Prudentius).

<sup>224</sup> ὑμμι is used by Dioscorus for a singular as well as a plural subject.

one of Dioscorus' favorite devices.

This brief review of the first part of H.5 indicates that on the second level of meaning, although a clear distinction often cannot be made, the poet addresses the saint and Christ in a rotating manner.

### *Conclusions*

The elements which suggest a mystical level of meaning in the Dioscorian encomia seem to correspond to one another and to the Christian mystical theories of the early Byzantine period, especially those set forth by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Augmented by these theories, the mystical elements paint the following unified and complex picture. Dioscorus presented himself as a divinely inspired poet, similar to Homer as the latter was envisaged by the late Neoplatonist Proclus. As such and in the rôle of a Christian mystic, Dioscorus received what seems to be several mystical visions. These visions were conveyed to him by saints (perhaps at times by angels). The essence of the mystic visions, however, was the figure of Christ. Dioscorus during or after (see below) these mystical experiences, wrote poems recreating the experience and praising and expressing his love for Christ and the Christ-bearing (Χριστοφόρος) saint. This praise and recreation of the mystical experience was concealed—according to common mystical practice—beneath a literal level of meaning that appeared similar to encomia in praise of political magistrates of the period.

In accordance with the mystical theology of Proclus, the process of writing the poem may have opened up *the channel of imperishable fire*.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup>Proclus wrote: ἡ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀκροτάτη καὶ πλήρης τῶν θεῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐνιδρύουσα τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς αἰτίοις τῶν ὄντων, κατὰ τινὰ τε ἔνωσιν ἄρρητον εἰς ταὐτὸν ἄγουσα



In the absence of any clear evidence, however, the scenario of the poetry writing is impossible to reconstruct. Perhaps Dioscorus only vicariously experienced mystical unions: through conversations with mystic monks from the Upper Thebaid he may have received a sense of the nature of the experience and then tried to recreate it in allegorical poetry. He may have had mystical experiences; and immediately in the aftermath he tried to recreate them in his verses. If he was writing the poetry, however, at the same time as he was having a mystical experience, then the situation points out an important aspect of Christian mystical theology of the early Byzantine period. Unlike Plotinus, who during the experience lost his sense of identity and became completely immersed in The One, Christian mystics retained a sense of their own identity. During the mystical experience, according to Christian mystical writers of the early Byzantine period, remained conscious of their self, their love, and their unworthiness in contrast to the splendor, the love, and the generosity of Christ. Not only Christian mystics such as Evagrius and Pseudo-Dionysius, but also late Neoplatonists such as Proclus (according to Sheppard's analysis) envisaged a differentiated union. A sense of personal identity during the inspired experience would have been necessary for the poet in order to compose his verses.

While this chapter focused on only several verses and phrases which

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τῷ πληροῦντι τὸ πληρούμενον, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἀύλως καὶ ἀναφῶς ὑποστρωννύουσα πρὸς τὴν ἔλλαμψιν, τὸ δὲ προκαλουμένη πρὸς τὴν μετάδοσιν τοῦ φωτός, «μιγνυμένων δ' ὀχετῶν πυρὸς ἀφθίτου ἔργα τελοῦσα» κατὰ τὸ λόγιον. ἓνα δὲ σύνδεσμον θεῖον ἀπεργαζομένη τοῦ μετεχομένου καὶ μετέχοντος καὶ σύγκρασιν ἐνοποιόν, ὅλον μὲν τὸ καταδεέστερον ἐδράζουσα ἐν τῷ κρείττονι, τὸ δὲ θεϊότερον μόνον ἐνεργεῖν ὑπεσταλμένου τοῦ καταδεεστέρου καὶ ἀποκρύπτουτος ἐν τῷ κρείττονι τὴν σφετέραν ιδιότητα παρασκευάζουσα. αὕτη δὴ οὖν μανία μὲν ἐστὶν σωφροσύνης κρείττων ὡς συνελόντι φάναι, κατ' αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ θεῖον μέτρον ἀφορίζεται. (*In Rep.* 1.178.11-26)

strongly suggest a mystical meaning, it may be incorrect to conclude that Dioscorus was simply using mystical motifs (derived by and large from Pseudo-Dionysius) in hyperbolic praise of various magistrates and dignitaries of the Thebaid. There is no conclusive proof that any of Dioscorus' addressees was a real historical magistrate, such as a duke or *praeses* of the Thebaid.<sup>226</sup> Unlike other encomiasts of the period, Dioscorus incorporated no historical facts about his addressee into the encomium: there is no birth date, no names of important ancestors, no place of education, no battles fought, no laws enacted. This historical vagueness perhaps arose because Dioscorus was not focusing on a political dignitary or even a saint as an historical person; rather, he was concentrating on a particular saint as a spiritual entity and bearer of the vision of Christ. In fact, one reason for the homogeneity and frequent repetitions in the Dioscorian poems could be that in essence Dioscorus was praising one and the same person, Christ, and saints who had become Christ-like. Each addressee which is named in a Dioscorian encomium can be identified with an important biblical or Egyptian saint.

