

# **THE OFFICIAL RESPONSE OF HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III OF JERUSALEM TO HIS BEATITUDE JOHN X OF ANTIOCH CONCERNING THE CANONICAL JURISDICTION OF THE EMIRATE OF QATAR**

Translation by Theodoros Pritsis, M.Div., Th.M.

Your Beatitude, Your Most Godly and Your Holiness, Patriarch of the Great God City of Antioch and all the East, in Christ our God, Most Beloved and Dearest Brother and Concelebrant of Our Humility, Mr. Mr. John. We embrace Your Most Beloved Reverenced Beatitude in the Lord and We greet You with exceeding joy.

Being at the doors of Holy and Great Lent, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the month of March, We received the letter (Decision No. Ref. 7) of Your most beloved and profound Beatitude, in which it expresses the heartfelt wish through Our experience in prayer and humility the devout period of the fast and Our participation in the joy of the glorious Resurrection, and yet through favorable times toward an exchange of loving embrace and Our meeting of peace and the diligence of the topics concerning the Apostolic Thrones of Jerusalem and Antioch and mainly after the recent worthy election and enthronement ceremony, to which our Patriarchate beared the joy and honor of its participation.

We accept these blessings as an expression of sincere love of the soul of Your most beloved Beatitude, distinguished for many years in theological knowledge, ecclesiastical education

and monastic life. We desire to offer to Your Beatitude, the appropriate clarifications for the main topic touched upon in Your Beatitude's letter, such as the presence of our Patriarchate in Qatar, towards Your reassurance and Her dear to God shepherded sister Church of Antioch and Her preservation and strengthening from the beginning of Christianity full communion and cooperation between Our two Churches.

Firstly, we would like to mention that the Emirate of Qatar is an integral geographical continuation of Arabia, pastoral jurisdiction of our Patriarchate, as the set out points exhibit in continuation:

1) From out of Our title: "*Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine, Syria, Arabia, beyond the Jordan, Cana of Galilee and Holy Zion*" distinctly exhibits that We are the Patriarch of all Palestine, in whom are included the three Palestines, as exhibited from the eighth Act of the Proceedings of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (see Ralli & Potli, "*Constitution of the Divine and Holy Canons,*" vol. 2, Athens 1852, p. 131).

2) From Our Title also exhibits, that We are the Patriarch of Syria, which shows the above regions of Porphyroupolis (present day Haifa), in other words the Metropolis of Ptolemais and the above region of Skythopolis, in other words the present-day mountains of Golea until the bases of Mount Ermon. This clearly exhibits to the interpretation of Theodore Balsamon to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> canons of the First Ecumenical Synod, where it is mentioned synoptically: "*The Patriarch of Jerusalem has the eparchies of Palestine, Arabia and Phoenicia*" (see, *ibid.*, p. 129).

3) From Our Title also exhibits, that We are the Patriarch of Arabia, which has already been mentioned in the above interpretation of Theodore Balsamon, but also from the fact that the Arabian peninsula is a natural continuity of the

third Palestine. In confirming this, We quote the ancient published catalogue by Veverigios, in whom all the eparchies of the Patriarchates are mentioned, just as our Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For reasons of brevity, We omit here the Metropolises and Dioceses of the three Palestines and We mention the disputed point, such as in the Arabian eparchy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has as follows:

1. Bostra, Metropolis – 2. Adrasos. – 3. Dia. – 4. Madaba. – 5. Gerasa. – 6. Nevi. – 7. Philadelphia. – 8. Esvous. – 9. Neapolis. – 10. Phillipoupolis. – 11. Fenoutos (Isos Fino). – 12. Constantina. – 13. Dionusias. – 14. Pentakomia. – 15. Trikomia. – 16. Kanothas. – 17. Salton. – 18. Vataneos or Kataneos. – 19. Eksakomia. – 20. Enneakomia. – 21. Komi Gonias. – 22. Komi Herous. – 23. Komi Stanes. – 24. Komi Xaveras (or Maxaveras). – 25. Komi Koreathis. – 26. Komi Vilvanous. – 27. Komi Kapron. – 28. Komi Pirgoareton. – 29. Komi Setnis. – 30. Komi Ariahton. – 31. Neotis. – 32. Klima Anatolikon and Dismon. – 33. Komi Ariathas Trahonos. – 34. Komi Vevdamous (see Ralli & Potli, *“Constitution of the Divine and Holy Canons,”* vol. 5, Athens 1852, p. 472).

