

THEOPISTUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Theopistus accompanied [DIOSCORUS](#) I of Alexandria (444-458) to the Council of CHALCEDON. After Dioscorus was sentenced to [exile](#) in Gangra, Theopistus went to the Pentapolis where he wrote an account of the events of the council, challenging its decisions.

He is named in the *[Panegyric](#) of Macarius of Tkow*, which is attributed to the same Dioscorus. In this text (ed. Johnson, 1983, chap. 1, pp. 10-13), the bishop-monk Macarius is portrayed as an uneducated holy man who did not know Greek, just as [Dioscorus](#) did not know Coptic. When he saw that an interpreter was needed in order to talk with Dioscorus, Theopistus asked Dioscorus why he had brought Macarius to the council; Dioscorus replied that Macarius was the superior of either of them.

It seems clear that a Coptic-monastic tradition sought to exalt a specific monk (as in the case of Victor at the Council of EPHESUS), thus introducing some alteration in the “official” Greek tradition of the patriarchate, which was also anti-Chalcedonian. However, Theopistus is a well-attested historical character.

As a literary writer, Theopistus is known as the author of the so-called *Life of [Dioscorus](#)*. Internal references lead one to suppose that he produced it in Greek in the Pentapolis (perhaps at Cyrene about 455). The Greek original has been lost; a complete [Syriac](#) version has survived (ed. Nau, 1903) and also various fragments from a papyrus codex now in London ([British](#) Library, Or. 7561, 85, 87, 90-102; ed. Crum, 1903; Wenstedt, 1906). As far as comparison can indicate, the Coptic and [Syriac](#) texts both appear to have their source in the same Greek version.

The content of the text reflects the tastes of the time, and especially that of the anti-Chalcedonian circles in which Timothy moved. They produced such works as the *Plerophoriae* of [JOHN](#) OF MAYUMA and the *Life of Peter the Iberian*, in which historical facts that were actually the basis of

the accounts tended to be replaced by the miraculous element and “pious fraud” of a polemico- theological type. The text is not a true life of [Dioscorus](#) but an account (fictitious and polemical) of the Council of Chalcedon, including the opening stages of the council, its actual celebration, the condemnation of Dioscorus, and his [exile](#) to Gangra and death.

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