

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TWENTY YEARS of
HISTORIC RELIGIOUS
INITIATIVES based in
the HASHEMITE KING-
DOM of JORDAN by
H.R.H. PRINCE GHAZI
bin MUHAMMAD bin
TALAL and many, many
friends, 1993–2013 CE

Twenty Years of Historic Religious Initiatives
based in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal
and many, many friends,
1993–2013 CE

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PREFACE



Twenty Years of Historic Religious Initiatives summarizes twenty years of religious initiatives led by H.R.H Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal from 1993 to 2013. Many of these initiatives are truly historic in the sense that they have become landmarks or referral points which have already led to an inspired countless other projects. ‘The Amman Message’ gave us a consensus of the Muslim Ummah not witnessed for over a thousand years, and has become the leading voice in the struggle against extremism in Islam. Likewise, ‘A Common Word’ has become historically the most successful dialogue between Muslims and Christians, and apart from repairing relations with the Vatican and forging new relations with many other churches, has also led to practical joint peace missions (e.g. to Nigeria).

Many of the other initiatives show the same level of depth and far-sightedness which means that their effects will still be benefitting people long after we have passed away. In Jordan the building and refurbishment of sites associated with the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ benefits all Muslims. Likewise, the vision to protect Masjid Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem is another indispensable service for Muslims

However, it is not just Muslims who have benefitted from Prince Ghazi’s work. Christians from all over the world have been presented with a treasure they could barely have dreamed of. The Baptism Site of Jesus Christ ﷺ, one of the three holiest sites for Christianity, has been rediscovered and opened up for pilgrims to come and benefit from. This example of Muslims helping Christians is one that inspires millions. Other initiatives are addressed to all of humanity. The World Interfaith Harmony Week carries a UN mandate asking for an attitude of harmony to prevail amongst people of all faiths and those of no faiths, under the banner of ‘Love of God and Love of the Neighbour’, or ‘Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbor’, for at least a week in February annually. A more recent

initiative has established a fellowship at Regent's Park College, a Permanent Private Hall in the University of Oxford to study love and this carries untold potential for promoting peace.

One could go on, and mention all of the initiatives, but that is what the book describes. It is enough to say that these initiatives have opened up new horizons of Muslim communication with the world. Indeed, they are a service to humanity.

In a world full of great disturbance, this book gives peace of mind.

—Shaykh Dr Mustafa Ceric,
Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia

FOREWORD



The title of this superbly produced book is significant. Though it rightly honours the extraordinary religious initiatives of H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal, it also mentions the contribution of ‘many, many friends’. I suspect that this unusual form of a title owes not a little to the generosity and self-effacement of Prince Ghazi himself, marked by the many photographs in this book of Prince Ghazi among his friends. I am deeply honoured to be counted among these friends of different faiths, and as one of them I hasten to say that the mentioning of us all does not undermine the unique achievement of Prince Ghazi himself. Indeed, it only enhances it, since we have only been drawn into making our contribution through his infectious enthusiasm, originality, vitality of intellect and authentic spirituality.

This gift of drawing others to him and towards each other in his company is characterised by Prince Ghazi’s choosing of the phrase ‘A Common Word’ from the Qur’an, in the first place for the title of the historic Open Letter from Muslim scholars to Christian leaders world-wide, but also as a way of speaking about other inter-faith projects he has initiated. *‘Let us come to a common word between us and you’* (Qur’an, Aal ‘Imran 3:64) is the invitation, and it is clear from Prince Ghazi’s many writings that he does not regard the ‘common word’ as some kind of synthesis between religions, or a ‘lowest common denominator’. Rather, the double love command, to love God and one’s neighbour opens up a common space or area in which those of different faiths can live together, talk with each other, share experiences, work together to enable the flourishing of human life and explore the eternal truths to which their respective faiths bear witness. In this way, the ‘common word’ is a ‘common ground’ for friendship and love. As the response to the Open Letter of my own Christian world communion put it, ‘This common ground is not just a strategy for dialogue, but a gift of God to us all. In the end, it is God who gives the ground on

which we stand, and God who opens up the space in which we can meet.’

Though there are ample examples of both love commands in the Qur’an and the Hadith, it was a move of the greatest courtesy by Prince Ghazi to give a major role in marking out this common ground to those passages in the New Testament Gospels where Jesus Christ ﷺ brings together two commands from the Hebrew Bible concisely into one saying. Prince Ghazi had in fact highlighted his interest in these words of Jesus ﷺ as early as in his doctoral thesis in the University of Cambridge on *The Literary Archetype of Falling in Love in Western Literature*, a work that also shows the humane breadth of his knowledge of world literature. This, of course, stands alongside his profound Islamic scholarship, shown in his second doctorate on the theme of love, this time from Al-Azhar University, on *Love in the Qur’an*. In fact, he uses his skills in exegeting traditional commentary of the Qur’an to demonstrate that there is a basis for the defence of everyone’s freedom of religion in the very words of the passage from which the appeal to a ‘common word’ comes: ‘that none of us shall take others for lords beside God’. These are just some of the reasons why it may justly be claimed that ‘A Common Word’ has become the most influential inter-faith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in history.

There is no need for me to say more about the achievement of ‘A Common Word’, as it has garnered many awards. It is well documented in the present volume, which also records how its aims have been put into practice in interfaith cooperation in Nigeria. I mention it here as a key example of Prince Ghazi’s concern to create a ‘common space’ in which those of many faiths and none can find that they can be friends. This volume also shows how Prince Ghazi has created physical spaces in which this can happen. The initiatives for the development of the Baptismal Site of Jesus at the Jordan and for the guardianship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem have given physical embodiment to the making of a common ground and a space to be those of different faiths, or of different communions within the Christian faith. In the one case a common space has been created by Prince Ghazi ‘from the ground up’ where there was little there before, except a precious tradition which had been largely forgotten and overlooked. In the other case, Prince Ghazi has taken an initiative to create a truly common meeting-place out of a situation which has over the years become full of religious conflict both between and within faiths.

One of the most recent projects mentioned in this volume, the ‘Love Initiative’, is a continuation of the concerns opened up by ‘A Common Word’, with its urging of the common ground of the double command to

love. The aim is to establish 'love' as not only a proper subject but as a key subject on the academic curriculum, shaping young minds to understand the potential of the study of love for reconciliation in our world. In establishing a Fellowship in the study of love at my own academic institution (Regent's Park College) within the University of Oxford, a project in which I have the privilege to be involved, a space for the meeting of minds is being opened up. Alternating the post-holders, five years at a time, between a Christian scholar and a Muslim Hafith in perpetuity will not just ensure academic courses and academic research, though it will; it will also create a place, a room for friends to meet who are applying the very best thought to the powerful presence of love in the environment of our world and the whole cosmos.

It is not my expertise to be able to write about the way that the initiatives of Prince Ghazi have opened up space for Muslims, among themselves, to read the Qur'an and its tradition of interpretation, and to meet and explore the spiritual depths of life together. I am, however, profoundly impressed to read in this volume about such physical spaces as the Holy Sites of Jordan and the Museum of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the intellectual and spiritual spaces opened up by the national Islamic curriculum, the Amman Message declaration, the Professorial Chairs, the Prince Ghazi Trust, and the Grand Mufti Legislation. New room has been opened up both physically and intellectually at the same time in several new universities and institutes for Islamic thought. In tune with our age, yet also deeply rooted in Islamic heritage, room has even been opened up in cyberspace for people to access the greatest treasures of Qur'anic interpretation and commentary, and to draw on the artistic resources of Islamic calligraphy. All this has been at the initiative of Prince Ghazi, opening space for meeting, learning and reconciliation to wider and wider horizons. Reading in this volume, it seems that much inspiration has been gained by meeting in the holy space under the blessed tree of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the Jordanian desert.

The boundaries of the space of meeting have been extended far beyond inner-Islamic and Islamic-Christian encounter. Pioneering work in modern times has been initiated in dialogue between Islam and Buddhism, and space has been made for those of every faith and even no faith at all in the founding of the World Interfaith Harmony Week. It seems that the approval of the United Nations was gained for the first time for a resolution that mentioned the name of God, because it also made space for those who seek the welfare of all humankind under the name of loving 'the Good'.

There are echoes here of the philosopher Plato, who wrote much on the theme of love, and whose work Prince Ghazi has explored in a learned way since the time of his first doctoral research.

Yet for all this, Prince Ghazi's concern has been for the keeping of fidelity to God within the distinct form of faith in which – as 'A Common Word' puts it – all people should 'be free to each follow what God commanded them'. The strategy of opening up space in which people can meet as friends is not intended to suppress difference, but to encourage each faith to take seriously its doctrine and spirituality, recognizing the common ground of love of the One God and the many neighbours. This very concern means that those who are willing to join Prince Ghazi on this ground discover the richness of spiritual heritage which Islam keeps as a gift for all humankind. All this is indicated by a wonderful book title which itself breathes the air of spaciousness and open horizons – 'Historical Religious Initiatives ... by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi ... & many, many friends'. On behalf of those friends, standing with them on common ground, I congratulate H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal on the truly remarkable achievements of the past twenty years. With them, I salute his faith, vision and courage, and expect, God willing, that much more is still to come for the benefit of our world.

—Revd Professor Paul S. Fiddes
Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford;
Director of Research, Regent's Park College, Oxford

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The following book is a record and commemoration of the remarkable religious initiatives based in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan undertaken by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal (see Appendix 1 for lineage) over the first twenty years of his working life (1993–2013 CE).

As a general trend, the scope of these religious initiatives expand in widening concentric circles: starting in the 1990s, they focused on Jordan and Jordanians; then they extended to Islam and Muslims everywhere; next they moved to encompass Christianity and Christians, and finally they sought to reach out to all people, everywhere. In an interview in 2012 with Oxford Islamic Studies Online, Prince Ghazi hints at this:

The three [most famous] initiatives—Amman Message (2004); A Common Word (2007); World Interfaith Harmony Week (2010)—not only share the same motivation of seeking to promote peace, harmony, brotherhood and love in the world, but do so, as it were, in a widening concentric circle that starts with Muslims who comprise about a quarter of the world; expands to Muslims and Christians together who comprise about half of the world, and finally extends to the whole world. They also, despite apparently different forms, rely fundamentally on the same idea: underlying the message they seek to promote with a theologically or spiritually correct doctrine that explicitly formulates the Common Word between Muslims, believers and spiritual beings as such. In doing so, they aim to take religion out of religiously-manipulated conflict, and enable political problems to be resolved by political means. (<http://bit.ly/oxfordg>)

As will be seen, these initiatives and others (especially Altafsir.com and the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ www.baptism.org) are some of the most successful and important religious initiatives in modern history, yet Prince Ghazi has never held any direct political authority or executive power except as a member or chairman of various boards of trustees (notwithstanding the single day he served as Regent of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 2004 in the absence of H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein). Rather, Prince Ghazi always worked as a specialist and an advisor in, variously,

cultural, educational, tribal and religious affairs. Most of Prince Ghazi's initiatives (notwithstanding his writings, which are his alone) have proceeded through N.G.O.s—particularly the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (RABIIT). They have borne fruit—by the grace of God and despite Jordan's relative poverty—as much through the hard work, patient study, research, respectful consensus-building, careful planning and execution, and consistent follow-up of Prince Ghazi's friends, colleagues, staff and family, as through his own. Indeed, if Prince Ghazi has been graced to propose and write these initiatives, greater credit—after God—goes to the hundreds, if not thousands, of scholars and men and women of religion all over the world who have graced, carried out, participated in and supported them. Nevertheless, it is perhaps to Prince Ghazi's credit that he was able to convince and rally so many people of good will to be involved in these initiatives and to support them. And needless to say, without the consistent moral and financial support of H.M. the late King Hussein bin Talal and his son H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, none of these initiatives would have been possible.

MABDA, 2013

№ 1

The REDISCOVERY and
RENOVATION of the
ISLAMIC HOLY
SITES of JORDAN

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(1994–2013 CE)



THE REDISCOVERY AND RENOVATION OF THE ISLAMIC HOLY SITES OF JORDAN

In 1994, whilst still working as an aide in the Royal Court, a colleague of Prince Ghazi's by the name of Muhammad Yunus Al-'Abbadi discovered, in the then unsorted Royal Archives a document dating back to around 1930. The document was a survey of Religious Sites conducted by H.M. King Abdullah I. It contained the names and general locations of over forty different tombs of Prophets, Companions of Prophets, Martyrs and Saints and other sacred sites. There was already a functioning *Royal Committee for the Building and Restoration of the Tombs of the Companions*, headed by H.R.H. Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid, the Royal Chamberlain, but its mandate and scope was only the seven tombs of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who died at the Battle of Mu'tah (8 AH / 630 CE) near Kerak (his adopted son Zeid bin Haritha; his cousin Ja'far bin Abi Taleb; and Abdullah bin Rawaha) and the martyrs of Abu 'Ubaydah's army from the great plague of Amwas (17 AH / 639 CE), including Abu 'Ubaydah himself, Sharhabil bin Hasna, 'Amir bin Abi Waqqas and Mu'ath bin Jabal. So Prince Ghazi brought the document to H.M. King Hussein, who promptly wrote a personal cheque for \$500,000 and told Prince Ghazi to start work on the other tombs. H.M. King Hussein also immediately appointed Prince Ghazi to the *Royal Committee for the Building and Restoration of the Tombs of the Companions* and it was renamed '*The Royal Committee for the Building and Restoration of the Tombs of the Prophets and the Companions*'.

Over the next few years, Prince Ghazi travelled around the country looking for the sites one by one until they had nearly all been rediscovered and renovated, and mosques or prayer rooms built next to them (see Appendix 3: A List and Map of Jordan's Islamic Holy Sites). Some—like the blessed tree which the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had sat under as a

The 'Holy Sites of
Jordan' published

Opening of the Abu
'Ubaydah compound

The Blessed Tree
documentary made

The Blessed Tree near
Safawi, Jordan





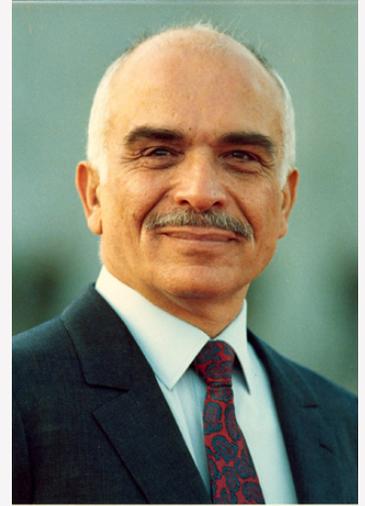
اللجنة الملكية لإعمار مساجد
ومقامات الصحابة والشهداء

Royal Commission Logo

child on the road to Bostra—were known only to a few locals through oral tradition. Some—like Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari’s grave in Shgeig south of Madaba—were rediscovered from pre-diacritical inscriptions on tombs. Two or three, however, still remain unidentified (such as the tombs of Damis Abul-Hawl and the General Musa bin Nusayr). Most of the sites had been rebuilt as far back as the reign of King Nur al-Din Zengi (1118–1174 CE), and many of them (like Aaron’s Tomb on top of Mount Hor in Petra), bore his name and the date of his refurbishment of them nearly 900 years previously. In total, the land of Jordan has at least fifty of these tombs (see: <http://bit.ly/hsjordan>), showing the truth of God’s words in the Qur’an (referring to the Aqsa mosque and the land of Jordan and Palestine).

Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque; the environs of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. Indeed He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Al-Isra, 17:1)

Over the course of 1995–1996, Prince Ghazi initiated, oversaw and edited *The Holy Sites of Jordan* (published by *Turab*, [an N.G.O. which Prince Ghazi and some friends founded for that purpose] Amman, 1996; 2nd edition in 1999), the first study, survey and guide to Jordan’s (Christian and Muslim) Holy Sites. The publication of this book—which sold ten thousand hardback copies and became Jordan’s best-selling English-language hardback ever until that time—led to the revitalization and dramatic expansion of Jordan’s religious tourism industry. Prince Ghazi also oversaw the publication of a book in Ar-



H.M. King Hussein, picture signed to H.R.H. Prince Ghazi, 1988



H.R.H. Prince Ra'ad bin Zeid, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi and H.M. King Abdullah II at *Kahf Al-Raqim*



Muhammad Yunus Al-'Abbadi (in 2013)

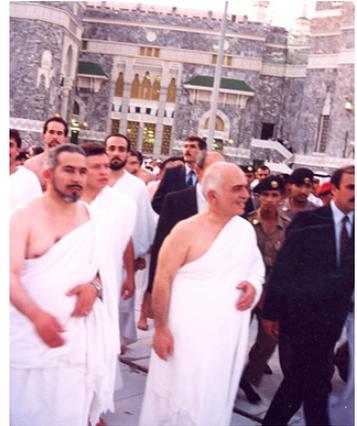
abic about Jordan's Holy Sites (by Engineer 'Abd Al-Muni'm Hiyari), which itself was reprinted many times, with a GPS guide. Both books are available as free PDFs at www.rissc.jo.

In 2010, Prince Ghazi commissioned and supervised a documentary film, *The Blessed Tree* (<http://bit.ly/blessedtree>), detailing the rediscovery of the blessed tree, and containing interviews with senior scholars who visited the blessed tree such as Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, the late Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri and others.

For his services and dedication to the Holy Sites in Jordan, Prince Ghazi was awarded the Al-Hussein Medal for Distinguished Service (of the 1st Order) by H.M. King Abdullah II on 24/8/1999, at the opening of the Abu 'Ubaydah Sepulchral Mosque and Islamic Centre in the Jordan Valley.

BENEFIT:

The rediscovery, renovation and publicizing of the Holy Sites in Jordan has not only provided Jordanians with more than fifty sanctuaries of historical and religious significance where they can pray, contemplate, and better appreciate the significance of their land—these holy sites are now rarely empty—but has also created a national Islamic religious tourism industry for pilgrims from other countries. In particular, Turks, Syrians and Iraqis going on Hajj, or 'Umrah, to Saudi Arabia, frequently stop at the better known Holy Sites, such as the *Kahf Al-Raqim* (the Cave of the Sleepers) after which the Eighteenth Chapter (Surah) in the Qur'an is named. Many other Muslim tourists—including many Malaysians and Indonesians—come specifically to Jordan to visit these sites and benefit from the blessings there.



H.M. King Hussein performing Umrah; Shaykh Ahmad Hlayyel front left; H.R.H. Prince Ghazi, H.R.H. Prince Talal (elder brother of Prince Ghazi) and H.R.H. Prince Abdullah in background, 1990s



Under the blessed tree, 2007 (L to R): Prof. Tim Winter, Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Prof. Ibrahim Kalin, Prince Ghazi and Shaykh Muhammad Ramadan Said Al-Bouti



At the blessed tree, 2010 (L to R): Prince Ghazi and family, Grand Mufti Ceric, Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb, Grand Mufti Khalili and Dr Ahmad Al-Sharif



*Kahf
Al-Raqim*

The Mazar
Mosque



The tomb of
Ja'far bin Abi
Talib





In the 1990s, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi discovered the place of the tomb of the Companion Abu Dharr Al-Ghafari from the headstone which proved its antiquity from lack of diacritical marks and proved that Abu Dharr was buried there by explicitly mentioning his name. To this day Shgeig is still a wilderness, fulfilling the words of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, 'God have mercy on Abu Dharr, he walks alone, he dies alone and he will be resurrected alone.' Narrated by Al-Hakem in Al-Mustadrak, (52/3).



№ 2

THE BAPTISM SITE OF JESUS CHRIST

العميلة

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 INTERFAITH 

(1995–2013 CE)



Initial visit

THE BAPTISM SITE OF JESUS CHRIST العليشة

Royal decree by H.M. King Hussein

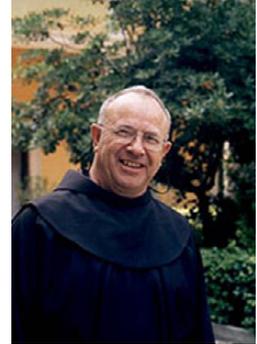
Prince Ghazi becomes Chairman of the Board of the National Park

00 Pope John Paul II undertakes a pilgrimage to the Baptism Site

Site becomes a National Park

In August 1995, Prince Ghazi—by then H.M. King Hussein’s *Cultural Secretary*—visited Mount Nebo southwest of Amman, overlooking the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. A Franciscan Monk by the name of Father Michele Piccirillo was in residence there, excavating the ruins of an ancient Byzantine church on the site where the Prophet Moses عليه السلام had died three thousand years earlier. The previous year, 1994, Jordan had signed a Peace Treaty with Israel so that the border with the West Bank on the River Jordan was no longer a war zone. Father Piccirillo told Prince Ghazi that he knew from the Madaba Map mosaic, dating back to the sixth century, that there was another ancient Byzantine church at Bethabara near where John the Baptist عليه السلام had baptised Jesus Christ عليه السلام, but that he could not go there as it was still a military zone and full of landmines. Prince Ghazi agreed to take him down there with a fellow archaeologist who was visiting from Italy. On August 8th, 1995 the three of them went down and visited the site and found the remains of this church with a large mosaic floor. The incident is recounted in the self-effacing words of the late Father Piccirillo as follows:

After 50 years [of desuetude] on August 11th, 1995, accompanied by Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad a team of archaeologists could visit once again both sites guided by the soldiers guarding the border. In the field south of *Tal Mar Ilyas* they could collect some shards of the Roman period, the first evidence of the possibility that the area had been inhabited at the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. (From: M. Piccirillo, *The Madaba Map Centenary*, Jerusalem 1999, pp.218–221.)