The above list confirms and in the work of Deacon Gregory Palamas: *“Jerusalem.”* (see *“Jerusalem, a concise history of the Holy City of Jerusalem from its foundation until the newer years”* by Deacon Gregory Palamas, professor of History in the Theological School of the Patriarchal Throne of Jerusalem, in Jerusalem, out of the Printing Press of the All-Holy Tomb, 1862, pp. 376-382).

This same is confirmed and out of the report of Neilos Doxopatres: *“On The Five Patriarchal Thrones”*, which mentions the following: *“And after these things he was honored the throne of Jerusalem, broken away of the parish and power of the Alexandrians, and become autocephalous, and head, and equal in rank to three thrones. Yet, declared itself after Antioch in honor of seating. And he was called Patriarch of*

Jerusalem, and verily previous bishop being of Caesarea and of Palestine. Palestine had Caesarea as its metropolis, in which includes Jerusalem, and Jerusalem became the diocese of Caesarea. It had other metropolises, having of them different dioceses, that is to say, second is Skythopolis, or Bashan, third is Petra, fourth is Bostra, or Arabia. It also has twenty-five autocephalous dioceses, not having dioceses within them, which are subject to the throne of Jerusalem; 1. Diospoleos 2. Askalon 3. Jaffa 4. Gaza 5. Anthidona 6. Dioklitinianoupolis 7. Eleftheroupolis 8. Neapolis 9. Sebasteia 10. Jordan 11. Tiberias 12. Diokaisareia 13. Maximianoupolis 14. Kapitoliada 15. Myra 16. Gadara 17. Nazareth 18. Mount Tabor 19. Kyriakoupolis 20. Adrias 21. Gavalades 22. Aelia 23. Farao (Pharaoh) 24. Elenoupolis 25. Mount Sinai (see Ralli & Potli, "Constitution of the Divine and Holy Canons," vol. 5, Athens 1852, p. 486-490).

Especially concerning Mount Sinai, with whom the relations of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are not dissentious witnessed by the sources, which must be into consideration by everything written in the Synodical epistle of Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople (1565) because of Synodical fortification of the privileges of the monastery: "...synodically meeting the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and the Patriarch of Antioch...and the Patriarch of Antioch has given two of his subjected metropolises which lie under his Throne, Caesarea of Palestine and Skythopolis, now detached from the metropolis Tyre of Porphyroupolis, and put on the boundary the river in between Ptolemais and Mount Carmel Zabulon in like manner four dioceses from the metropolis Bostra of Damascus, Cadiz, Kapitoliada, Avilla, and Gibeon, and dedicated those to Jerusalem, and a boundary was put until the country of Afsitis. The Patriarch of Alexandria has given as well metropolises that lie under His throne, Bostra of Arabia and Petra, and six dioceses, Gaza, Askalon, Eleftheroupolis, Faran, Ailia and Sinai. Particularly secure was the throne of Mount Sinai, in order that no one sits upon

*it, and make a jurisdiction until the Red Sea.*

It is expressed in this text the confidence of Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople that the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem spreads out towards the side of Arabia.

Furthermore We quote Your Beatitude and an excerpt from Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem's "12 Volumes" ("History of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem"), Second Book, Chapter 4, Paragraph 7: "Concerning the answers about the six oppositions against the patriarchal value of Jerusalem, and through many witnesses and the proof of appositions, that the ancient Patriarch of Jerusalem was also and is to be": "Concerning the fifth one must mention that it is daring to say that the Patriarch of Jerusalem did not have, before the Council of Chalcedon, neither eparchy nor administration, because he had both. The Patriarch of Antioch and here the Patriarch Jerusalem to differ on some eparchies and concerning their administrations (in the first Synod according to Gelasius locum tenens were Jerusalem, Caesarea, Phoenicia and Arabia, so that the power of Jerusalem spreads and to Phoenicia and Arabia) and in the first Synod out of agreement of these partitioned Eparchies, the Synod confirmed their agreement. If the Patriarch of Jerusalem is to not first receive the eparchy or administration, and if indeed this was true, how did the Emperor, the Archons and the large Ecumenical Synod not disagree with the Patriarch of Jerusalem? Moreover in the extortionate Council of Ephesus, which took place before the Council of Chalcedon, Iouvenalios had the accustomed ranks, in other words he sided with the Patriarch of Alexandria, as shown in the first act of the Council in Chalcedon, wherefore Patriarch Tarasios in the Seventh Ecumenical Council called him (Iouvenalios) patriarch and that, according to his value, he become Exarch of the Synod, first act..." (see Dositheos Jerusalem, "Dodecabiblos", According to the Jerusalem Patriarchs, vol. A & B, ed. Rigopoulos, Thessaloniki 1982,

