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The Unpublished Letters of Theoleptos Metropolitan of Philadelphia (1283-1322) (Part Two)¹

ANGELA C. HERO

Second Letter to the Same by the Same

The letters which you sent to me with Kydonatos and Karbones, and lately with the monk Niphon, may have been written on different occasions but their purport is the same. For although they discuss in part different matters, for the most part they address themselves to one and the same objective. The letters therefore which I sent, one to you and another to Agathonike, are sufficient by the grace of Christ to prepare you for any good work and for the endurance of misfortunes that strike from the outside. They also contain my answer to [your] questions in those letters. The frequent reading of [my letters] and the refreshing of memory by this reading as well as the ensuing practical benefit will be a cause of great profit to the peruser.

To my statements in those letters I now add the following: temptations did not overtake you yet, you have not yet learned the struggle against them; you did not yet feel their bitterness nor did you taste the sweetness which springs from the fruit and solace of patient endurance. For this reason you are annoyed at the first occurrence of trivial vexations. You are still strolling in the springtime of comfort. You are feeding on the consolation of your parents, your brothers, your relatives, your friends and all your acquaintances. You enjoy the flavor of praises; the delight of relaxation possesses you. These things weaken your judgment, harden your opinion and blemish your inclination for painful [tasks.] For these reasons the winter of temptations is slow in coming; because you are weak and cannot endure it. The mother gives milk for nourishment to the delicate young child, but when he grows she offers him solid food. If sorrows approach you too, know that they are small because the [divine] grace so ordains it, that you may little by little through small sorrows pass the test by patient endurance. If, on the other hand, you are beset by frequent troubles, behold! Christ “The
μάζει κατά γάρ το πλήθος τῶν δύναμεων μου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου, ἡμαῖν, αἱ παρακλήσεις σου ἔφραγνες τὴν ἡμέραν μου.

Οδὴ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ δίπλα πόνου ποιοῦται ὁ γεωργός καμάρτιον πολλά τὸν σῖτον γεωργεῖ, ὁ κηπωρᾶς ἑρωτόν χρήστος τῆς τῶν λαχάνων ἐργάζεται αὐξήσῃ, ὁ ἔμπορος πελάτης πολλὰ δολάσσει καὶ πολλὰς διαπεραὶ καὶ μακρὰς ὀδοὺς στέλλεται κέρδος μικρὸν ἐνεκα, καὶ αἱ θλίψεις τοῦ μοναχοῦ τῆς ἁγίους χαράς προμηθεύονται, καὶ ὁ ἄμαρτος [οἰ. 236] πάνω καὶ ὁ κατορθῶν διὰ πειρασμῶν σῳζότας τοὺς μὲν ἀμαρτάνουσαν ἐπέρχονται οἱ πειρασμοὶ εἰς ἑκτὸν ἀμαρτημάτων, ὡποὶ ἐνταῦθα διὰ θλίψεως σφορονοκέντρες τῶν ἐκείνης πειρατηρίων λυτρώματα ἔμειναν τὸ δὲ καταρθότας πάλιν συναντῶσαι οἱ πειρασμοὶ εἰς ταπείνωσιν τοῦ ὑψομένου φιλονόμος ἐκ τῶν ἁρετῶν καὶ τὸ μὲ ἀπολέσαν τὸν ἀποκείμενον παρὰ θεοῦ τοῖς δικαίως μισθών. οὕτω μάχαιρα διὰ πυρός καὶ ἔνατος στομματίζεται, οὕτω δίνεται πειρατημένος λαβίδος δικτός συνέχεται, οὕτω μοναχὸς χαρίς ἐκουσιών πόνον καὶ ἀκουσιών πειρασμῶν στεφάνασωτας.

