

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE GHAZI – JORDAN FEBRUARY 2015.

High Level Meeting at the Dead Sea, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

8-9 February, 2015

The hand of evil has stretched to Jordan and its neighbors this week, spreading violence and ignorance to a region striving to counter extremism with moderation and coexistence. The people of the Middle East, not in spite of, but because of their shared Abrahamic values, are unified in celebrating the sanctity of life. Our common religious foundations are built on the right of our Creator alone to bring about life. We strongly condemn such ugly, inhumane acts as they betray the keystone of our shared faiths: love. It is categorically incorrect to claim violence and killing as part of a God-inspired campaign. Carrying out such horrors in the name of religion is a crime against the Creator as well as against all humankind.

In Ephesians 6:11, Paul directs his audience to prepare for a battle, to “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Paul’s words echo through the centuries to meet us at a time when we are threatened by a force of evil far removed from the goodness of God’s creation. Paul would advise us to take the same stand today, against terrorist groups whose ambitions to rule

through death and destruction are none other than evil incarnate. These fighters, masquerading as Muslims, seek not to exalt the name of the Creator but to corrupt a religion of balance and peace. We know this from the scriptures of our Muslim brethren and from the leadership of King Abdullah II himself, who described this group as criminal and misguided; a band of brutal men who have nothing to do with the great faith of Islam. We join in denouncing the violence and oppression manifested by terrorists who have hijacked Islam to their own gain. We stand here today to proclaim that these acts of hatred are carried out neither in the name of the Creator, nor in the name of religion.

The language of the verse from the Epistle to the Ephesians provides a martial image of troops preparing for battle. The troops of Paul's vision were legions of those striving to live faithfully, united in their commitment to dismantle corruption of God's creation. What, then, is this 'armor of God,' which Paul invites us to wear? The armor is none other than God's commandment to us to seek justice, and love and kindness, and walk humbly with our Lord. Our counter-terrorism mission should be informed by our God-given directions to spread neither hatred nor violence, but to counter evil with a resolute gospel of moderation and harmony.

We do not stand here today to defend religion. The spermatic Divine Logos, i.e. the truths of our faith, can be found in the holy texts of all Abrahamic religions. Instead, we are here to refuse the claim that any terrorism can be led by God and that the Creator calls us to violence. We dress ourselves in the armor of peace and inclusiveness against the forces of evil at work in the world today, with the same assurance that the love of the Creator will guide us through these times of turmoil.

We suggest some practical steps to target and educate today's young generation of men and women so that we fight radicalization, which is fueling these things that are alien

to our region and have nothing to do with the Islamic faith.

We have to especially target the social and media outlets, which have the power to perpetuate or magnify messages.

We would like to end by expressing our utmost thanks to His Majesty the King for this generous and cordial hosting, and not in the least His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi for his dedicated and continuous efforts in promoting interfaith harmony and building the much-needed bridges of communication.

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THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM