

On the Occasion of the All-Venerable Dormition and
Glorious Translation of the Theotokos

“How Is One To Hymn Thy Grace, O Sovereign Lady?”

Glory to God for all things! A wondrous *Treatise* by St. Philotheos (Kokkinos), Patriarch of Constantinople (1353-1354; 1367-1376), “On the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos,” has been in circulation since 2007 (Athens: Ekdoseis “Athos”) in a beautiful and meticulously produced volume.

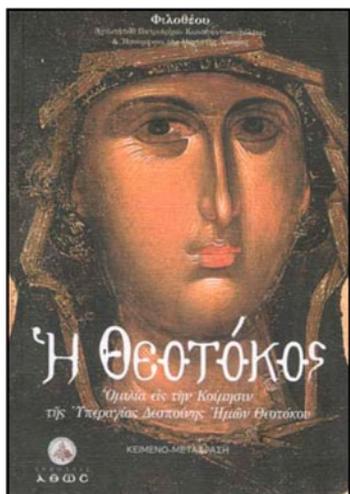


This treatise, which is narrative in form, was written at the beginning of the fourteenth century, when St. Philotheos, a Hesychast and a follower of St. Gregory Palamas, was Abbot of the Great Lavra on the Holy Mountain, where the hand-written manuscript from which the following text is taken can be found. It is “the most complete of all writings dedicated to the Dormition” of the *Panagia*.

• In what follows, we have reproduced §XLIII.

St. Philotheos (Kokkinos),
Patriarch of Constantinople

Homily on the Dormition of Our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos



XLIII. But how, and with recourse to what thoughts and words, can one even in small part hymn thy Grace, O Sovereign Lady?

1. Thou didst check the flood of the corruption of our kind, inundating us without ceasing, more so than did that symbolic Ark cleave Jordan's stream.¹

2. Through thee was the bitter sea of impiety cloven, and the new Israel conveyed dryshod to the Promised Land by way of a cloud and a pillar of fire, while the noetic Pharaoh was drowned, together with the Egyptians in his company.²

3. Thou didst nourish thy people with Christ, the Manna of Life, and didst give them to drink of the sweet drink that flowed from His side, like unto that sharp rock³ in the wilderness of sin, snatching them from the death of sin.

4. Thou didst cut through the impassable barrier and destroy the middle wall of the ancient enmity⁴ forging peace in Heaven and on earth.

5. Thou gavest birth to perfect God and perfect Man on earth in manner surpassing nature, bringing the whole of man, preternaturally deified, back again to Heaven.

6. Thou didst banish our ancestral curse and in its place gloriously bring in its place a blessing for the sake of all, when thou heardest from on high, "Blessed art thou among women."⁵

¹ Joshua 3:14-17.

² Exodus 14:19-30.

³ Numbers 20:8-II.

⁴ Ephesians 2:14.

⁵ St. Luke 1:28.

7. Having shattered the bond of our disobedience and condemnation through the lance of thy Son and God, thou didst seal our freedom in regal manner through His blood.

8. Thou art the cause of the preaching of the Apostles.

9. Thou art the premise of the struggles of the Martyrs.

10. Through thee have women in manner transcending nature set up a notable trophy of victory over him that first tyrannized women.

11. “Young maidens love thee,”⁶ that is, the souls of the holy and righteous, virgins both pure and abounding in every virtue. “They have drawn near behind thee, running after the savor of thine unguents.”⁷

12. “Daughters saw thee and praised thee, and queens and concubines blessed thee,”⁸ according to the wise Solomon. Let David, thine ancestor and the Ancestor of God, sing with Solomon these things to thee: “All the glory of the king’s daughter is within; in gold-fringed garments is she robed, adorned in divers colors. The virgins that follow her shall be brought unto the king; those near her shall be brought unto thee.”⁹

13. Having previously foreshadowed thee at sundry times, the Law and the Prophets have in latter times been glorified by thy glory.

14. The golden seven-branched candelabrum¹⁰ prefigured thee, who shineth forth with the seven light-bearing gifts of the Spirit.

15. An unerring type of thee was the golden jar that contained the Manna,¹¹ the new bread that came down from on high, and the rod of Aaron¹² that preternaturally budded wondrous fruit.

16. Thou art the new Tome of which the Prophet Isaiah spoke,¹³ in which was inscribed the Word of God in human form ineffably appearing as “God with us,” the “Angel of the Father’s Great Counsel,” “wonderful Counsellor,” Who with the great might of His Divinity assumed power over both the present and the future.¹⁴

⁶ Song of Songs 1:3.

⁷ Cf. Song of Songs 1:4.

⁸ Cf. Song of Songs 6:9.

⁹ Psalm 44:14-15.

¹⁰ Exodus 25:31-40.

¹¹ Exodus 16:33-34.

¹² Numbers 17:8.

¹³ Isaiah 8:1.

¹⁴ Isaiah 9:6.

17. Ezekiel, inspired by God, saw thee of old as a closed gate that “looketh eastward,”¹⁵ being inaccessible to all and accessible to God alone, Who, he says, “shall go in thereto and go forth.”¹⁶

18. Avvakoum foretold thee as the “shady and densely wooded mountain,”¹⁷ from which God descended, hinting at the incomprehensible mystery of thy childbirth, both deep and hard to fathom, and also at the height of thy virtues and the loftiness of thy soul, which disdains things earthbound.

19. Prefiguring the seedless Nativity of Christ from thee, Solomon says, “Wisdom hath builded a house for herself, and set up seven pillars,”¹⁸ alluding to the union in thee of the seven energies¹⁹ of the Spirit,²⁰ since indeed “the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in thee.”²¹ For this reason, the Prophet-King David spoke to Christ about thee by anticipation: “Thy temple is holy, wonderful in righteousness.”²²

20. And, looking to thy conceiving and the glad tidings of Gabriel concerning it, he said to thee: “Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house. And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty.”²³ Signaling thy Dormition and resurrection and thy rest in thy Son and God, he addressed Him beforehand with Divine inspiration: “Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest; Thou, and the ark of Thine holiness”;²⁴ “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God”;²⁵ “The Most High hath sanctified His tabernacle; God is in the midst of her, she will not be shaken.”²⁶



¹⁵ Ezekiel 44:1.

¹⁶ Ezekiel 44:3.

¹⁷ Avvakoum 3:3.

¹⁸ Proverbs 9:1.

¹⁹ The energies of the Spirit are also called the gifts of the Spirit: see St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, Ch. XIX (§§48-49), *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXII, cols. 156A-157A, and St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXX, col. 316AB.

²⁰ For this interpretation, see Procopius of Gaza, *Commentary on Proverbs*, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, cols. 1300D-1301A.

²¹ Cf. Colossians 2:9; see also the *Theotokion* at the *Aposticha* in Plagal of the Fourth Tone at Vespers on Wednesday evening (*Παράκλητική* [Athens: Ekdoseis Phos, 1987], p. 441).

²² Psalm 64:5-6.

²³ Psalm 44:11-12.

²⁴ Psalm 131:8.

²⁵ Psalm 86:3.

²⁶ Psalm 45:5-6.