Father Michele Piccirillo (1944–2008)

05

Film produced

Prince Ghazi reported the incident to H.M. King Hussein, and after more investigation, a Royal Commission was formed with Prince Ghazi as its Vice Chairman, and the then Crown Prince Al-Hasan as its Chairman. In Father Piccirillo’s words, again:



(L to R) H.M. Queen Noor, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi, H.M. King Hussein and H.R.H. Prince Hasan, 1991

10 Pope Benedict XVI undertakes a pilgrimage to the Baptism Site

Campaign to add Baptism Site to World Heritage List



A dream which is becoming true just two years after thanks to the positive and contagious enthusiasm of the nephew of King Hussein who is the head of the palace office for the conservation of the religious heritage of the reign. A decree issued by King Hussein on 10 September 1997, established a 'Royal Commission for the development of the park of the Baptism of the Lord the Messiah (on him be peace) in the Jordan valley'. (From: Michele Piccirillo, 'The Sanctuary of Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John the Baptist baptised will be reopened', *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*)

Two years later, in 1999, Prince Ghazi became the Chairman of the Committee, and in 2001, after he had lobbied for, and seen through, legislation to make the Site a National Park, Prince Ghazi became the Chairman of the Board of the National Park—a position which he has maintained until 2013. During that time, Prince Ghazi—ably assisted by a full-time team of over fifty staff, notably the long-time Commission Director, Dia Al-Madani and his much-beloved deputy Rustum Mkhjian—oversaw the creation and maintenance of a unique and self-funding National Park of almost ten square kilometres. The efforts included: acquiring and fencing off the land; demining it; granting land to all Jordan's recognised churches inside it; excavating its many historical and archaeological treasures and ruins (the site contains a number of different important religious sites including, pre-eminently the site



Rediscovering the Church of John the Baptist ﷺ, 1995



Commission Director, Dia al-Madani

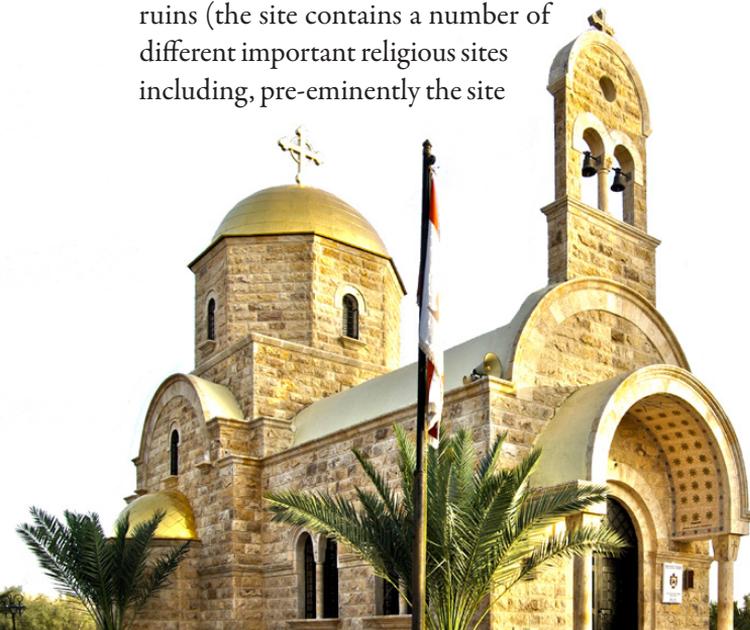


Assistant Director of the Baptism Site and Director of Archaeological Works, Rustum Mkhjian

Baptism Site
Commission



Greek Orthodox Church at the Baptism Site





where John the Baptist ﷺ baptised Jesus Christ ﷺ—*This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing* [John 1:28; see also John 3:26; Luke 3:21–22]—but also includes other sites such as the small hill from which the Prophet Elijah was taken to Heaven and the cave where John the Baptist ﷺ lived); creating pilgrim tracks and tourist routes; creating an environmental code, standards and practices to minimize the impact of the churches and pilgrims on the natural environment; supplying the churches with water, electricity, transport and sewage infrastructure; creating tourist facilities and training tour guides; setting up a website (www.BaptismSite.com); building a religious conference centre near its entrance; generating pilgrim interest in it; and most important of all, garnering letters of authentication—based on the Biblical, archaeological, and historical (including early pilgrim accounts) evidence—from the world’s major Christian Churches including: the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem; the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem; the Russian Patriarch; the Coptic Pope; the Archbishop of Canterbury; the President of the Lutheran World Federation; the Baptist World Alliance President; the Armenian Patriarch; the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch; the Ethiopian Patriarch; the Romanian Patriarch; the Maronite Patriarch and Pastor Rev. Rick Warren (see: <http://bit.ly/bsjesus1>).

In 2007, Prince Ghazi commissioned and supervised the film *The Baptism of Jesus Christ: Uncovering ‘Bethany Beyond the Jordan’* (the film was produced by Mustafa Gouverneur and can be viewed online at www.BaptismSite.com).



Mustafa Gouverneur of Ten Thousand Films has produced films on *The Blessed Tree*, *The Baptism Site of Jesus Christ*, and the *A Common Word Initiative*



Armenian Orthodox Church at the Baptism Site





In 2011–2012, Prince Ghazi negotiated (and acted as a mediator) between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Russian Orthodox Church regarding the Russian Orthodox Church's presence in the Holy Land, and specifically in the Baptism Site. This led to a historic agreement between the two Orthodox Churches which did not violate the 'status quo' agreement between the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem and the other Orthodox Churches, and yet led to the recognition and establishment of a magnificent Russian Orthodox Pilgrims' Centre under the Greek Orthodox Church's jurisdiction at the Baptism Site.

In 2012, Prince Ghazi set in motion a campaign to add the Baptism National Park to the UNESCO International World Heritage Sites List.

For his seminal role in rediscovering, founding and establishing the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ الغسل, Prince Ghazi was decorated in 2009 by H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, with both the Orthodox Medal of Peace and the Medal of the Holy Sepulchre (of the 1st order). For his role in negotiating between the Orthodox Churches, Prince Ghazi was awarded the Russian Order of Friendship Medal by President Vladimir Putin of Russia in 2012.



H.E. President Putin awarding Prince Ghazi *The Russian Order of Friendship*, 2012



The Catholic Church at the Baptism Site (under construction)



H.H. Pope John Paul II at the Baptism Site, 2000



H.H. Pope Benedict XVI with H.M. King Abdullah II, H.M. Queen Rania, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi and Rustum Mkhjian at the Baptism Site of Jesus Christ الغسل, 2009



Prince Ghazi's Address to Pope Benedict XVI



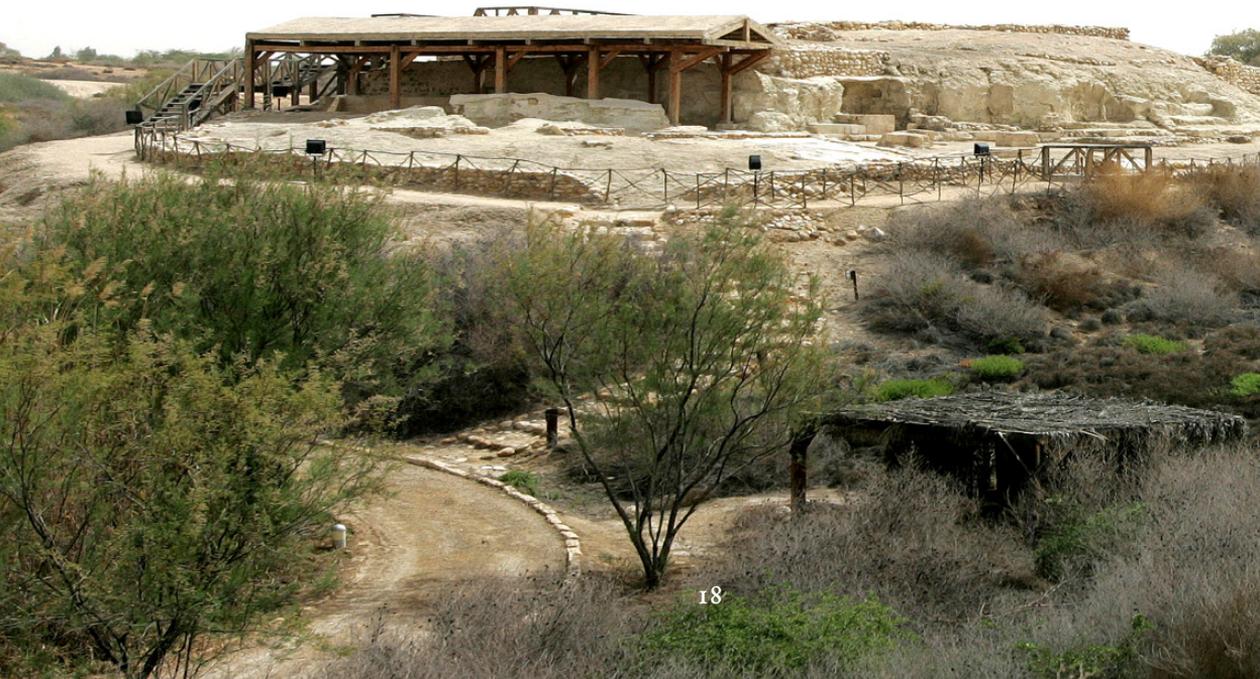
(L to R) H.H. Pope Benedict XVI, H.R.H. Princess Areej Ghazi, H.R.H. Princess Tasneem Ghazi and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi at the King Hussein Mosque, 2009



BENEFIT:

The Baptism Site receives 200,000–300,000 Christian pilgrims annually and is now Jordan’s second most popular tourist destination after the ancient city of Petra. The Baptism Site hosts five completed and functioning churches, as well as a Muslim prayer area, with seven more churches, chapels or cathedrals in various stages of construction and planning. It is universally recognised by Christian Churches as one of Christianity’s three holiest sites in the world, (along with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem), as it marks the moment of Epiphany and the beginning of Jesus Christ’s ﷺ mission and thus the beginning of Christianity itself. Indeed, many Christian leaders—religious and temporal—have undertaken pilgrimages to it including H.H. the late Pope John Paul II in 2000, and H.H. Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. Since tourism revenue accounts for some 12% of Jordan’s G.D.P., and perhaps one in five tourists come to Jordan specifically to pray at the Baptism Site, the Baptism Site could be viewed as bringing in at least 2% of Jordan’s G.D.P.. Moreover, quite apart from the incalculable spiritual benefits with which it graces its pilgrims, the Baptism Site serves as a remarkable model for the whole world for interfaith harmony, as it is a Holy Site built and maintained by Muslims for Christians, to the benefit of all, by God’s grace.

Elijah’s Hill at the Baptism Site





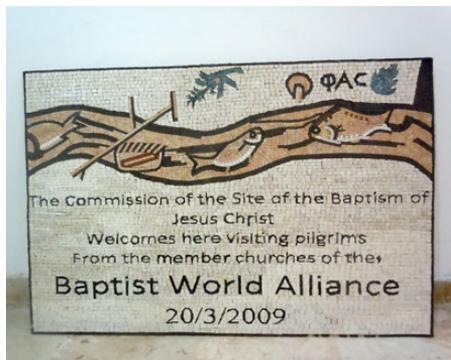
A place of prayer for Muslims at the Baptism Site



Prince Ghazi, H.E. President Putin, H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III and Archbishop Mark outside the Russian Orthodox Pilgrims' Center, 2012



The Coptic Church at the Baptism Site



Plaque at the Baptism Site



The Church of the Arch at the Baptism Site



The place where Jesus Christ ﷺ was baptized



№ 3

AL-BALQA UNIVER-
SITY; TRADITIONAL
ISLAMIC ARTS COL-
LEGE and the MIN-
BAR of SALADIN

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(1996–2010; 1998–2013 CE)



AL-BALQA UNIVERSITY; TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC ARTS COLLEGE AND THE MINBAR OF SALADIN

Prince Ghazi tasked to head Royal Committee

Al-Balqa University formed with Prince Ghazi as Chairman
Islamic Arts College founded

In 1996, H.M. King Hussein tasked Prince Ghazi to head a new Royal Committee to study how to bring Jordan's various government community colleges under one umbrella and transform them into technical and vocational colleges for practical skills. The country had a glut of unemployable liberal arts Associates' degree holders and a great need for vocational and technical college graduates, to the extent that there were 100,000 foreign workers (mostly Egyptian) doing skilled and semi-skilled labour in Jordan, and yet there were high rates of unemployment in Jordan amongst AA and Liberal Arts BA-degree holders. After studying—together with a talented team of education specialists—the situation for two years, Al-Balqa University was formed with a new Board of Trustees of which Prince Ghazi was Chairman, a position which he held until 2010. By the time Prince Ghazi resigned from the post, Al-Balqa University had become Jordan's largest university with 45,000 students in 13 campuses and one of the few fiscally healthy universities in the country.