Ἡ τοῦ θεου πυρὸς λάβει ὁ ἐκκοσίος πόνοι καὶ αἱ ἐξεβάλενθι θλίψεις περίκοκασι. Εἰ δὲ θεοῦ πῦρ ὑποδεξαζόμεθα καὶ ἀνάγαιον, μὴ ἐκλύουσιν ἑπί τούτων ἡ ἀθληματος ἀγονισμα τας ἁρετὰς, μὴ ἀπανᾶναι τὰς συμβανούσις σας συμφοράς [οἰ. 236 α] οὕτω γὰρ ἐξεις τὸν θεούν ἐν ἑαυτῇ διὸ π ὁ ὁ καὶ τὰ ἐκντὰ τὰ πάσιν ὑθυπνότας κατανόων τὸις λόγοις τούτως, σῶντας τὴν τοῖς ἐκέκοιτος πόνον καὶ τεῖν ἀκούσας ἐπιτροπῆς ἐγκεκριμένην ἐλλαγμένην καὶ ὑφυπερήτως σας σας καὶ ἐκ τοῦ νομοῦ φωτισμὸν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀθληματος ἀθληματος οἴοι τοῦ πυρὸς σπάνθης ἀποτεράμπται, ὡσὶ καὶ ὑψώσας τὸν

34-36 Ps. 93 (94). 19 || 43 διὰ... σῴζονται || cf. Jac. 1. 12 || 50-51 ἄθροα... λαβιδός || cf. Is. 6. 6-7 || 57-58 Deut. 4. 24; 9. 3 || Ad app. 58-62 Ps. 105(107). 43 || 61. 2. Cor. 4. 6 || 62-63 χαρήσεται... αἰρομένην || cf. Joan. 16. 22

37-39 Οἰδή... ἐργάζεται || οὕτως ἐχει ὅμη Immunize γῶν... ἑρωτότων... 54 κι... πῦρ... σεμεσσά || ὅμη... 58-62 μοχθηρίαν... καρδία... τίς σσοφος... κατα συνήθης ταύτα ὅμη... 61-62 χαρήσεται... ὅμη... 62-64... ἀπολέσαται... σεμεσσά... ὅρα... ὅμη... 63 χάλυκος...
iron, in the same way when a God-loving soul is attacked by temptations from the outside, it glows with the [lights] emanating from the divine illuminations and becomes all light and can illuminate those who approach it as they see the lights flashing from the endurance for the love of God and from the gentleness and kindness towards all. The voluntary sufferings of the champion [of God] render impotent the manifest ways of the body’s pleasures, whereas external hardships check and destroy the hidden passions of the soul and thus the man of God is molded.

You sold all your belongings and renounced your parents, your brothers, your relatives, your friends, your acquaintances, your money, your houses, your estates, and even your own body. In exchange for all these, you acquired the “precious pearl,” Christ who is every blessing and above every blessing. Having Christ, you have every blessing; what is it that you miss and are complaining? What is it that you lack and you are upset? You had a taste of Christ, “the heavenly bread,” the true manna. You drank the drink of life. You know that “the Lord is good.” You learned that “there is no want to them that fear Him.” You stored in the treasury of love the treasure of life: Christ. You rejected the pleasure of this world by [rejecting] the things attached to the world. You set the fear of God to guard the gate [of your soul] and persuade you to endure all anguish in “this world” for the sake of Him who suffered wounds on your behalf and made you a partaker of His glory, by accepting the various sorrows that befell you and by imitating His fortitude.

