

*Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria: The Last Pharaoh and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Later Roman Empire* offers a thorough revision of the historical role of Dioscorus as patriarch of Alexandria between 444 and 451 CE. One of the major protagonists of the Christological controversy, Dioscorus was hailed a saint in Eastern Church traditions which opposed the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Yet Western Church traditions remember him as a heretic and violent villain, and much scholarship maintains this image of Dioscorus as ‘ruthless and ambitious’, a ‘tyrant-bishop’ feared by his opponents—the ‘Attila of the Eastern Church’.

This book breaks with these negative stereotypes and offers the first serious historical analysis of Dioscorus as ecclesiastical politician and reformer. It discusses the discrepancy that theologically Dioscorus was a loyal follower of his famous predecessor Cyril of Alexandria (412–444) while politically he was the leading figure of the anti-Cyrrillian party in Alexandria. Analysing Dioscorus’ role as president of the Second Council of Ephesus in 449 and his downfall and deposition at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Volker L. Menze also offers a much-needed new reading of the acts of these two general councils.

Reappraising the life and role of Dioscorus ultimately shows how the Christological controversy of the fifth century can only be fully understood against the background of imperial politics—and its mechanisms for implementing ‘Orthodoxy’—in the Later Roman Empire.

Jacket illustration: Icon of Patriarch Dioscorus as Pharaoh with the city of Alexandria and the Council of Chalcedon in the background. Artwork created by Dietmar W. Menze.

**VOLKER L. MENZE** is Associate Professor for Late Antique History at Central European University, particularly working on ecclesiastical history 300–700 CE. His recent publications include an edited volume on Syriac hagiography and articles on church councils, book burnings, bribery, episcopal nepotism, and alternative ecclesiologies in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.

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