In 1998, immediately after the Board of Trustees was formed, Prince Ghazi founded in it a College of Traditional Islamic Arts. With support

Rebuilding of the Minbar of Saladin completed

Minbar placed in Al-Aqsa Mosque



Prince Ghazi on the reconstructed Minbar of Saladin in 2006, before it was returned to Al-Aqsa

from H.R.H. Prince Charles the Prince of Wales, the renowned Islamic Architect Dr Khaled 'Azzam—Director of the Prince of Wales' School for Traditional Arts (P.S.T.A.) in London—became its first Dean, and the prize-winning geometrician Dr Minwir Al-Mheid became his deputy. They immediately set about creating the first academic *and* vocational college for *traditional* Islamic arts in the Islamic World. Up until that time arts colleges in universities in the Islamic World produced modern art by Muslims—something far different from traditional Islamic Art based on Qur'anic philosophy and 'golden proportions'—or simply did not

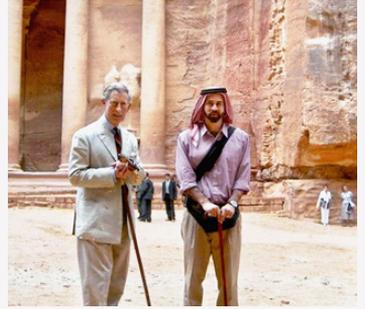
Prince Ghazi resigns as Chairman with Al-Balqa now Jordan's largest university



teach traditional Islamic arts such as woodwork and brass-work. Prince Ghazi also passed special regulations to allow traditional master craftsmen from all over the Islamic world, with years of experience and international prizes for their work, to be employed in the College, with Professorial (in the ‘Applied Arts’) status, pay and benefits *without* having received academic BAs, MAs and PhDs.

Dr Minwir Al-Mheid also brought to the College the unique project (which he had won in an open international contest) of rebuilding (by hand and without nails) the beautiful, priceless and historic Minbar of Saladin at the Al-Aqsa Mosque (see <http://bit.ly/minbar1>). The 800 year-old structure had been destroyed in an arson attack by a Zionist extremist named Denis Michael Rohan on August 21st 1969, and had still not been replaced. Under Dr Minwir’s supervision the College rebuilt the Minbar exactly as it had been—though no proper drawings existed of it—and it was finished in 2006 and placed in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 2007. The Traditional Arts College has since become the leading traditional arts college in the Islamic World, and in 2007, when the World Islamic Sciences and Education University was formed from the Islamic colleges of Al-Balqa University, it became part of W.I.S.E. University.

In 2010, a few months after resigning the Board of Trustees of Al-Balqa, Prince Ghazi was awarded an honorary PhD from the university, for having founded and established it.



H.R.H. Prince Ghazi with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales in Petra, 2004



Dr Khaled Azzam

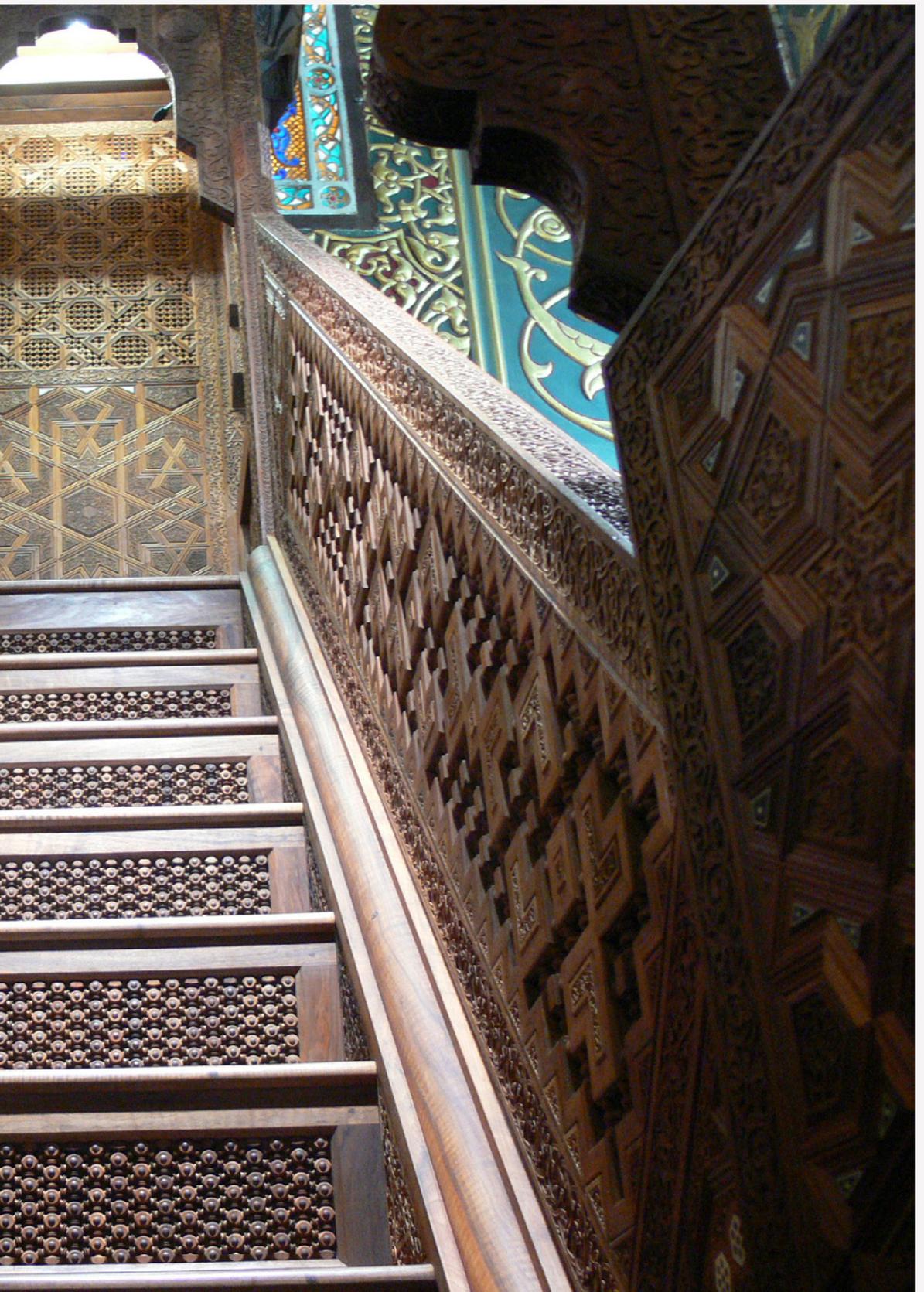


Prof. Minwer Al-Mheid

The Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque









BENEFIT:

Apart from all the benefits of Al-Balqa University, and of the work of the Traditional Arts College itself, one of the greatest benefits of the College is that it opened the door for traditional guildsmen and craftsmen to have tenure-track professorial posts and benefits in arts colleges in the Islamic world, thereby ensuring a financial, academic and social future for traditional Islamic craftsmen—something essential for the survival of the traditional Islamic Arts.



H.M. King Hussein at the opening of Al-Balqa University, 1996,
H.R.H. Prince Ghazi in background

№ 4

RABIIT, MABDA and THE MUSLIM 500

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2000–2013; 2007–2013; 2009–2012 CE)

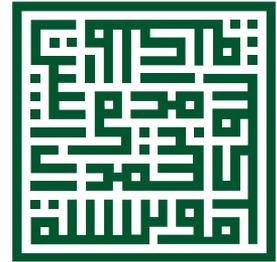


RABIIT, MABDA AND THE MUSLIM 500

In 2000, Prince Ghazi became Chairman of the Board of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (RABIIT), and from 2000–2013 he has overseen the administration of the Institute. During that time the Institute has been transformed from a struggling, non-computerised, academic dialogue centre into arguably the most influential and formidable international Islamic institute in the world, after Egypt’s Al-Azhar.

In addition to the RABIIT’s ownership of TURAB; Altafsir.com; W.I.S.E. University and the Traditional Islamic Arts College (as mentioned previously and in what follows), RABIIT has played a key role in and / or funded: the *Amman Message* initiative; the *A Common Word* initiative; the *World Interfaith Harmony Week* initiative and prize; the *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism* initiative; the *International Islamic Integral Professorial Chairs* initiative; the *Nigeria Interfaith Reconciliation* initiative and the *Love Initiative* (as mentioned in what follows).

In addition to all that, Prince Ghazi revamped The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, proposing and seeing through special new legislation for it in 2007 (see: www.aalalbayt.org), establishing it as an independent N.G.O. whose primary purpose (see Article 4A of its law) is: ‘To spread knowledge of Islam and Islamic thought, reflect their luminous sides, and contribute towards purifying Islamic culture of all adventitious elements and correct misconceptions about Islam’. Prince Ghazi also established (as part of it) the *Royal Academy for Islamic Thought* whose 100 senior fellows are elected from the most prominent scholars or preachers of the Islamic World. Other RABIIT initiatives (all housed in a new building in Dabouq, Amman) include:



The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, logo

1. *Al-Waqi’ah*, which operates free job-creation schemes in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan (and makes the World Interfaith Harmony Prayer beads);
2. The *Royal Institute for Jerusalem Studies*, headed by Dr Wasfi Kailani, author of *Why Should Muslims Visit Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa?*

95

00 Prince Ghazi becomes Chairman of RABIIT

05

RABIIT becomes an independent N.G.O.

MABDA established

10 First edition of the *Muslim 500* published

Prince Ghazi awarded *Al-Nabdab Al-Murasa'* medal



In 2007, Prince Ghazi also established—as a subsidiary of RABIIT—MABDA/RISSC: an independent Islamic think-tank whose ‘primary goal ... is to protect, preserve and propagate traditional, orthodox, ‘moderate’ Islam as defined by the international Islamic Consensus on the ‘Three Articles of the Amman Message’ arrived at over the years 2005–2006’ (see www.rissc.jo). Following on from the philosophy of Altafsir.com, MABDA makes available for free online entire books on Islam, tafsir, Jordan, Jerusalem and interfaith subjects (both classical copyright-expired and modern specially-commissioned) in PDF format and e-books for mobile devices such as iPhones/iPads etc. This in itself is a seminal move to force Islamic institutes to make the Islamic World’s treasures available to the public for free.

Another brainchild of Prince Ghazi’s is the seminal MABDA-published *Muslim 500* annual publication (which was started in 2009), which is the first easy-to-digest assessment of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world—and the different kinds of Islam and Islamic influence in the world—ranking them according to their influence. It is the first and leading guide of its kind and relies heavily on members of the online public to make suggestions to improve it annually (see: www.TheMuslim500.com). From 2013, it will be translated into other languages and published internationally, God willing.