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78 Mat. 13.46 || 82 Basil. Caes., Liturgia (Brightman, 309, 9); Joan. Chryss., Liturgia (Brightman, 360, 31) || 83 ζόης . . . σώμα: cf. Joan. 6. 53-55 || 83 Ps. 33(34).8; 1 Pet. 2. 3 || 84-85 Ps. 33(34).10 || 85-86 θεσμού. . . Χριστόν: cf. Ps.—Macarius, Hom. 16, 5 (Despréz, 196, 7) || 89 Rom. 12. 2; 1 Cor. 2. 6 || 89-90 τραυματισθέντα: cf. 1 Pet. 2. 25 || 90. κοινωνόν. . . δόξης: cf. Joan. 17. 22, 24; 1 Thes. 2. 12; 1 Pet. 5. 10
Οι πλούσιοι τοῦ αἱ ὑ νοὶ τοῦτος καὶ πτωχεύομαι καὶ πεινάσων ὡς ἦπατημένοι τῇ τῶν φθειρωμένων ἐπιθυμίᾳ καὶ δοκοῦντες κατέχεν τὰ μὴ κρατούμενα· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ πεινάσωμεν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἀδυναμίζομαι ὡς τοῦ ἄλληνος πλούτου ἐκπεπτωκότες καὶ τὴν ἱέρσεων ὑλὴν ἀγαπητῶν καὶ τὴν ἰδιωτικοποιημένην τέρψιν τῶν ἐν τῷ παρερχομένῳ αἴώνι καὶ ἐφανερωμένοι καὶ ἀφανιζομένοι δήκεν ἀρχιτέκτονς τοῦ θεοῦ. Οἱ τοιοῦτοι καὶ πτωχεύομαι καὶ ἐπί τοῦ λειμα πε-κοντανοῦ ὁδόν ἐκεῖ ἄλλα πολλάκις καὶ ὀδόν [fol. 238r] διὰ τὸ ἀστατον τῶν παρόντων, οὐ δὲ παρεσάμενοι τὰ πάντα, καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς τοῦ σώματος ζωῆς μὴ φείδομεν διὰ τοῦ προτιμάν ἡν ἡν ἐλπίδαν ζωήν, τὸν Χριστὸν, ἐκτέθειν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς τὸν Κύριον ὡς ἀποτρεφόμενος τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἡμώ-νοι ἀπαριστήκτηκεν καὶ ὑποί τοῦ Χριστοῦ περιελεμένοι. οὕτω ὡς ἀνθρώπους ἐκτέθειν τον Κύριον ὁ κελατωθεὶς ἡντας τος ἄγαθος· δὲ δὲ τὸ πάντο παντὸς ἀγαθὸν ἐκαθορισμένος, κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστολικὴν παραγγελίαν, χαίρετε ἐν Χριστῷ. Πάντως ὡς γὰρ ἠδύνατον χορεῖ τοῦτον ζῆν, οὕτως οἰκεῖον ἄδια τοῦτο καὶ ἀεὶ χαίρεται καὶ ἀλήθεις χαίρε-μας.

Εἰ τὴν παρὰ τῶν τεκόντων κολακεῖαν καταδέχεται, εἰ τὴν τὸν ἀδελφὸν [fol. 238v] συνειλαχθαν ἐπιποθεῖες, εἰ τὴν τὸν συγ-γενὸς ὑφίστασθαι στέργεις, εἰ τὴν σύνηθεν τῶν κόσμων φιλεῖς προσεχεῖς, οὐ, εἰ τῶν προσκόπων ἐναρείον πραγμάτων καὶ υπέ-κματα καὶ ἥγους παρακατέχεις καὶ ἀλλο τον ὑπέγειων παρὰ σοι μένου, πῶς ἐρεῖς μετὰ τοῦ Παῦλου ἐξ οἰ-κής, καὶ συμφωνεῖ εἰς τοῦ Παῦλου, ἐποίησεν ἃ ἐτέρω ἤ τοί, τοῦ κόσμου ζῶντος καὶ


94-96 ἐπιθυμία... ἐκπεπτωκότες] φεῦ τῆς ἐπάνω Ομη || 101 ὡδὲ ὃ || 107-111 ἀλλήθος... χαίρει... μακάριοι οί τοιοῦτο ὡς ἀλληθός Ομη || 113 ἄδωντος] σημείωσαν Ομη || 116-17 κολακείαν... ἀδελφῶν] προσοχῆς ἔξη Ομη || 121-22 πῶς... καὶ ἀδωντον Ομη

The rich of “this world” become poor and go hungry because they are deceived by the desire of perishable [goods] and believe that they possess what cannot be possessed. For this reason they shall go hungry and suffer in the world to come, because they have forfeited the true riches and cherished the transient matter and the false delight of the [gratifications] of this passing age which are spun and disappear like “spider’s webs.” Such persons become poor and are consumed by famine not only in the world to come but many times even here on account of the instability of the things of the present world. But those who rejected everything, not even sparing the life of their body, because they prefer Christ, the true life, seek out the Lord day and night, for they have turned away from the world and have denied themselves and are following Christ. These persons “shall not want any good thing” because they truly “seek out the Lord.” And he who possesses the whole and incomparable Good wants nothing; never suffers a loss; but always enjoys every blessing and rejoices for ever because his joy is in the Lord, in accordance with the Apostolic injunction; “Rejoice in the Lord always!” For just as it is impossible to live without Him, it is likewise inconceivable without Him to rejoice always and to rejoice truly.