pp. 324-325).

The jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem likewise exhibits and out of the address of Patriarch Neophytos VI of Constantinople (1734-1740 & 1743-1744) in his introductory letter (Decision Number 77), concerning: *“Moravicans, the so-called God-protecting who came to the eastern church, as agreeing with us concerning the piety, composition to the Patriarchs to accept them as pious and orthodox.”* In this letter the Patriarch of Constantinople addresses the Patriarchs as follows:

*“Your Beatitudes and Holinesses, the Pope and Patriarch of the Great City of Alexandria and all of Egypt, Mr. Mr. Kosmas (it is about Kosmas III 1737-1746), and the Patriarch of the Great God City of Antioch and all the East (the name of the Patriarch of Antioch is not noted here, at that time it was Sylvester 1724-1766), and the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine and Syria and Arabia Mr. Mr. Parthenios (1737-1766), and their consisting holy metropolitans and their most graced bishops, the in Christ our God beloved fellow brothers and concelebrants the embrace in Christ (see Manuel Gedeon, “Canonical Provisions” vol. A, Constantinople. 1888, pp. 219-220).*

It is true that out of the sources emerge some historical news tidings, through which declare relations of the Christians of the region of Arabia and especially of Yemen with Syria, but this relationship only cultivated in the circles of the Syro-Jacobites (Syriac Christians), the heretics, to which other jurisdictional criteria existed. However the consolidating canonical order of the Orthodox Church, the Patriarchate of Antioch did not have such pastoral responsibility in Arabia, but in the eastern eparchies, which is also expressed by Neilos Doxapatres (see below).

In the aforementioned references, stating its undoubted jurisdiction Our Patriarchate was not able to exercise

pastoral work, due to the historical developments in this region, until where upon our days given to it the cause, which is exposed in order:

We submit to the command of the Holy and Great Synod, under the presidency of my late predecessor Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, We went to Qatar during the feasts of Pascha 1997 and from then We have unceasingly served as an archimandrite the liturgical and pastoral needs of our flock in the specified region. The deceased Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem fulfilled there, during the month of November in the year 1999, a pastoral visit with an entourage of hierarchs and other clergy of our Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in which he was received by the flock and celebrated the service of agiasmos (sanctification of water) in the hall of the Sheraton Hotel, because there didn't exist a church.

From Pascha in the year 2001, We were replaced temporarily, by the then Very Reverend Archimandrite Makarios, presently the Archbishop of Qatar (Kattaron), who canonically succeeded Us by Synodical decision in October 2004.

From that time our Patriarchate asked and received from His Majesty Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani an area of land, in which began similar sponsorships from him and from pious Christians, to erect a church of the Blessed Isaac who practiced asceticism in Qatar and the Great Martyr St. George the Trophy-Bearer, finishing day by day the Bishop's quarters for the residence of the at that time representative of our Patriarchate, erected and was already inhabited.

This church is the liturgical and parish center of the Orthodox Christians found in Qatar, independent of any racial criterion, inasmuch that racial discrimination was condemned by the Synod of the Patriarchs – Primates of the Orthodox Church in the year 1872 (*see History of the Greek Nation, ed. Publishing Athens, vol. M, 1977, Modern Greek, from 1833 until 1881, p. 305*), in other words independent of their ethnicity,

Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, Greeks, Cypriots, Russians, Serbians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Africans and others.