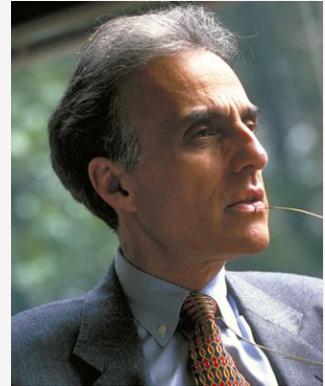
For all these services Prince Ghazi was awarded the *Al-Nahdah Al-Murasa’* Medal (Renaissance Medal—Special Grand Cordon) by H.M. King Abdullah II on September 29th 2010 in front of the Royal Academy’s tri-annual gathering.

BENEFIT:

In addition to all the immeasurable beneficial effects of all the individual projects mentioned above, the great benefit of revamping RABIIT and doing all these projects institutionally through it is that they will continue, God willing, long after Prince Ghazi’s departure.



H.M. King Abdullah II awards H.R.H. Prince Ghazi the *Al-Nahdah Al-Murasa’* medal, 2010



Professor John Esposito, first editor of the *Muslim 500*



Professor S. Abdallah Schleifer, current editor of the *Muslim 500*



RABIIT staff, 2009. (Front L-R) Dr Farhan Nazzal Al-Masaid, Shaykh Said Hijjawi, H.R.H. Princess Areej Ghazi, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi, Prof. Ibrahim Shabbouh (Director of RABIIT, 2001–2009), Shaykh Abd Al-Nasser Abul Basal



RABIIT Environment Conference, 2010

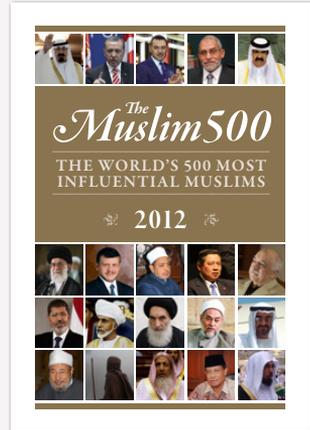


ABOVE: The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC/MABDA), logo

LEFT: MABDA staff meeting



MABDA staff (L to R): Zeinab Asfour, Lamyia Al-Khraisha, Aftab Ahmed, Besim Bruncaj and Sulayman (Simon) Hart, 2013



The Muslim 500, 2012 (cover)



RABIT's new building

Payer beads have long been valued in sacred traditions which have prescribed a specific number of recitations of prayers.

The prayer beads have been used as a counting aid for these sacred numbers of spiritual invocations. However, the function of the prayer bead is not just that of a count; it is also to become identified with the spiritual value of the prayers themselves, so that the prayer bead can be viewed as a means of arriving at the goal of prayers. Beads take on different names and numbers depending on the religious traditions. Islamic prayer beads are called *tasbeeh*, or *misbaha*, and are usually 33 or 99 beads long. Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs use *japa mala* (or *mala* for short) made by beads that are divisible by 9 but typically 108 beads total. Roman Catholics use a *rosary* numbering 54 beads with an additional five beads at the head. Eastern Orthodox Christians tend to favour *shokli* prayer ropes with 33, 50, or 100 knots. Regardless of the name and numbers, the goal has always been the same: attainment of spiritual openings. The essential purpose of praying and meditating with beads is to enable inner integration of mind and heart. As the beads move through one's fingers, keeping track of

the number of prayers or mantras being said, full spiritual consciousness is devoted to those meditations. It's because of this resulting consciousness that prayer beads have been the weapon of choice for nearly every aspirant of spiritual illumination since time immemorial as they struggled to transcend the corporal. Prayer beads thus have physical, psychological and metaphysical effects on the people who use them. They can even be used in a secular context as 'worry beads' to relieve stress due to their calming effect. These Harmony Beads represent some of the shared aspects of the great religious traditions. They are very adaptable as they have been uniquely designed to easily accommodate the usage of any numerical repetition from one to a million, making them the perfect gift for anybody, whether of the same belief or of another belief. Our Harmony Beads come from the Holy Land's finest olive wood that is sustainably harvested and locally sourced. They are handmade by women in refugee camps through the Al-Waqiah Charitable Project which teaches marketable skills to refugees and creates job opportunities in the camp and beyond. Proceeds from your purchase of Harmony Beads go to both refugees and the World Interfaith Harmony Week making it a purchase that brings good to yourself and others.

Counting Guide

- 25** 1. Find the second small divider bead (x).
- 2. Move backwards towards the Alf (a).
- 3. The last bead is the 10th bead.
- 33** 1. Find a 33 marker (x).
- 2. Move backwards towards the Alf (a).
- 3. The last bead is the 33rd bead.
- 50** 1. Start with the central bead (1).
- 2. Move backwards towards the Alf (a).
- 3. The last bead is the 50th bead.
- 54** 1. Start with the central bead (1).
- 2. Move towards the Alf (a) including the 3 Divider Beads (x) and the 33 Marker (c).
- 3. 50 + 3 + 1 = 54.
- 100** 1. There are 99 large beads on the counter.
- 2. Count each of them one and finish with the Alf (a) to make 100.
- 108** 1. Count to 100 as instructed above.
- 2. Count to eight on the 8 Counter Beads (c).
- 3. 100 + 8 = 108.

- 1,000** 1. Starting with the Alf (a) count to 100 using all 99 beads.
- 2. Finish each round by moving one of the ten Hundred Counters at (a) to finish counting one hundred, do this ten times to count to one thousand.
- 1,000,000** 1. Count to one thousand as instructed above.
- 2. After every thousand move the thousands counter (1), do this one hundred times.
- 3. After every one hundred thousand, move a counter (x); do this 10 times.
- 4. 100 x 8 x 2 x 10 x 10 = 1,000,000.

Tip: Saving Your Spot

1. Loosen the string on the Thousands Counter (1) by pushing the small bead away from the main string, creating a large loop.
2. Move the Thousands Counter (1) to your current place as a mark from where to continue from.
3. Tap the loop on the Thousands Counter (1) by pulling the small bead back towards the main string.

Inside the Harmony Beads' booklet, LEFT: about the Harmony Beads, RIGHT: a counting guide.



RABIIT law (1st page)



Handmade Harmony Beads made by the Al-Waqiah project



Al-Waqiah workers, 2010

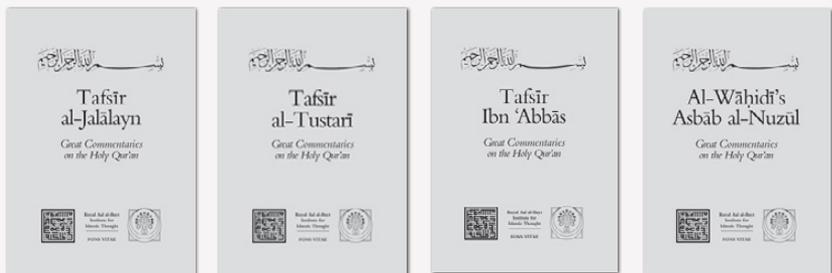
MABDA's ENGLISH BOOK SERIES

1. The Amman Message 2008
2. Forty Hadith on Divine Mercy 2009
3. Jihad and the Islamic Law of War 2009
4. A Common Word Between Us and You 2009
5. Body Count 2009
6. The Holy Qur'an and the Environment 2010
7. Address to H. H. Pope Benedict XVI 2010
8. Keys to Jerusalem 2010
9. Islam, Christianity and the Environment 2011
10. The First UN World Interfaith Harmony Week 2011
11. Islam and Peace 2012
12. Reason and Rationality in the Qur'an 2012
13. The Concept of Faith in Islam 2012
14. Warfare in the Qur'an 2012
15. Address to the Jordanian Scholars Association 2012
16. On the Israeli Demand for Recognition of a 'Jewish State' 2012
17. Why Should Muslims Visit Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa? 2012
18. The Qur'an and Combat 2012
19. Condemning Terrorism 2012
20. A Common Word Between Us and You: 5-Year Anniversary Edition 2012
21. What is Islam, and Why? 2012
22. How to Integrate the Remembrance of God into Teaching? 2012
23. Invoking the Divine Name 'Allah' 2012
24. War and Peace in Islam: The Uses and Abuses of Jihad 2013
25. Twenty Years of Historic Religious Initiatives 2013

MABDA's English Book Series



The Great Commentaries on the Holy Qur'an Series co-published by RABBIT and Fons Vitae



№ 5

ALTAFSIR.COM AND
GREATTAFSIRS.COM

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2000–2013 CE)



ALTAFSIR.COM AND GREATTAFSIRS.COM



Prince Ghazi in 2010

In 2000, Prince Ghazi conceived the dream of making the greatest treasures of Qur'anic commentary and interpretation (*tafsir* or *tafseer*)—and translations of these commentaries—available for free online at the touch of a button to all people everywhere 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, together with audio recordings of Qur'an *tajwid* (recitation) in the ten different *qira'at* (methods of recitation) of the Qur'an. At the time, the Internet was still in its developmental stage in the western world, and the project posed

considerable technological challenges, in addition to the fact that many of the most influential works of Qur'anic commentary in history had not been commercially or even properly edited. An open international contest was held and initial estimates were that the project would take ten years and cost \$15–20 million. Yet one Jordanian software 'start-up' company maintained that they could do the project for around \$1.2 million within three years, even though editing and typing in the *tafsirs* alone would require a full-time team of more than 12 scholars and editors for at least five years. This company was Integrated Technology Group (I.T.G.) and it was founded and majority-owned by Mr. Walid Tahabsem, a Jordanian of Circassian origin, who would soon turn I.T.G. into Jordan's largest software company and a multi-national powerhouse (www.ITGsolutions.com). Indeed, I.T.G. won the 2003 World Summit Award and a number of other awards.



Walid Tahabsem
(CEO, ITG Solutions)

The money had to be raised, and indeed it was generously and entirely donated by a single Omani donor who insisted on remaining anonymous, but *Altafsir.com* would be legally owned by RABBIT as a non-profit, non-advertising charity.

By 2006, www.AltafSir.com was not only up and running with all the features Prince Ghazi had hoped for, but it had also become the largest, greatest and most popular Qur'anic Commentary website in the world. By 2012 it was receiving over 8,500,000 visitors a year, and was still increasing steadily, and contained 85 works of *tafsir* (some of which had never been

00 Dream conceived

ITG wins contract

05

Website launched

10

ITG pledges to maintain and upgrade the sites for free



published before even in book form), most of which are thousands of pages long (well over a million pages in total), and over 30 works of Qur’anic studies.

All this took an enormous scholarly labour; each of the Qur’anic Commentaries had to be typed in individually, word by word, and at least triple checked by different teams of scholars. Nothing was scanned in in order to make it possible, through the use of the latest technology, to search and cross-reference for single words or groups of words, *hadiths*, or Qur’anic verses anywhere on the website’s database.