Several verses which were included in this study and many which

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<sup>226</sup>There is no agreement among scholars as to who were the dukes of the Thebaid during Dioscorus' lifetime and when were their terms of office. Attempts by Maspero and MacCoull to identify and date the dukes of the Thebaid, based upon Dioscorian documents, poems, and other evidence, have ended up in disagreements, self-contradictions, and uncertainty. Richard Salomon notes: "The list of the *duces*, in spite of the rich-looking material in the Cairo papyri, still is an unsolved riddle. The tentative lists presented by Maspero and Bell, the two masters in the field, disagree on every date." "A Papyrus from Constantinople (Hamburg Inv. No. 410)," *JEA* 34 (1948): 107. See J. Maspero, "Études sur les papyrus d'Aphrodité, II" *BIAO* 7 (1909): 97-152, esp. 107-09; idem, "Les Papyrus Beaugé," *BIAO* 10 (1912): 131-57, esp. 143; H. I. Bell, *P.Lond.* V, "Index of Officials," s.v. *δοῦξ*; L. MacCoull, "Dioscorus and the Dukes: An Aspect of Coptic Hellenism in the Sixth Century," *Byzantine Studies* 13 (1986): 30-40, esp. 33-35. The problem of identifying the historical dukes is compounded by the fact that the dukes in the documents are usually addressed by a string of names, among which are appended the names of several saints and angels.

were not, do support the literal level of meaning—praise of a magistrate. It has been demonstrated that some of these verses may also carry a deeper level of meaning. Perhaps all of the verses in the Dioscorian encomia have a mystical level of meaning. Dioscorus was obviously well read and had command of a wide range of literature; much of this literature has obviously not survived to the modern era. Thus it is not always possible for a modern reader to see where Dioscorus may be making pointed literary allusions that support his mystical level of meaning. It was not necessary, however, for mystical allegories in the early Byzantine period to carry mystical significance in every verse. It has been shown that Proclus argued that a single poem could contain several kinds of poetry; for example, the *Iliad* contains verses which are simply reflections of material reality, other verses which are didactic, and other verses which are mystical. Yet these verses tend to appear in clusters; that is, the mystical allegory of Hera's seduction of Zeus forms an episode. Proclus pointed out the mystical significance of details in this episode, but did not explain the mystical significance of every verse. A reader is left wondering if Proclus thought there was mystical significance to every verse in this Homeric episode. The same holds true for Dioscorus' encomia. In their entirety, the encomia seem to have a Neoplatonic-Christian level of meaning below the literal, encomiastic level of meaning. Yet, although Neoplatonic or Christian mystical significance can be found in the imagery of almost every verse, and no Dioscorian verse contradicts a mystical level of meaning, the mystical significance of some verses is elusive. Perhaps this is because of a lack of surviving information; or perhaps this was the intent of the poet. Whatever the case, Dioscorus' encomia are like the concealed allegories of

the early Byzantine period. They are like the mystical allegories—as interpreted by Proclus—of Homer's description of Hera's seduction of Zeus and Hephaestus' entrapment of Ares and Aphrodite. They are also like the mystical allegory of Musaeus' *Hero and Leander*—as interpreted by modern scholars. In its entirety, it appears to be Neoplatonic-Christian mystical allegory, and may have been interpreted that way already by Procopius. Not every verse, however, in *Hero and Leander* reveals a mystical level of meaning.