We as Patriarch, with an entourage of hierarchs and other clergy of our Patriarchate, fulfilled from the 12<sup>th</sup> until the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2010, in like manner formal pastoral visit to Qatar, in which We met with members of our flock, and later with His Majesty Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who had sent a representative to Our Enthronement, and later to other formal factors of the state of Qatar. After the end of the Patriarchal Concelebration, We laid the foundational stone from the erection of the holy Church of the Blessed Isaac the Syrian who practiced asceticism in Qatar and the Great Martyr St. George the Trophy-Bearer.

This pastoral concern of our Patriarchate opened the road and through the other Christian confessions, which received, following our example, the approval of an area of land from the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, -may his years be many and God-fruitful, and each of them erected a church in favor of their Christian flocks in Qatar. Enduring these aforementioned actions of our Patriarchate, no presence of the Patriarchate of Antioch has existed there and no protest from it has been heard.

Likewise in brotherly love We remind Your Most Beloved Beatitude, that Your Metropolis of Baghdad does not include the Arabian Gulf, but is limited to the limits of the present state of Iraq, as exhibited of the essay of Neilos Doxapatres: *"The Patriarch of Antioch holds all of Asia, and the East, and India, where until the present day, catholic who ordained catholics, sends the so-called Romogyreos, and Persia. Now and this Babylon, the now-called Bagda; and from there the Patriarch of Antioch was sending a katholikon to Eirinoupolis, the so-called Eirinoupoleos and the Armenians, and Avasgian, and Ivirian, and Midian, and the Chaldeans, and Parthian, and*



Elamites, and Mesopotamia" (see Ralli & Potli, "*Constitution of the Divine and Holy Canons.*" vol. 5, Athens 1852, p. 488).

From this clearly exhibits that no mention exists for the Patriarchate of Antioch in the present day Arabian Gulf and the present day Arabian Peninsula. The title of Metropolitan Mr. Constantine has always been known as Metropolitan of Baghdad only. He received this title at his ordination, and as his predecessor the memorable Photios Khoury, who likewise was the metropolitan of Baghdad only.

As concerning the addition of Kuwait to his title, it deals with verbal permission, which was given on behalf of Our memorable predecessor, Patriarch Benedict of Jerusalem, when at the end of January in the year 1964 our representation, consisting of the then Archbishop of Hierapolis and later Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros, the then deacon and present Metropolitan of Kapitoliada Hsychios, the Oikonomos Rev. Fr. Constantine Karmas travelled to Damascus and met with the then Patriarch of Antioch Theodosios VI, present also was the at that time Metropolitan of Baghdad Photios. In that meeting the at that time Patriarch of Antioch Theodosios pleaded with the at that time Archbishop Diodoros of Hierapolis to relay to the at that time Patriarch Benedict of Jerusalem his entreaty to allow Metropolitan Photios of Baghdad to travel to Kuwait for the pastoral care of the Christians there. Archbishop of Hierapolis Diodoros conveyed this entreaty to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Benedict, who accepted it.

Otherwise and already from 1967 our clergyman, now memorable Very Reverend Archimandrite Avramios Aouad, abbot in Lydda and in continuation in Haifa, traveled to Kuwait for the service of the Christians there, and also the Agiotafitis (Guardian of the All-Holy Tomb) Archimandrite Anatolios, later Archbishop of Tiberias and Exarch of our Patriarchate in Athens, traveled to Yemen for the service of our flock there, as it is shown by the archives of our Patriarchate.

For this reason our Patriarchate fulfilled for a long period of time the vacant Holy Metropolis of Bostra in Arabia with the election of the memorable Metropolitan Ymenaios of Bostra in the year 1985, in which he was succeeded in 1989 by the present Metropolitan of Bostra Timothy.

No juxtaposition existed during the entire past period 40+ years between our Patriarchate and the ever-memorable Patriarchal predecessors of Antioch Theodosios, Ilias and Ignatios, but on the other hand, We always maintained good and brotherly relations with them close collaboration within the framework of rehabilitation of the Middle Eastern Council of Churches and in general.

We are truly sorrowful and do not hold any grudge for the fact that the Patriarchate of Antioch protested and asked from Us the non-execution of the decision of Our Holy and Sacred Synod, since the promotion for the many years of devoted service of Our Patriarchal Representative to the Emirate of Qatar Very Reverend Archimandrite Makarios to Archbishop of Qatar (Kattaron).