In addition to presenting the standard classical and modern commentaries on the Qur’an (*tafsir*), Altafsir.com also makes available the texts of all eight recognized schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhabib*), and contains works of various mystical, philosophical, linguistic and theological currents. Moreover, the website makes it possible for the first time ever in one place to conduct comparative studies between the *Shafi’i*, *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Hanbali*, *Ja’fari*, *Zaydi*, *Ibadi* and *Thahiri* schools complete with multi-screen displays and search programs. Further resources include a user-friendly interface for the study and comparison of all the established variant readings (*qira’at*) and tonal keys (*maqams*) of Qur’an recitation. Thus for students of *tajwid* and researchers alike, the differences between the *Warsh*, *Hafs* and other modes of recitation became a mouse-click away, in the voices of the Islamic World’s most beloved Qur’an reciters. Furthermore, the audio-video format was designed to aid users in memorizing the Qur’an and also in studying and applying the rulings and variations in recitation styles

Altafsir.com also commissioned and published (online) free for the first time ever *in toto* a series of classical commentaries on the Qur’an in English, which were co-published by Fons Vitae and RABIT and are also available for free download at www.mabda.jo. Moreover, for the first time in history, Altafsir.com commissioned and published (in 2007) a complete single collection of all the Authentic *Hadiths* on *Fadail Al-Qur’an Al-Kareem*. Finally—and uniquely—Altafsir.com employs a



FONS VITAE



2003, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi with H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Sa’id Al-Sa’id, who donated generously to RABIT



Altafsir.com – home page



Shaykh Hasan Al-Saqqaf, Mufasssir for Altafsir.com



Shaykh Said Hijjawi, Mufti for Altafsir.com



top full-time live Qur'anic commentator (*mufasssir*) as well as a full-time *mufti* to answer online questions free. Altafsir.com is thus a unique and complete website for the study of the Qur'anic Sciences.

In 2012 Prince Ghazi initiated a back-up website abroad—www.GreatTafsirs.com—for Altafsir.com in case of power shortages or website breakdown (Altafsir.com operates from Jordan). GreatTafsirs.com will also focus on e-applications. It is expected to be operational by the end of 2013, God willing.

In 2012, I.T.G. took a decision to maintain, upgrade, manage, advertise and continuously expand Altafsir.com and GreatTafsirs.com for free, as a service to the Qur'an.



We were delighted by viewing this site wherein we found a sea of knowledge copiously flowing with works of exegesis and the basic references and sources in this primary field of the Islamic Sciences and Heritage.

— Professor Ahmad Al-Tayyib, Rector Al-Azhar University (currently Grand Imam of the Azhar).

Altafsir.com is arguably the best and most reliable website on the Qur'an and Tafsir.

— Shaykh Faraz Rabbani from www.SunniPath.com

I wanted to say '*Jazakum Allah khayran*' (may God reward you) to all of you folks for providing this valuable service to Muslims. Being a scholar of Islam, I find this site to be indispensable when researching Qur'anic Tafsir matters. You have saved me a lot of time and money by offering this service. This is the best site on the Internet for the Tafsir of the Qur'an. Keep up the great work you are doing.

—Shaykh Nazim Mangeria from www.SunniForum.com

BENEFIT:

The benefit of Altafsir.com—by the grace of God—cannot be overstated. It is necessary for a proper understanding of the Holy Qur'an; seminal to the continuation of the Islamic Sciences; fundamental to plurality and diversity in Islamic knowledge; indispensable to the world's Islamic scholars and students, and invaluable to Muslims.



Altafsir.com logo

№ 6

THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC STUDIES CURRICULUM

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

 INTERFAITH 

(2001, 2005–2006 CE)



THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC STUDIES CURRICULUM

Over the years 2005–2006, Prince Ghazi headed the committee that oversaw the rewriting of the national Islamic religious curriculum, with the help of Dr Haitham Idilbi and the late Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, both improving and harmonising it.

In 2001—under the pen name ‘Dr Ghazi Abdullah’—Prince Ghazi wrote the national 11th and 12th grade philosophy textbook *Al-Insan* (‘Man’), simplifying it from 180 pages to 40 pages and adding an interfaith component. In 2007 he wrote a revised 2nd edition.

Prince Ghazi writes the national 11th and 12th grade philosophy text

BENEFIT:

The national Islamic religious curriculum is the mandatory curriculum used by all of Jordan’s Muslim students (97% of the country’s population is Muslim); i.e. over a million and a half children.

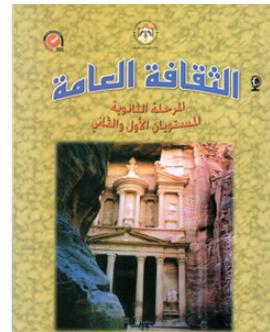
The national 11th and 12th grade philosophy textbook is the mandatory textbook that is used by all students in the country who wish to sit for the national *tawjihi* (university entrance exam); i.e. over one hundred and twenty thousand students every year. For tens of thousands of students it is the only exposure to philosophy that they will ever have throughout their lives. Prince Ghazi’s text has been in continuous use from 2011–2013.

Prince Ghazi heads committee that oversees the rewriting of the national Islamic curriculum

Prince Ghazi writes a revised second edition



Ministry of Education logo



Ministry of Education school textbook (philosophy section written by Prince Ghazi)

№ 7

THE AMMAN MESSAGE

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2004–2006 CE)



THE AMMAN MESSAGE

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ clearly defined what Islam is to the Archangel Gabriel ﷺ himself—the second Caliph of Islam, the great ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab relates:

One day when we were sitting [in Medina] with the Messenger of God [the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ] there came unto us a man whose clothes were of exceeding whiteness and whose hair was of exceeding blackness, nor were there any signs of travel upon him, although none of us knew him. He sat down knee upon knee opposite the Prophet, upon whose thighs he placed the palms of his hands, saying: ‘O Muhammad, tell me what is the surrender (Islam)’. The Messenger of God answered him saying: ‘The surrender is to testify that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is God’s Messenger, to perform the prayer, bestow the alms, fast Ramadan and make if you can, the pilgrimage to the Holy House.’ He said: ‘You have spoken truly,’ and we were amazed that having questioned him he should corroborate him. Then he said: ‘Tell me what is faith (Iman)’. He answered: ‘To believe in God and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day [the Day of Judgement], and to believe that no good or evil comes but by His Providence.’ ‘You have spoken truly,’ he said, and then: ‘Tell me what is excellence (Ihsan)’. He answered: ‘To worship God as if you saw Him, for if you see Him not, yet He sees you.’ ‘You have spoken truly,’ he said ... Then the stranger went away, and I stayed a while after he had gone; and the Prophet said to me: ‘O ‘Umar, do you know the questioner, who he was?’ I said: ‘God and His Messenger know best.’ He said: ‘It was Gabriel [the Archangel]. He came unto you to teach you your religion (din).’

Nevertheless, for 1300 years Muslims had managed to disagree about who is a true Muslim.

The *Amman Message* was H.M. King Abdullah II’s idea. It started as a detailed statement released on the eve of the 27th of Ramadan 1425 AH / 9th November 2004 CE by H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan. It sought to declare not only what Islam is but what it is not, and what actions represent it and what actions do not. Its goal was to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam. (See: www.AmmanMessage.com)

In order to give this statement more religious authority, H.M. King

1 Sabih Muslim, *Kitab Al-Iman*, 1; no. 1.



Abdullah II then sent the following three questions to 24 of the most senior religious scholars from all around the world representing all the branches and schools of Islam: (1) *Who is a Muslim?*; (2) *Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (takfir)?*; (3) *Who has the right to undertake issuing fatwas (legal rulings)?*

In July 2005 CE, based on the *fatwas* provided by these great scholars (who included the Shaykh Al-Azhar; Ayatollah Sistani and Shaykh Yusuf Qaradawi), H.M. King Abdullah II convened an international Islamic conference of 200 of the world's leading Islamic scholars ('*Ulama*') from 50 countries. In Amman, the scholars unanimously issued a ruling on three fundamental issues (which became known as the 'Three Articles of the *Amman Message*'):

They specifically recognized the validity of all 8 *Madhabs* (legal schools) of *Sunni*, *Shi'a* and *Ibadhi* Islam; of traditional Islamic Theology (*Ash'arism*); of Islamic Mysticism (Sufism), and of true *Salafi* thought, and came to a precise definition of who is a Muslim.

Based upon this definition they forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims.

Based upon the *Madhabib* they set forth the subjective and objective pre-conditions for the issuing of *fatwas*, thereby exposing ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam.

The actual text agreed upon (written by Prince Ghazi) reads as follows (see: <http://bit.ly/amthetext>):

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
May peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad
and his pure and noble family,*

(1) Whosoever is an adherent to one of the four *Sunni* schools (*Madhabib*) of Islamic jurisprudence (*Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi'i* and *Hanbali*), the two *Shi'i* schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*Ja'fari* and *Zaydi*), the *Ibadi* school of Islamic jurisprudence and the *Thahiri* school of Islamic jurisprudence, is a Muslim. Declaring that person an apostate is impossible and impermissible. Verily his (or her) blood, honour, and property are inviolable. Moreover, in accordance with the Shaykh Al-Azhar's *fatwa*, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever subscribes to the *Ash'ari* creed or whoever practices real *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) an apostate. Likewise, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever



H.M. King Abdullah II and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi in Oman, 2008



subscribes to true *Salafi* thought an apostate.

Equally, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare as apostates any group of Muslims who believes in God, Glorified and Exalted be He, and His Messenger ﷺ and the pillars of faith, and acknowledges the five pillars of Islam, and does not deny any necessarily self-evident tenet of religion.

(2) There exists more in common between the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence than there is difference between them. The adherents to the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are in agreement as regards the basic principles of Islam. All believe in Allah (God), Glorified and Exalted be He, the One and the Unique; that the Noble Qur'an is the Revealed Word of God; and that our master Muhammad, may blessings and peace be upon him, is a Prophet and Messenger unto all mankind. All are in agreement about the five pillars of Islam: the two testaments of faith (*shahadatayn*); the ritual prayer (*salat*); almsgiving (*zakat*); fasting the month of Ramadan (*sawm*), and the *Hajj* to the sacred house of God (in Mecca). All are also in agreement about the foundations of belief: belief in Allah (God), His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and in the Day of Judgment, in Divine Providence in good and in evil. Disagreements between the *'ulama* (scholars) of the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are only with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (*furu'*) and not as regards the principles and fundamentals (*usul*) [of the religion of Islam]. Disagreement with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (*furu'*) is a mercy. Long ago it was said that variance in opinion among the *'ulama* (scholars) 'is a good affair'.

(3) Acknowledgement of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*Madhahib*) within Islam means adhering to a fundamental methodology in the issuance of *fatwas*: no one may issue a *fatwa* without the requisite personal qualifications which each school of Islamic jurisprudence determines [for its own adherents]. No one may issue a *fatwa* without adhering to the methodology of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. No one may claim to do unlimited *Ijtihad* and create a new school of Islamic jurisprudence or to issue unacceptable *fatwas* that take Muslims out of the principles and certainties of the *Shari'ah* and what has been established in respect of its schools of jurisprudence.

These 'Three Articles' were then unanimously adopted by the Islamic World's political and temporal leaderships at the Organization of the Islamic Conference summit at Mecca in December 2005. And over a pe-



Dr Joseph Lombard, who was working as a consultant at the Royal Hashemite Court in 2005, helped organise some of the conferences that adopted the Amman Message



riod of one year from July 2005 to July 2006, the Three Articles were also unanimously adopted by six other international Islamic scholarly assemblies, culminating with the *International Islamic Fiqh Academy* of Jeddah, in July 2006. In total, over 500 leading Muslim scholars worldwide unanimously endorsed the Amman Message and its Three Articles (see: <http://bit.ly/amendorse>).

