

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



WHAT LIES LURKING?

Political, Economic, Technological, Sociological, Ecological,
Cultural and Religious Changes in the Middle East and the
World over the Next 25 Years

Address to the General Assembly of the
Church of Scotland

May 24th 2017 CE

By: H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal

مؤسسة الأمير غازي بن محمد
للثقافة الإسلامية
THE PRINCE GHAZI TRUST
FOR QUR'ANIC THOUGHT



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بِنِعْمِ اللَّهِ

Allah is Sufficient for us!
Most Excellent is He in Whom we trust!

(The Family of `Imrân, 173)

The Prince Ghazi Trust for Quranic Thought
What Lies Lurking?

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الحمد لله رب العالمين
والصلاة والسلام على خاتم الأنبياء والمرسلين،
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Your Grace, the Lord High Commissioner,
Moderator,
Distinguished Assembly...

Greetings of peace,

It is a great honour to be invited to address this august assembly. I am mindful of the Church's principled stances on causes around the world, particularly the cause of justice in Palestine. There are also well-known historical, personal and family ties between my family, Jordan and the United Kingdom, and Scotland and its land in particular. As you will perhaps know, H.M. King Abdullah II's late maternal grandfather Colonel Gardiner—a distinguished World War II veteran—was of Scottish descent. My late uncle, H.M. King Hussein, used to love to come here to unwind, and I myself was privileged, a few years ago, to accompany H.M. King Abdullah II on a private holiday driving through the western part of Scotland. We saw many

sites of indescribable beauty that I will never forget. On at least one occasion, I distinctly recall that we even saw the sun....

I thought I would use this brief address to adumbrate for you the main political, economic, technological, sociological, ecological, cultural and religious trends in the Middle East, and indeed the world, over the next 25 years as I see them. This view 'from Jordan' is not, however, necessarily Jordan's view, nor even H.M. the King's but merely my own personal one, for which only I am responsible. Obviously, only God knows the future, and in one way the very concept of human knowledge predicting the future is ridiculous, but in another way it can serve as a salutary warning about the seeds that are being sown today. So, by way of warning, I am calling this little talk '*What Lies Lurking?*'.

The talk follows on from a recent one I gave arguing that the overall trend of the last 25 years or so can be summarized by two things: First, a more rapid acceleration of the technology that has changed the world more in the last 200 years than in the last 200,000 (and all that that entails). Second, a *breaking down of barriers*—all kinds of barriers—

political (such as the Iron Curtain and the Bi- or even Uni-polar world), social (notably through demographic explosion and mass migration; through the I.T. revolution, the internet and social media), cultural (with the rise of globalism and the death of the last traditional societies), and religious (with the rise of global fundamentalist movements in all religions). Consequently, the next 25 years, I believe, will be marked by disequilibrium and internal conflict unleashed by the breaking down of barriers. So:

1. Politically, to quote Plato, 'When a democracy, athirst for freedom, happens to get bad cupbearers for its leaders, it gets drunk by drinking more than it should of the unmixed wine of freedom (*Republic* 562 d) ... until in the end they take no notice of laws whether written or unwritten (*Republic* 563 e)', and this leads to tyranny. We have already seen this in the Philippines, and will see it elsewhere in the world's democracies via the rise of populism, extreme nationalism, racism and xenophobia. Big Brother will become a bigger bother by harnessing the services of the five or ten multinationals that run global I.T. (and

store more data about people than they have about themselves in their own memories), so people will also have a Big Mother-in-law to monitor them. Terrorist propaganda will succeed in making Muslims even more hated than they currently are by most of the rest of the world, and in some places Muslims will be in internment camps and other concentration camps (like Srebrenica in 1995 CE). In some Muslim-majority countries, they will succeed in terrorizing minorities so that mass migrations will eventually separate religious populations, as they did in Greece and Turkey after World War I, or in the Indian Subcontinent after Partition. This 'religious irredentism' will not, however, end conflict, but, as Karl Popper foresaw and as the case of South Sudan has shown, merely internalize it. Limited nuclear war may occur in the Korean Peninsula, the Indian Subcontinent and elsewhere, but far from horrifying the world into abandoning nuclear weapons, it will show their efficacy, and dozens of remaining countries will rush to acquire them. We will publically have a grotesque version of the long-awaited Huntingtonian 'Clash of *un*-Civilizations', as I call it, behaving almost exactly as predicted

by Orwell's *1984*, but privately fight secret wars for dwindling resources via mercenary armies (somehow still called 'civilian contractors').

2. Economically, the usury-based world economic system that means that every country which cannot print artificial money indefinitely, and every person who does not have extra money to lend, gets poorer in real terms (through 'inflation')—and which periodically crashes to make sure that poor people who manage to escape debt fall into it—will find new life by eliminating cash currencies. The world will operate on credit so that no one but your government, your bank and your 'national' privately-owned Central Bank will be able to decide how much imaginary money you really have, and how and where you can spend it. Capitalism and its sister consumerism will continue to be celebrated for lifting people out of poverty, until all the world's real wealth and resources have been totally depleted and the environment has completely collapsed.
3. Technologically, we will see the rise of robots, artificial intelligences, drones, body-compatible technology, neural lace and brain-to-brain or

brain-to-computer technology, and individual flight-packs or suits or seats. So, having banished all the angels from the sky, and shot all the birds, we will now be able to ourselves fly, mainly so that we can shoot each other as well. We will continue to cure diseases at the rate of one for every two our scientific tinkering creates, and empty-headed rich people will be able to have their heads transferred on to other people's bodies so that, like zombies, they will not die (unless of course they run out of money). People will go to Mars and discover some interesting rocks, but elsewhere science will discover what everyone has always known, namely that the whole universe is teeming with life (except our own hearts). As science becomes more like magic, magic will become an acknowledged science and ESP will be confirmed and immediately exploited by militaries for nefarious uses.