We are not able to proceed with the postponement or nullification of such a decision for the above-mentioned reasons, which confirms Our canonical jurisdiction and Our canonical actions in the aforementioned region.

From all the above it is exhibited that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem sowed and watered in the land of Qatar, which is under His canonical jurisdiction.

Toward the corroboration of the fact that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem acts in full respect toward ecclesiastical order and the in Christ preservation of communion and unity of the brother Orthodox Churches, We mention similarly, that We, in the grace of peace and unity of the Churches, withdrew Our decision which was taken by Our predecessor the memorable Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, for the pastoral care after

the persistent request of the faithful from Palestine and the Orthodox from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which reside in the United States of America.

Having through hope that the true and brotherly above mentioned in Our brotherly letter, will be sufficient to convince Your most beloved and profound Beatitude for the justified continuation of the pastoral work of our Patriarchate in the Emirate of Qatar, the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabian Gulf, We insist on the in Christ continuation of close collaboration of the brother Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch for the benefit of Our Orthodox flocks and for the glory of Our Triune God and mainly during the passing time of the present coincidence, in which the people of Syria, mainly the Christ-named flock of the sister Orthodox Church of Antioch which is being severely tested.

For this, We offer to Your Beatitude Our embrace in the Lord from the All-Holy and Life-Giving Tomb, We remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2013.

To Your Honored Beatitude

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

**THEOPHILOS III**

Patriarch of Jerusalem

---

# LETTER OF H.B. PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL REGARDING GIHON COMPANY.

Holy City of Jerusalem, Monday, October 29, 2012

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu,

Prime Minister of the State of Israel,

Your Excellency,

We trust this letter finds You well, in good health and prosperity.

We write to you in relation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the most ancient Shrine of Christianity.

In an unprecedented act, the Israeli water utility company, "Gihon", imposed a "Charge" of millions of shekels upon the bank accounts of Our Patriarchate thus rendering them frozen and inactive.

This was conducted by the administration staff of Gihon Company, in a move which totally disregards and undermines the sanctity as well as the sensitivity of the Shrine of the Holy Sepulchre.

Imposing such an unjust act amounts to an attempt to change the De-facto situation which constitutes a fundamental breach of the "Status Quo", legally existing for centuries, that guards the Holy Sepulchre and, for hundreds of years, grants

the use of free water supply servicing the millions of pilgrims that journey to the Holy Land.

We gravely fear such acts as they may impact the pilgrim's customary practices and lead to the unimaginable closure of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We call out for Your Excellency's immediate intervention to cause the upholding of the Status Quo and to stop this offensive conduct against the sacred Holy Sepulchre of Jesus Christ, the most ancient and holy shrine for Christians of the World.

With best wishes and Patriarchal blessings,

**THEOPHILOS III,  
Patriarch of Jerusalem.**

---

# **H.B. THEOPHILOS' III LETTER OF CONDOLENCES TO THE COPTIC CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.**

His Eminence

The Coptic Archbishop, Dr. Anba Abraham

Coptic Church Jerusalem

Your Eminence,

We were shocked to hear about the tragic death of twenty two faithful of the Coptic Church in Alexandria, victims of a terrorist action together with a hundred of injured. We strongly condemn this lethal action of violence and express Our deep condolences to the Coptic Church and to the relatives of those ones who passed away.

We pray to Our Lord Jesus Christ from His Holy Tomb to alleviate the injured and protect innocent people from such arbitrary actions in the future.

With Our fraternal wishes,

**THEOPHILOS III**

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Holy City of Jerusalem

Tuesday, January 04, 2011

---

# **A MESSAGE OF GREETINGS TO THE MIDDLE EAST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.**

**A MESSAGE OF GREETINGS TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE  
PRESIDENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE EAST  
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AT THEIR MEETING IN DAMASCUS.**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**22 September 2010**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and We send our prayers and blessing for your meeting in Damascus. We apologize for not being able to be with you ourselves, but the demands of other commitments keep us away. We would like first & foremost to express Our thankfulness and appreciation to Our Brother, His Beatitude Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Kyrios Ignatios the forth, for hosting Our executive Committee meeting here in Sydanaya. We are happy, however, to send Our delegation, which consists of His Eminence Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela, Father Ibrahim Dabour, and Mrs. Wafa' Ksous, who have Our confidence.