This was thus a historic, universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma'*) of the *ummah* (nation) of Islam in modern times, and a consolidation of traditional, orthodox Islam. The significance of the Three Articles of the *Amman Message* is that: (1) it is the first time in over a thousand three hundred years that the *ummah* has formally and



(L to R) Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Shaykh Hamzah Yusuf, Shaykh Yusuf Islam (a.k.a. Car Stevens) and Prince Ghazi in Mecca, 2005

specifically come to such a pluralistic mutual inter-recognition of *who is a Muslim*; and (2) that such a recognition is religiously legally binding on Muslims since the Prophet (may peace and blessings be upon him) said: *My ummah will not agree upon an error* (Ibn Majah, *Sunan, Kitab al-Fitan, Hadith no.4085*).

H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein himself recounts the story of the *Amman Message* in his memoirs:

In late 2004, I brought together a group of leading Islamic scholars in Jordan.... I asked my cousin and adviser Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, a highly respected Islamic scholar with a PhD from Cambridge University, to lead and coordinate their work. The scholars produced a document called



(L to R) Shaykh Tahir Al-Qadri, Prince Ghazi, Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayah and Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi at a conference which adopted the Amman Message, Istanbul, 2006



The Amman Message, which set out what Islam is, what it is not, and what types of actions are and are not Islamic. Released on November 9, on the eve of the holy month of Ramadan, it states in part:

Today the magnanimous message of Islam faces a vicious attack from those who, through distortion and fabrication, try to portray Islam as their enemy. It is also under attack from some who claim affiliation with Islam and commit irresponsible acts in its name.

We denounce and condemn extremism, radicalism and fanaticism today, just as our forefathers tirelessly denounced and opposed them throughout Islamic history.... On religious and moral grounds, we denounce the contemporary concept of terrorism that is associated with wrongful practices, whatever their source and form may be. Such acts are represented by aggression against human life in an oppressive form that transgresses the ruling of God.

I knew that no statement coming from Jordan alone would be enough to combat the *takfiris*, who had spread their poison across the entire Muslim world. So Ghazi distilled the Amman Message down to its three most basic points, three questions that would undercut the *takfiris'* distortions and show them up as fraudulent from the point of view of normative Islam. The three articles are:

1. Who is a Muslim?
2. Is it permissible to declare someone an apostate (*takfir*)?
3. Who has the right to issue *fatwas* (legal rulings)?

We sent these questions to twenty-four of the leading Muslim religious scholars across the world. Unlike Christianity, Islam does not have an official clergy. But it does have schools with famous religious scholars, known as imams, who command great respect. We included representatives from the four main schools of *Sunni* Islamic jurisprudence (*Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi*, and *Hanbali*), the two main *Shia* schools (*Jafari* and *Zaidi*), the *Ibadhi* School, and *Thahiri* scholars.

In July 2005, we invited two hundreds of the world's leading Muslim scholars from fifty countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, to a conference in Amman. These scholars issued a ruling on the three fundamental issues we had raised, and their conclusions became known as the three articles of the Amman Message:



The scholars specifically recognized the validity of all eight *Mathhabs* (legal schools) of *Sunni*, *Shia*, and *Ibadhi* Islam; of traditional Islamic theology (*Ash'arism*); of Islamic mysticism (Sufism); and of true *Salafi* thought, and came to a precise definition of who is a Muslim.

Based upon this definition they forbade *takfir* (declarations of apostasy) between Muslims.

They set forth the subjective and objective pre-conditions for the issuing of *fatwas*, thereby exposing ignorant and illegitimate edicts in the name of Islam.

(H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, *Our Last Best Chance: The Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril*, [Viking, Penguin, USA, 2011], pp.257–258.)

Prince Ghazi compiled all the documents, and summarized and introduced them in 2006 in an important work explaining the whole Amman Message initiative and process, entitled: *True Islam and the Islamic Consensus on the Amman Message / Kitab Ijma' Al-Muslimin 'ala Ihtiram Mathabib al-Din* (The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Amman, Jordan, 2006). The Grand Imam and Shaykh Al-Azhar at that time, Professor Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, wrote an introduction to the book, in which he described it as follows:

The best resource for all those who wish to travel along the straight path in their words and in their actions, and in their spiritual and religious life.

Prince Ghazi also made all the documents (and even the signatures of the scholars who signed them) available free online at: www.AmmanMessage.com.

BENEFIT:

God says in the Holy Qur'an:

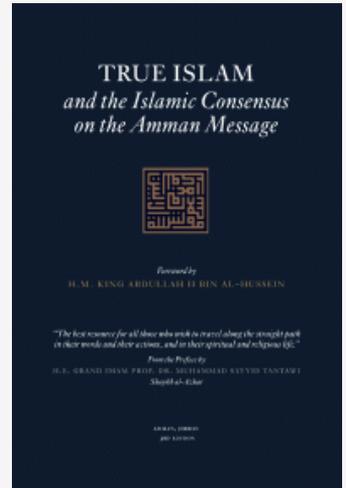
There is no good in much of their secret conferences save (in) whosoever enjoins charity and fairness and peace-making among the people and whoso



OUR LAST BEST CHANCE

An Intimate Account of the Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril
King Abdullah II of Jordan

Our Last Best Chance (book cover)



Kitab Ijma' Al-Muslimin 'ala Ihtiram Mathabib al-Din (book cover)



The late Grand Imam Al-Tantawi

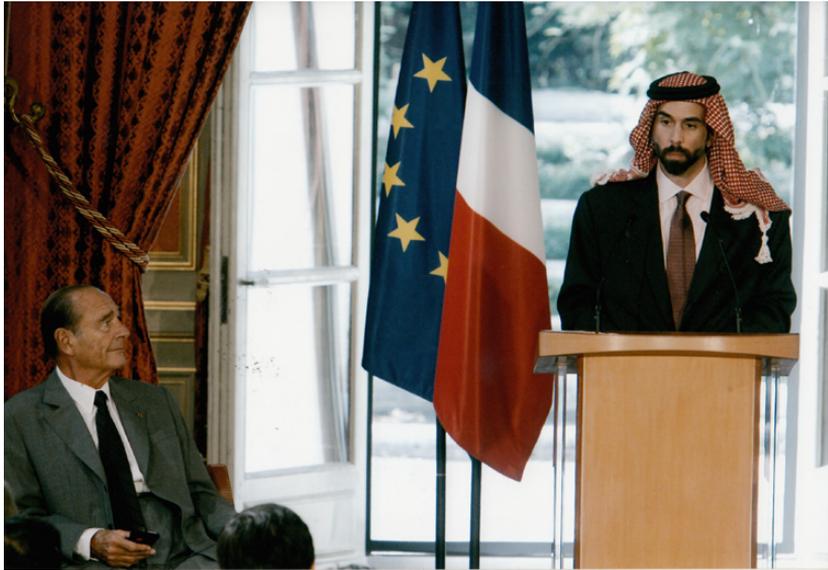
doeth that, seeking the good pleasure of God, We shall bestow on him a vast reward. (*Al-Nisa*, 4:114).

The great benefit of the ‘Three Articles’ of the Amman Message is that they constitute—for the first time in Islamic history—a universal and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma’*) of the *Ummah* (nation) of Islam on who is a Muslim, and who has the right to issue fatwas. Therefore, they not only consolidate traditional, orthodox Islam but also consolidate and formalize plurality and diversity within the framework of Islam. Moreover, the ‘Three Articles’ of the Amman Message also safeguard Islam from the pronouncements of the ignorant. They thus protect both Islam and Muslims alike, and the Amman Message serves as a unique and authoritative historical text on which can be based laws and educational principles, God willing.



Screenshot of Grand List of Endorsements of the Amman Message (Egypt signatories page)

Prince Ghazi spreading the Amman Message at the Elysée Palace, with H.E. President Chirac of France, 2006



№ 8

The WORLD ISLAMIC
SCIENCES and EDU-
CATION UNIVER-
SITY (W.I.S.E.) and the
PRINCE GHAZI FUND
for IRAQI STUDENTS

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2007-2013; 2006-2013 CE)



THE WORLD ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND EDUCATION UNIVERSITY (W.I.S.E.) AND THE PRINCE GHAZI FUND FOR IRAQI STUDENTS

In 2007, Prince Ghazi proposed, lobbied for and saw through legislation to create a separate Islamic University (the World Islamic Sciences and Education University [W.I.S.E.]), out of the Islamic colleges of the Al-Balqa University, whose mandate is to be a national technical and vocational university. W.I.S.E. was established as a non-profit university (owned by RABIIT) and it became Jordan's only Islamic University, with some 7,500 students in 2013. In order to ensure that the University taught traditional, orthodox Islam, Prince Ghazi brought in a curriculum from the Azhar University and hired professors from the Al-Azhar or from Iraq, in addition to Jordanians.

By 2005, Prince Ghazi had established a fund for Iraqi students escaping the 2003 war and the sectarian killings that continued in its aftermath, who wished to major in Islamic Studies. This Fund (the Prince Ghazi Fund for Iraqi Students [P.G.F.I.S.]) was transferred to W.I.S.E. and over the next five years H.H. Crown Prince Shaykh Mohammad bin Zayed of the U.A.E. paid approximately twenty million dollars into it. This enabled the fund to select (largely with the help of the Iraqi Sunni *Waqf*) around 600 promising Iraqi students and their families to come to Jordan and pursue their Islamic Studies. The fund paid for all their costs whilst in Jordan as well as granting them living allowances, accommodation, health care, and in many cases book and travel costs. The students (and sometimes their spouses) did BAs, MAs or PhDs (and in some cases all of them). With the donor's consent, the interest on the money was used to educate 100 financially challenged foreign students in Islamic Studies from 25 or so other countries. Since 2012 the Fund has not taken on any new students (having exhausted the assigned funds) but it continues to pay for several hundred students still studying at W.I.S.E..

BENEFIT:

Aside from the great benefit of having a traditional Islamic University established in Jordan, it could be said that the Prince Ghazi Fund for Iraqi Students has preserved, by the Grace of God, the traditional orthodox nature of the majority of Iraqi Arab Sunnis: during the 2003 war and arguably

Iraq war begins

H.H. Shaykh Mohammad bin Zayed donates \$20 million

W.I.S.E. University founded

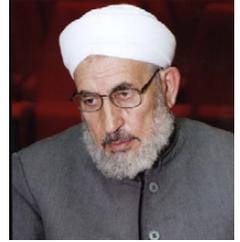
7,500 students now at W.I.S.E. University



جامعة العلوم الإسلامية العالمية
The World Islamic Sciences & Education University (W.I.S.E)



through until 2013, there have been two deliberate campaigns (one by Al-Qaeda Sunni *takfiri* extremists and another by Shi'a extremists) to liquidate all traditional Sunni *'ulema* (scholars of Islam). Over 1200 traditional Sunni imams were methodically assassinated in order that Iraqi Sunnis would either become extremist *takfiri* or extremist Shi'a. The P.G.F.I.S. not only replenished these imams but also provided a safe haven and jobs to some of the greatest Iraqi scholars (as professors and teachers at W.I.S.E.), and they in turn were also able to make sure that the institutes which depended on their direction back in Iraq could still function. But for the Grace of God, the extraordinary generosity and vision of H.H. Crown Prince Shaykh Mohammad bin Zayed of the U.A.E. and W.I.S.E., the destiny of traditional Sunni Islam in Iraq outside of Kurdistan might well have been very different.



Shaykh Abdel-Malek Al-Sa'di, one of the Iraqi professors at W.I.S.E.