4. Sociologically, the populations of the Islamic World and Africa will continue to explode (with Latin America trailing closely behind in growth), whilst those of Europe, Russia and China gradually age and decline, even though

these places are largely responsible for the world's 100 million or so annual abortions. In the end, Europe will not be able to sustain itself without, ironically, inviting Christians from its former colonies in Africa and South America to colonize it. As for growth in the Islamic world, there are not—nor will there be—enough good jobs for young people; meaning, I fear, that for too many of them their only releases will be wars, crime and drugs.

5. Ecologically, the environment will collapse (and is already), and untold species of animals, fish, and plants will go extinct due to man-made climate-change, despite 'conclusive proof' to the contrary by climate-change deniers and the industries they represent. Empedocles' four traditional elements of air, fire, water and earth will have their revenge on us through acid rain and hurricanes, fires and volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, el-Niños and rising sea-levels, and earthquakes and pollution, because our internal four humours have themselves all been unfettered. There is indeed—as all religions have taught—a mirror-play between the macrocosm and human beings (the microcosm). Indeed,

God says in the Qur'an:

Corruption has appeared in the land and in the sea because of what people's hands have perpetrated that He may make them taste something of what they have done that perhaps they may repent. (Al-Rum, 30:41)

Human beings will be eating insects for protein (which of course eat them when they die), and perhaps jellyfish, rats and crows—or rather, crow—because in many places that will be all that is left, and so the great 'circle of life', will become a vicious semi-circle, where you are what you eat and will eat you.

6. Culturally speaking, relativism and utilitarianism will ensure that (notwithstanding some religious dissent, largely in the Islamic and Orthodox Christian worlds) the remaining social and sexual taboos that exist will be abandoned with great triumph, because ethics will not be viewed as a matter of reining in the ego (as in Plato and Neo-Platonism), or virtue or moral laws (as in Monotheism), or even stilling the mind (as in Hinduism and Buddhism), but rather of giving vent to whatever impulse

bubbles up into the consciousness, so long as it does not physically harm other people or their property. This of course will be greatly facilitated by the fact the vast majority of the world's youth (and indeed population) are now the new lotus-eaters drugging themselves with an average of eight hours a day (more time than they spend working) on the internet, social media and television—and so are barely able to discipline their impulses in any way in the first place.

7. Religiously speaking, we will of course continue to have a growth of radical fundamentalism in Islam (my recent book *A Thinking Person's Guide to Islam* goes into this in detail), but we will also have an Islamization of radicals (so that angry young people with little faith will use Islam as an outlet for their anger), in addition to Islamization of criminals (such as the late Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi; the founder of ISIS); an Islamization of lunatics (such as Boko Haram) and an Islamization of really ignorant and gullible people (like most of the 'lone wolf' terrorists we see here in the West). The other world religions—all of whom are enjoying their

own fundamentalist renaissances, albeit not as spectacularly (unless of course you fancy a burger in India) will—with beautiful exceptions like H.H. Pope Francis, H.M. the Queen and, here in Scotland, my friend Iain Torrance—gradually raise their voices in unison until they all demand together that Islam be wiped off the face of the earth for not being enough of a religion of love. And nary a peep from the ‘free media’ about the irony.

Now if all this sounds too bad to be true, unfortunately it isn't. It is a mordant but serious warning, and in fact much of its substance is to be found in Islamic latter-day prophecy literature. So what to do? Jesus Christ ﷺ said:

Woe to the world because of traps! For traps must come, but woe to that man by whom the trap comes! (Matthew 18:7)

Now we will certainly agree—across religious lines—that the first thing to do is keep our faith, prayers and principles and not be buffeted by vogue no matter what the cost. But even the fanatics believe this, and in fact they take pride in it, quite literally. So how can the dangers of fundamentalism be avoided whilst avoiding *traps*? The best way,

traditionally, to broaden one's horizons was to do so literally, i.e., through travel, with its dangers, difficulties, wonders and exposure to different peoples and ways. God says in the Qur'an:

Have they not travelled in the land so that they may have hearts with which to comprehend, or ears with which to hear? Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but it is the hearts that turn blind within the breasts (Al-Hajj, 22:46)

Now, however, since it is 'ban voyage' for Muslims, and travel will scarcely be feasible, there remains only one option. It is this: that people should put down their mobile phones, and turn off the net and the TV, and spend at least an hour every day in silent, solitary, and systematic reading. Indeed, the first word revealed of the Qur'an was: *Read!* (*Al-'Alaq*, 96:1), and in fact—though you would not know it looking at Muslims now—traditional Islamic civilization, having no clergy as such or clerical institutions or castes, was entirely based on the written word: first God's (in the Qur'an), then the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ sayings, and then all beneficial knowledge. Many of the world's classics of spirituality, philosophy, science, history and

literature are made available in attractive, accurate and affordable editions in series like Penguin Classics (despite their terrible translation of the Qur'an) and Oxford World Classics, and this—along with higher education—is still one of the things that this country still does better than anyone else in the world. I dare say then that a commitment to self-motivated, broad, lifelong learning—not only religious learning, but learning that 'makes the pupil like and dislike what he ought', which as Aristotle says 'is the aim of education', (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a), i.e. *wisdom*—at the expense of internet time is the best way to broaden and enrich our souls and perhaps save our futures. For in reading; in beneficial knowledge; in wisdom, there may also lie lurking solutions to many other of our looming problems. I trust this is something we can all agree on. The only prayer for 'more' in the Qur'an is: '*My Lord, increase me in knowledge.*' (*Ta Ha*, 20:114).

Thank you.

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