We rejoice in the good work for the future of the MECC that was accomplished recently in Cyprus, and We express Our gratitude to His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus for his welcome and encouragement. We remain firm in our commitment to the decisions that were made at the meeting of the Executive Committee in Amman, and We support the determination that resulted from the meeting of the Presidents of the Christian families last week in Nicosia.

We hope and pray that all our member Churches will join in these sincere efforts to reconfigure our Council for the common benefit both of the Christian population of the Middle East and the Holy Land and to ensure that our Christian voice is heard. It is time for us to overcome our misunderstandings and move ahead in the strength of our common purpose, especially at this critical time in the history of our region. Let us grasp the momentum and advance the Council's mission.

Once again We re-affirm the commitment of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to the significance and mission of our Council, which is important not only for the co-operation of the Churches in the region, but for the ongoing well-being and

security of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

**THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM**

---

# **THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM IS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE AMIDST THESE TIMES OF MISFORTUNE.**

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III has sent the following letter to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, His Excellency Mr. Dmitri Medvedev President of the Russian Federation and to His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation expressing the Patriarchate's solidarity with the Russian people amidst these tragic times of misfortune emanating from the ecological damage and catastrophes in the historical and beautiful city of Moscow and its environs, due to the many raging fires:

'We follow with deep sorrow and great anxiety the loss of valuable lives of our fellow men, the ecological damage and catastrophes in the historical and beautiful city of Moscow and its environs, due to the many raging fires.

Participating in this tribulation of the peaceful citizens of Moscow, We have prayed and continue to pray in the Holy Tomb of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the Holy Calvary for the cessation of the fires by dew and rain to be sent from our merciful God above; for proper cleansing of the air in the atmosphere of the city of Moscow, for the recreation of its



inhabitants and for the souls of the victims of the fire to be at rest.

Thus, We wish for Your honoured Excellency the Grace of the Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ to successfully overcome this tribulation and to restore the health and welfare of the pious Russian people, and remain,

With fervent prayers to Our Lord,

**THEOPHILOS III**

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

---

# **MESSAGE TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

Mr. Guirguis Saleh

Secretary General of MECC,

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We send you our greetings in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the Holy City of Jerusalem. We have been kept up to date with the work of the Middle East Council of Churches, and we are pleased that our delegate, Archbishop of Abela Mr. Dorotheos, is able to represent us at this meeting of the Executive Committee.

We remain committed to the stated purposes and goals of the mission of the Middle East Council of Churches. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is always ready to work in

collaboration with all the people of good will for the well-being of our region, and we wish especially to acknowledge the efforts of our fellow Christians from other Churches and Christian communities in this regard. Such collaboration represents for us that respectful co-existence of people of different religious, cultural and ethnic identities that we believe is essential for the integrity of the life of the Middle East.

However, our concern about the present state of affairs in the Middle East Council of Churches continues. We wish respectfully to remind the Executive Committee of the resolutions of the 9thh General Assembly of the MECC in Paphos, Cyprus, which was held from 27 to 30 November 2007. It was at this meeting that the need for re-structuring the organization was acknowledged.

Subsequently, the MECC has admitted a serious financial crisis, a crisis that is being felt by many organizations around the world. At later meetings of the Executive Committee in Beirut and Kykkos, although the deepening crisis was known, no action was taken.

We note with sadness a distinct lack of progress in setting the MECC on the firm footing that was articulated in Paphos. Instead, the financial crisis has deepened.

We acknowledge with gratitude the hard work of many in the MECC to ensure that the Council is faithful to its goals and mission, and we understand the many challenges that faces the Council in its work. It is all the more important in our view that the Council remains absolutely committed to its vision and mission.