If you accept the flattery of your parents, if you long for the conversation of your brothers, if you like the company of your relatives, if you are fond of intimate contact with the world, if you cling to your dowry and retain houses and farms, and if any other earthly [possessions] remain yours, how will you say with Paul, “the world has been crucified to me,” while the world
lives and thrives in you? Then again if you abandoned all these, but now when you see your parents taking away your posses-
sions and turning away from you, or [when you see] anyone whomsoever looking down upon you, you become disturbed and
agitated and at times the spear of grief and wrath and rancor
strikes you, while at other times you strike your visitors with
the retorts of your tongue as if with arrows, how will you say
the remaining [words] of the Apostolic saying, “and I am
crucified to the world,” when your soul is attached to the world
and to the flesh through desire? The lovers of “this world” have
made covenants with the world and they pursue the life of the
flesh believing that this is pleasure. But you have explored the
“world to come” and loved its blessedness and crucified yourself
to the present world through the monastic life. You promised
to live by the hope of future [blessings] alone, so that you may
say with Paul: “It is no longer I who live but Christ Who lives
in me.” He who is not living is dead. A dead person is not moved
by the spirit and the wishes of the flesh, and thus he has Christ
living in him. [Such a person] leads the life of the spirit and walks
in the spirit and is a “citizen of Heaven.” “If Christ is in you,”
he says, “although your bodies are dead because of sin, your
spirit is alive because of righteousness.”

When His mother and His brothers were searching for Him
the Lord said: “My mother and my brothers are those who hear
the word of God and act upon it.” You, too, must say: “My
father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has taken
me to Himself.” Do not grieve when you are treated with
injustice and contempt. You do not suffer loss by suffering an
injustice whereas by grieving you do injustice to your soul, making
it dark and dead. For “wordly grief,” says the Apostle, “produces eternal death.” Those who seize your belongings and look down upon you do a greater injustice to themselves; for it is not the man who is injured and endures oppression with a noble spirit that suffers loss but the man who wrongs and oppresses his neighbor. Those who seize your belongings “break your bonds” and set you on the road to spiritual freedom. Those who look down upon you preserve you free of vain-glory. Behold how this is accomplished: when you are looked down upon, you suffer and by suffering you discover the shame of the love of glory; for this hidden passion in you which you were fostering by being flattered and failed to recognize it, this you now discovered by grieving and being disturbed over the insolence and rejection. You were nourishing the wild beast by being honored and satisfying your love of worldly things, and you thought that you were at peace and free of passions. The moment you were insulted, wronged, rejected, the wild beast rose trembling to pieces, irritating you, annoying you, inciting you to anger, hurling you down the precipice of rancor. When you observe, therefore, the abnormal state of your heart and the rest of your soul’s disgusting condition, you discern the disposition of the passion which holds you in its grip and think to yourself: this passion which distresses me now, charmed me before by my voluntary worldly inclination; that is why I am torn to pieces by external difficulties contrary to my inclination. Had I restrained the “desire of the flesh” with the bridle of self-control, I would not be punished now with irrational sorrow over my family’s rejection. I shall scourage pettiness, then, by magnanimous fortitude and shall endure sorrows patiently no matter how and from where they befall me. I shall make my “soul peaceful” and just as I willingly rejected the pleasures of this mortal life, so will I prepare myself to accept the anguish inflicted by the outside [world].