Not only is the mystical significance of several verses elusive, but also it is never said or plainly revealed that his poems have a mystical level of meaning. Dioscorus may have chosen to use the encomiastic genre because it could both reveal and conceal the mystical meaning. Because the mystical experience is beyond description, a poet needs to use images with which his readers are familiar and which will convey an approximate sense of the actual experience. Poems in praise of a magistrate provided such a vehicle. The genre of the encomium could naturally incorporate elements of majesty, hierarchy, travel, humility, meeting, praise, jubilation, and petition. The genre was popular and conventional; significant variations would have been discernible and understandable to an erudite and interested Byzantine audience. Secrecy, however, was equally important to mystical writers. Pseudo-Dionysius wrote in *The Mystical Theology*:

Τούτων δὲ ὄρα, ὅπως μηδεὶς τῶν ἀμυήτων ἐπακούσῃ· τούτους δὲ φημι τοὺς ἐν τοῖς οὖσις ἐνισχημένους καὶ οὐδὲν ὑπὲρ τὰ ὄντα ὑπερουσίως εἶναι φανταζομένους, ἀλλ' οἰομένους εἰδέναι τῇ καθ' αὐτοὺς γνώσει τὸν θέμενον «σκότος ἀποκρυφῆν αὐτοῦ». (*MTh* 142.12-15)

The difficulties encountered in our analyses show that Dioscorus took

Pseudo-Dionysius' injunction about secrecy seriously. The literal level of Dioscorus' poems by and large conceals their mystical significance. Enough is obtrusive or discernible, however, that using Proclus' interpretations of Homer and Musaeus' epyllion as *comparanda*, one might call Dioscorus' encomia mystical allegories.

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In order to facilitate access and better provide a reading list for further information, the bibliography is arranged into the following categories: 1) editions of papyri; 2a) primary sources—individual authors; 2b) primary sources—collections and anonymous authors; 3) art, architecture, and coins; 4) dictionaries, lexicons, and encyclopedias; 5) secondary sources—papyrology; 6) secondary sources—mysticism; 7) secondary sources—Neoplatonism; 8) secondary sources—monks and monasticism; 9) secondary sources—patristics; 10) secondary sources—hagiography; 11) secondary sources—poetry, prayer, allegory, and rhetoric; 12) secondary sources—general. Although some titles can fit into several categories, each source has been cited only in the category most appropriate for its topic.

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## VITA

Clement Kuehn was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on February 20, 1952. Mr. Kuehn received his B.A. from the University of Illinois, Chicago, where he graduated in 1976 with honors and distinction in American and English literature. In 1987 he was offered a teaching assistantship by the Department of Classical Studies at Loyola University, Chicago. In the summer of 1990, he received a Gleason Fellowship to study Classical and Byzantine art and archaeology at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. At the end of the same summer, he was granted permission by the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to examine and photograph the Dioscorian papyri owned by that museum. The following academic year (1990-91), Mr. Kuehn was invited to join the Loyola University Teaching Fellowship Program. During the same year he received his M.A. in Classical Studies. In the following academic year (1991-92), Mr. Kuehn was awarded the prestigious Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship, with which he was able to devote himself full-time to writing his dissertation, *Channels of Imperishable Fire*.

Mr. Kuehn's publications are the following: "Dioskoros of Aphroditos and Romanos the Melodist," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 27 (1990), 103-07; and "A New Papyrus of a Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (forthcoming). His papers and lectures include the following: "The Theater at Epidauros" (presented at Epidauros, Greece, July 1990); "The Tenth-Century Monastery of Hosios Lucas" (presented at Hosios Lucas, Greece, August 1990); "The American School of Classical Studies in Athens: Why I Dig Greece" (presented at a Loyola University colloquium, October 1990); "Teaching Core Courses: The First Time Around" (presented at a Loyola University colloquium, November 1990); "Human Victims in the *Iliad*'s Similes" (presented at the 87th annual CAMWS conference, April 1991); "A New Papyrus of a

Dioscorian Poem and Marriage Contract" (presented at the 18th annual Byzantine Studies Conference, October 1992).

In addition to his own research and publications, Mr. Kuehn worked as coeditor for two volumes about divine infinity by Leo Sweeney, S.J. The first volume, *Divine Infinity in Greek and Medieval Thought*, has already appeared in print (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); the second volume is forthcoming. He also prepared for publication the monograph *Promise-Giving and Treaty-Making: Homer and the Near East* by Peter Karavites and Thomas Wren (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

Since 1988 Mr. Kuehn has been teaching language and core courses at Loyola University, Chicago, including the following: Classical Epics, Classical Mythology, New Testament Greek, Greek Historiography, Roman Prose, and Roman Poetry. He has traveled extensively in Greece, Egypt, and Germany.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Clement A. Kuehn has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. James G. Keenan, Director  
Professor, Classical Studies  
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Edwin P. Menes  
Assistant Professor, Classical Studies  
Loyola University of Chicago

Leo Sweeney, S. J.  
Professor, Philosophy  
Loyola University of Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 16, 1943  
Date

James G. Keenan  
Director's Signature