Therefore with great reluctance we are forced to admit that we lack confidence in the current Secretariat Staff and the SCAF of the MECC, and it seems to us that the following two courses of action are the only courses of action now open to the MECC

in order to move forward:

1. Given the deepening crisis and the clear lack of progress in re-structuring the organization, and given the inability of the present Secretariat Staff and SCAF both to acknowledge this publicly and to propose effective solutions, it would seem that the honorable next course of action would be for the current Secretariat and SCAF Staff to submit their resignations, and for the Council to elect and appoint a new body of Secretariat Staff and SCAF with the clear mandate to execute a strategic plan that will accomplish the goals set at the 9<sup>th</sup> general assembly in 2007 as well as ensure the financial solvency of MECC and
2. that the newly elected and appointed secretariat Staff and SCAF will provide to member Churches an open strategic plan to set the MECC on its proper course. With an expectation of regular reports and accountability to member Churches.

We realize that these may be difficult recommendations for some to hear, but we articulate them out of deep concern for the MECC itself. If we are not ready and prepared to proceed along these lines with firm clear and focused action then there is no likelihood that the MECC can accomplish the good work that lies at the heart of its urgent mission to the peoples of our region who so desperately need the leadership of the Churches in establishing peace, reconciliation and a proper co-existence of all.

We pray for God's blessing upon your work during this meeting, and we urge you to take this necessary action for the future of the MECC.

**Theophilos III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**President for the Eastern Orthodox Churches of MECC.**

---

# **MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III ON THE CHRISTMAS OF 2008**

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem

and see this thing which is come to pass,

which the Lord

hath made known unto us (Luke 2:15)

The Church, the body of Christ, which perpetuates His salvific work on earth, to day cries out again to all the people, to those who are near and to those who are afar, to her members as well as the whole world, the saving truth.

It proclaims the fact that the God of our fathers, who in the beginning created man out of love, in His image and likeness, without tolerating the distortion of His image that occurred with the fall, recreated him at the end of times. He recreated and reborn His creature in a way that surpasses human understanding and strength. God achieved this with the incarnation and becoming man of His Only Son through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. "When the time arrived, God sent

His Son, who was born of a woman and under the law" (Gal. 4:4). God proceeded in the restoration of man by making man one with Himself. God, Himself became in the person of Jesus Christ the same as His creature, namely man, with all the irreproachable human passions. "He descended to human nature, without losing His attribute that He is God, receiving the human not as foreign, but as truly His", according to Saint Kyrillos of Alexandria (On king Theodosios, PG 76, 1169D). God appeared in the flesh at a specific time in history. "He came to the world, as man", without however by this losing His divine glory, by His Godbearing Father. (On the true faith, PG 76, 1177). He was born as man, during the time of emperor Caesar Augustus, in Bethlehem of Judea.

This mystery that transcends all understanding was realized far from all evil of this world. Christ "secretly was born in the cave", not powerfully and by force, without possessing any rule or authority, but with baby frailty and weakness, with humility and purity. He was revealed in the cave to pure and clean souls that could apprehend Him and embrace Him. He was visibly revealed first to the Virgin Mary, who admired and was astonished, seeing that in her was performed what the angel had foretold her in Nazareth. She was first to see the Invisible (Lord) lying in the manger and wrap Him in swaddling clothes, Him who cannot be contained. Joseph, her husband, is accompanying the Virgin and the child to Egypt. Simple in heart shepherds at the adjacent village, living in the open, are guided by the angels who sing in heaven the "Glory in the highest", and passing by Bethlehem, they see the baby wrapped and lying in the manger. The Magi coming from the East with gifts, prostrate with reverence before the newly born king.

From these faithful eye witnesses and deacons, this mystery is rendered to the Church. And first to this Church, which guards with the Hagiotaphitic Brotherhood the Holy Places that received the mystery of the divine revelation. This Church erected magnificent and beautiful churches at the Most Holy

Shrines, such as the Constantinian and Justinian Basilica of the Greek Orthodox over the Divine Cave. In her the Christians of the Holy Land and all pious pilgrims who flock from the ends of the world, are sanctified through the ages. In her their identity is formed, the ethos of love, of peace, of reconciliation and their harmonious cohabitation with the followers of other religions at the Holy Land. From this Church and from this place the evangelical salvific truth emanated to the whole world.

The fact of the divine kenosis and condescension the Church cries out today for some 2000 years in remembrance of the Birth of Christ. It proclaims that Christ "emptied" Himself by assuming the form of servant (Phil 2:7), so that man would not remain on earth in his fall, but ascend to heaven. This kenosis starting with the incarnation and through the flesh birth of the Son of God, extends to the Cross and the tomb, from where resurrection occurred.