When you think such thoughts, you detest passions and acquire patience; you avoid pleasures through self-control and endure pains through patience. And when you have conquered

Τοιούτου οὖν καὶ τοιούτου πλούτου ἐκ τῶν περισσῶν κομιζόμενη, μή μάχοι τοὺς περίαντάς σε, μηδὲ μίας τούς λυπούσθας σε, ὡς λατρεύσεις τούτους ἵψοι, διὰ τῶν κατὰ τὰς λύπας φαρμάκους ἱμανέουσας καὶ ὡς προκοπανεύουσας σοι τὰ ἀπόρρητα ἁγάπας. τίμα δὲ καὶ ὑπερεύχω καὶ ἁγάπα, κἂν ὑποδησιές εἴναι οἱ λυποῦντες σε, καὶ εἰ πλεῖον πάλαις ἐχείς ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων ἄνθρωπου, ἀλλὰ ἀντιτίθεις τοῖς ὁχληροῖς λογισμοῖς καὶ ἀποκρίνου λέγουσα: "ὅσα μέγας ἐν χώρας, τοιούτο καὶ ἡ νίκη κραταιοτέρα καὶ σῶρον πᾶλιν περιβοσής ἡ νίκη, τοιούτο καὶ οἱ στέρουνες μείζονες.

Ἀπόθεον πάσαν μέριμναν τῶν ἐν τῇ οὐ τοῦ ὁ, μίαν δὲ κτῆσις φροντίδα, τὸ βλέπειν ἐὰν τὸν *** [fol. 243r]

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192 τόπον παρέχεις; cf. Joan. 14. 2-3 || 196-97 Gal. 5. 22 || 198-99 ἄνεμος... τῆς γῆς; cf. Ps. 1.4-5 || 213-14 τίμα... se: cf. Mat. 5. 44 || 219-20 Rom. 12; 2 Cor. 2. 6

188-92 διὰ... εἰρήκαιν] τὴς τάσσαν ἄκού(ων) οὗ κτήσεται| ὑπομονὴν (καὶ) μακροθυμεῖ[άν] ὄργον] τοσοῦτον ἀγαθῶν ἐμπροσθεν] ἐτοιμασεῖ(αν) Omg || 200-02 ἁγάπης... διὰ... ὅρα παράκλησις(ν) Omg || 206 τήν] τῆς ὁ || 214 εἴεν O || 219 Ἀπόθεον... μέριμναν] στειροῦνται Omg || 220 lacuna 2 foliorum in O

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pleasure and pain, no obstacle can come near you from anywhere to prevent you from being with God. For when you reap peace from the wise thoughts that I mentioned, you offer a place to God in your heart and you keep God in your thoughts and you accomplish pure prayers in your mind and you chant with understanding and you read carefully, referring what you read to the attention of your heart, and you burn the fire of the love of God and the “fruits of the Spirit” grow in you and cast out every earthly thought from the depth of your soul, just as the wind [scatters] the dust from the face of the earth. For through the divine love you drive away the desire of earthly pleasures; through joy you crush the irrational sorrows attacking from without; through peace you banish anger; through goodness you chase away rancor; through forbearance you check pettiness; through gentleness you subdue arrogance; through firm belief in the future [blessings] you cast off the disbelief resulting from the enjoyment of present [gratifications] and through temperance you restrain unrestrained pleasure and render it impotent.

Since, then, you derive such and so much wealth from temptations, do not quarrel with those who tempt you nor hate those who distress you, but think of them as physicians treating you with the medicines of sorrow and procuring for you the ineffable blessings. Honor and pray for and love those who distress you no matter who they may be. And if you wage a greater war [against temptation] when your family causes you sorrow, resist the disturbing thoughts and respond by saying: “the greater the war, the mightier the victory; and again the more celebrated the victory, the greater the crowns!”

Put away all cares of “this world” and have only one con-
The Lord God grant to the most venerable abbess and the sisters in her charge the unadulterated blessings of Heaven. I exhort her to take gentle care of the nuns and [I exhort] them to obey her dictates and render unto her the proper honor. "May the Lord direct your heart to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ." Please bear with Agathonike and look after her in many ways that you may win both her and [the reward of] your labors on her behalf.