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Title: From the Discourse of John the Geometer on the Dormition of Our most holy Lady, Mother of God

From the Discourse of John the Geometer on the Dormition of Our most holy Lady, Mother of God (from: Antoine Wenger AA, *L'Assomption de la T. S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du V^e au X^e siècle*, Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1955, pp. 364–415), 57-60, pp.404-8.

John the Geometer lived in the 10th century, and was probably a layman. He wrote a *Life of the Virgin Mary*, from which this extract was taken, as well as poems in the Virgin's honour. Until very recently, the *Life* had not appeared in a complete translation into a modern language, but an English edition has been published recently (John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin Mary*, ed. and trans. Maximos Conostas and Christos Simelidis. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2023).

From the Discourse of John the Geometer on the Dormition

Now my nature is again in the heavens,
where first, as that which is common to us,
and secondly, as that which is new and theanthropic,
she who is at once, and to all, the queen of the universe,
higher than the thrones, more terrifying than the cherubim, wiser than the seraphim –
or rather,
fearful to thrones, terrifying to the cherubim, and incomprehensible to the seraphim –
with a kingdom that cannot perish,
is alone on the second rank after the royal Trinity:
filled with the Trinity to abundance,
clothed wholly with royal wealth,
admired and venerated by every rank and name, expressed or known,
inexpressible and unknowable to us until now.

But what to me is not only more radiant and more profitable
is that now she is a second mediator with the first mediator,
god-bearing humanity in relation to the human-bearing God,¹
second first-fruits for the Father, delightful and blameless after the first.

But these matters are beyond every reason and occasion.

It is given neither to us nor to those who transcend us
either to understand them or speak of them.

We must abstain from these things.

Our discourse has already reached its limit;
what we can add is little in measure, though all the same much in view of our need.
It will be at once an act of thanksgiving and a farewell, or rather, a petition.

We give thanks to you, Master and Steward, for all these mysteries,
and above all for having chosen such a one as we are
to be the minister of your mysteries.

¹ The Greek terms used here are 'theophoros' (not 'theotokos', the technical term for Mary's being the Godbearer) and 'anthropophoros'.



We thank you for your ineffable wisdom and power and love for humankind,
that you have not only bound our nature to yourself
and glorified it with an honour equal to your own,
and deified it with equal divinity,
but also that you did not disdain to take your mother from among us,
and showed her to be queen of the universe, of heaven and earth.

We thank you, our common Father, that you also made your mother
to be our common mother

so that none of us might be bereft of parents,
and that you have granted through them both, not only adoption as sons,
but also the name and state of brother.

We thank you who suffered so greatly from us and for us
and prepared your own mother to suffer so much for you and for us,
so that that equal honour in suffering should not only acquire for her participation in
the same glory,

but also, rather, eternally work our salvation,
as we remember the birth pains she endured for us,
and thereby preserve a love for her, not only naturally,
but also by remembering all that she did for our sake throughout the whole of her life.

We give thanks to you who give yourself as a ransom for our sake
and, after yourself, give your own mother as deliverance at each moment,
so that while you died once for our sake, she might die a thousand times in her will, just as
her entrails were burning for you on our behalf,
when, like the Father, for our sake she gave her only son,
and saw him delivered to death.

We thank you, too, Lady, for the troubles and sufferings you bear for us up to the
present time.

And we do not grieve at your tomb, but rather, celebrate your wedding feast;
we do not utter a farewell song, but we clap our hands in welcome.

For in passing over to the heavens, you did not abandon us to things of the earth,

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nor, as you were delivered from the miseries of this world,
passing over at once to ineffable blessedness that knows no end,
you did not forget the evils that beset us.

Rather, you keep us ever in mind and free us from hardship.

Nor did you leave us doubly orphaned, but rather, you freed us from being orphans, making
us acceptable to yourself and your Son and our Father,
and reconciling us to them. (pp. 404–8)