This divine and philanthropic way, the Church displays as valuable treasure of the truth, as an infallible compass of life even for today's man. She shares with him her experience and certainty that the answer to the question on the matter of life and the resolution of human problems is found in the adoption and application of the philanthropic attitude of life, that was revealed by Christ. That the consequence of the denial of the message of God by the people and of their departure from God is today obvious in humanity as never before. The raging wars, the military and terrorist violence, the destructive rage of the irrational which is unlawfully and unjustly manifested against simple and innocent people, the unequal distribution of physical and social goods and the resulting looming economic crisis, which nations and banks anxiously try to contain.

From this Sacred Cave, and the bosom of the Mother of the Churches, we bless with Patriarchal and Paternal blessings the members of this flock, which have been entrusted to us, at the

Holy Land and everywhere and prompt them, to embrace Christ, who became man in the flesh and have Him as life's guide and we direct a plea to the powerful of the world to adopt as their goal the maintenance of peace and justice without force, and the freedom and wellbeing of the people.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2008.

Ardent blesser in the Lord,

Theophilos 3<sup>rd</sup>

Patriarch of Jerusalem

---

# **BLESSING OF HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, TO VISITORS OF THE PATRIARCHATE'S NEWS GATE**

**To the Readers**

Beloved in the Lord Children of Our Mediocrity,

The Heritage, on the one hand, of the Most Sacred Shrines, those visible evidence of the presence on earth of the incarnate and salvific Economy of the Son and Word of God, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, on the other hand, the Ecclesiastic Community in the Holy Land, the continuation of the ancient Judeo-Christian Community, the Church of Jerusalem and of Palestine, are the pride of our Patriarchate, of the

Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, pride which the Hagiotaphitic Brotherhood (Brotherhood of the Sepulcher) and the indigenous flock have guarded for many centuries, with sacrifices of blood, ever pouring sweat and untold amounts of money.

This Heritage of the Holy Lands of Grace which fills the pilgrims flocking from the ends of the world, with the holy spiritual springs of contrition, repentance, consciousness and love of Christ, pouring of the Holy Spirit, from the deified Flesh of Christ, this Heritage is deservedly presented to people by the Church of Jerusalem, in every way and with full vigour, towards sanctification and salvation. The Church of Jerusalem could not find more suitable a way towards this end than the presentation in the World Wide Web, with which it also hopes not only to acquaint the faithful with its largely unknown history and various struggles in the Holy Land, sanctify the senses of the spectators and the rational aspect of their soul through the vision of the Holy Shrines and the narratives about them, but also to facilitate the arrival of pilgrims to the Holy Land and of all those willing to struggle together and help the Church of Jerusalem.

This website, fruit of unselfish effort and pious toil of friends and contributors of the Most Holy Sepulcher, the first official website of the Church of Jerusalem, will continuously be enriched, God willing, with information concerning every sector of our ecclesiastic life. The "aerial" electromagnetic data of contemporary technology, though inferior to the tangible writing with ink and paper, is capable however to likewise constitute a carrier of salvific concepts that lead to the uncreated deliverance in Christ.

May the Grace and Tradition of the Holy Lands, the treasure of the Hagiotaphites, be to all a steady guide of Orthodox Faith and Life. According to the early Jerusalemite Monks, God's Holy City of Jerusalem is "the eye and beacon of the whole world, having received the word of the Gospel in keeping with



the prophetic saying, that from Sion the law shall come out, and the word of the Lord shall come out of Jerusalem” and her inhabitants are “as if they touch the truth every day with their own hands through these Venerable Landmarks, in which the mystery of the incarnation of the great God our Saviour was performed”[i]. Invoking the grace of these Venerable Lands on all of you, we bestow upon you Our Paternal wishes and Patriarchal blessings.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, in the month of May, of the  
Saviour’s year 2007.

Ardently blesser in the Lord

**Theophilos III**  
**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

---

[i] Cyril of Skythopolis, The Life of Our Father, Hosios Savvas 57.Ed. Schwartz Editions, Kyrillos von Skythopolis, Hinrichs Verlag, Leipzig 1939, p. 154.