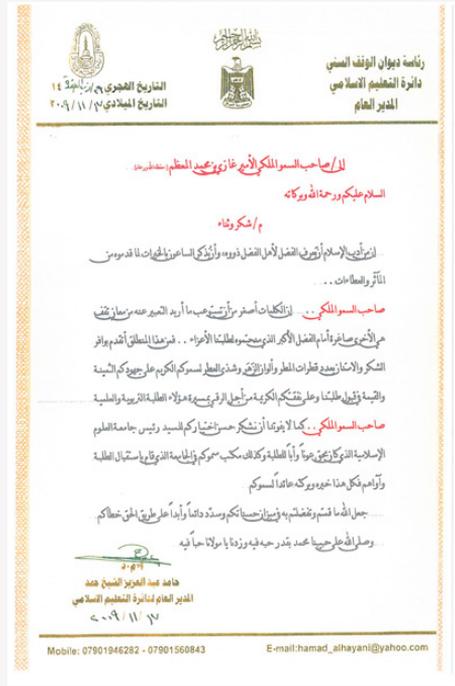
(L to R) Professor Tawfiq Bouti and Professor Abd Al-Hameed Maqsud. They came from Damascus University and Al-Azhar (respectively) to help set up WISE and then teach in it.

W.I.S.E. University Building, Amman





H.H. Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi,
Shaykh Mohammad bin Zayed



Iraqi Sunni Waqf letter of appreciation
for the Prince Ghazi Fund



Iraqi students of the Prince Ghazi Fund, 2007



Dr Abd Al-Nasser Abul Basal,
W.I.S.E. President, 2007-2013



The Prince Ghazi Fund scholars from the Philippines, 2010



International students of the Prince Ghazi Fund, 2007

№ 9

THE INDEPENDENT
NATIONAL GRAND
MUFTI LEGISLATION

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2007 CE)



THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL GRAND MUFTI LEGISLATION

In 2007, with the help of Shaykh Ali Gomaa, then Grand Mufti of Egypt, Prince Ghazi wrote, lobbied for and saw through new legislation making—for the first time in Jordan’s history—the post of National Grand Mufti independent of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Until then, the country’s ‘Mufti’ had been a mid-level employee of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, appointed and dismissed by the Minister, which of course led to the post not being taken seriously. In the 2007 legislation, the ‘Grand Mufti’ (*Al-Mufti Al-Aam*) became an independent minister-level post, appointed solely by the King upon religious advice (it is now the only post in the Kingdom which the king appoints solely at his discretion), with a national *Ifta Council* and with Muftis in each governorate issuing opinions which are legally binding in Islamic personal status religious legislation. The first National Grand Mufti in 2007 was the late venerable Shafi’i-*Madhhab* Shaykh, Professor Nuh Al-Qudah, who as a pre-condition to accepting the appointment stipulated that he would not tolerate any interference from the Palace, the government, parliament, intelligence or foreign powers in his work.



Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa

BENEFIT:

Within the two and a half years that he was Grand Mufti, Shaykh Nuh not only revitalised the whole institution, but with the help of his council, staff, website and modern automated phone services, was able to answer 200,000–300,000 questions a year, relative to 200–300 questions a year under the old Mufti system where each question was answered and transmitted individually with no technological resources or staff.



Grand Mufti of Jordan Shaykh Nuh Al-Qudah, (1939–2010), after whom the Sharia College at W.I.S.E. is named

‘Grand Mufti’ becomes an independent minister-level post

Sharia College at W.I.S.E. named after Shaykh Nuh Al-Qudah

№ 10

A COMMON WORD

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 INTERFAITH 

(2007–2013 CE)



A COMMON WORD

A Common Word Between Us and You was launched on October 13th 2007, initially as an Open Letter signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals (including such figures as the Grand Muftis of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Bosnia, Russia, and Istanbul), to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world, including His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In essence it proposed, based on verses from the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, at their cores, the twin 'golden' commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one's neighbour. Based on this joint common ground, it called for peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims worldwide. The *A Common Word* was, and is, an extended global handshake of interreligious goodwill, friendship and fellowship and consequently of world peace.

WHEN DID A COMMON WORD START?

Prince Ghazi—the author of *A Common Word* Open Letter—describes its genesis as follows:

A few days after H.H. Pope Benedict XVI's now infamous Regensburg lecture on September 12th 2006, I was on the plane going to the USA with H.M. King Abdullah II, and referring to the tensions in the Islamic World it had caused, he asked me to: 'see what you can do to defuse the situation'. Dr Caner Dagli was working in the Royal Court at the time as an Advisor on Interfaith Affairs. I asked him to write a response and we discussed the points I wanted him to put in. After he wrote his draft, I added in a few parts, notably the part about Christianity and Islam having love in common. Together with some friends, I organized for 38 Muslim Scholars to sign it (including ourselves) and we released it to the press as an Open Letter and sent it to the Vatican on October 13th 2006, exactly one month after the Regensburg lecture. We heard nothing until around December, when the Vatican Ambassador to Jordan came to my house in Amman with Archbishop Celata and another priest, who recommended to me that I should 'write to the Vatican Secretary of State if I wanted to have a dialogue'.

I was not satisfied with this rather insufficient response from the Vatican, so I decided to write a more extensive open letter on the

- Regensburg lecture
- First Open Letter of 38 scholars
- ACW Initiative launched
- Yale Conference on ACW
- Lambeth Palace meeting
- 1st Catholic-Muslim Forum, the Vatican
- 1st Georgetown event
- Evangelical Theological Society Conference
- RABBIT Conference
- WCC Conference
- 2nd Georgetown Conference
- 2nd Catholic-Muslim Forum

- Regent's Park College Symposium
- Heythrop College event

- College of William & Mary Seminar
- 3rd Georgetown event

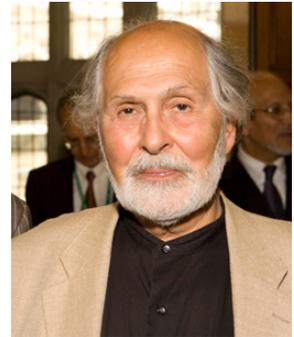


theme of love, on which I had done a PhD about at Cambridge University in 1988–1993, and which I was very interested in. I myself wrote the letter, directly in English (not Arabic), whilst I was in Oman alone (except for my wife and children) at my in-laws home in the first 6 months of 2007. The first person to see the draft was my wife Areej, who corrected some typos. I consulted with my friend Shaykh Habib Ali Al-Jifri and he spoke to some of the senior shaykhs (including Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa, Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah, Shaykh Mohammad Said Ramadan Buti, Habib Umar bin Hafidh and the late Grand Mufti of Jordan Shaykh Nuh Al-Quda) and he said they were willing to try another Open Letter. I had taken some of them that year to the tree under which the Prophet Muhammad had sat in Jordan around 1500 years ago, and had in fact privately prayed there for the success of this initiative. The idea was to add 100 more shaykhs and scholars and issue a more public letter, widening the recipients, in order to gently embarrass the Vatican into a peaceful dialogue because there were voices in the Vatican claiming that ‘theological dialogue is not possible with Muslims as they believe the Qur’an is the Word of God’. I myself researched the historical order of precedence of Christian leaders and included them all, as best as I could. When the letter was finished I sent it to Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr to get his opinion. He read it all and liked it, and we discussed it on the phone. Meanwhile, Habib Ali had it translated into Arabic at Taba institute in the UAE and sent it to the shaykhs mentioned for their opinions and approval. Altogether (including Professor Nasr’s comments and those of the senior shaykhs) there were not more than six changes, and I have kept all the drafts with the different changes to this day. I decided to call the letter ‘A Common Word between Us and You’ (now ‘A Common Word’ for short) based on the Qur’an verse 3:64, which is cited in the text of the letter.

After this core group had thus reached a consensus on the text, we decided to approach others for their signatures on a ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ basis. There was an Aal al-Bayt Conference on love in Islam in September 2007, and we thought this would be an excellent platform to gather support for the Open Letter. Between the conference and the efforts



Shaykh Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri



Professor Seyyed
Hossein Nasr



Dr Caner Dagli



of Habib Ali and Sohail Nakhoda (he was the editor of *Islamica Magazine* at the time, and helped a lot with gathering signatures from academics with whom he was in touch) we managed to gather exactly 138 important signatures and in fact only two people of all those we approached declined to sign it. Right until September 2007, I was in two minds about going ahead because I was unsure it would be successful. It was Habib Ali who pressed me and finally convinced me to go ahead. I then engaged a top publicity company for 3 months (Bell Pottinger of London). Tim Ryan of Bell Pottinger kindly agreed to drop their usual (considerable) fees and charge us only \$100,000. H.M. King Abdullah II graciously provided the money, and this was the only major expense involved. I did, however, buy www.ACommonWord.com before the launch in order to immediately create a public website for the initiative. Professor David Ford of Cambridge (whom we also consulted) was very eager to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue, and so he arranged to release a positive response as soon as news of the Open Letter came out. The Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, also agreed to immediately do a positive television interview about the Open Letter; and the Archbishop of Canterbury's office agreed to also immediately release a positive response. This 'pre-loaded' the response from the Vatican and the other Christian leaders. On October 13, 2007—one year to the day after the 1st Open letter, and one year and one month to the day after the Regensburg address—

we sent the *A Common Word* Open Letter out to all those to whom it was addressed. The rest is now history. All praise belongs to God alone, *Al-HamduLillah Rabb Al-'Alamin*.

Postscript: The shaykhs, Habib Ali and myself determined that we would not identify an author for the document—because what was important to Muslims would be who signed it; because such important shaykhs with such large followings had signed it, and because without their signatures the document



The core *A Common Word* Group at the TABA Foundation in Abu Dhabi, 2008; including: (standing L to R) Fuad Nahdi, Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri, Al-Habib Umar bin Hafiz, Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan Al-Bouti, Grand Mufti Ceric, Grand Mufti Gomaa, Shaykh Maliki, Prof. Ibrahim Kalin, Grand Mufti Al-Qudah, his son Bara; (front, L to R), Salim bin Umar bin Hafiz, Abbas Chaudhary, Dr Aref Nayed, Prince Ghazi and Tim Winter



would mean very little to either Christians or Muslims—and so we did not do so for at least a year after the release of the letter. Finally, we felt we had to release this information subtly on the website because the media was attributing the authorship to scholars who were actually not involved. (*A Common Word Between Us and You: 5-Year Anniversary Edition*, MABDA, Amman, 2012, pp. 131–133.)

HOW WAS A COMMON WORD RECEIVED?

Within the first year after its release, around 70 leading Christian figures responded to *A Common Word* in one form or another, including H.H. Pope Benedict XVI; H.B. the late Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexi II of Russia; the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams; Presiding Bishop of the Lutheran World Federation, Bishop Mark Hanson; the President and General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reform Churches; the President of the World Baptist Alliance; Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia; the President of the World Council of Churches; the Council of Bishops of Methodist Churches; the Head of the World Evangelical Alliance; the Mennonite Church; Quaker leaders and a number of other Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs, Catholic Cardinals, Archbishops, Heads of National Churches, Heads of Theological Seminaries, well-known preachers, professors and leading Christian scholars of Islam. Perhaps the most remarkable of these responses was an Open Letter published in the *New York Times* in November 2007 from over 300 leading US Evangelical and ‘Mainline’ leaders and Christian scholars written and organized by Professor Miroslav Volf and Yale Divinity School and entitled ‘Loving God and Neighbour Together’. Professor Volf himself describes the internal Christian religious and intellectual reaction as follows:

Much more significant than the violent reaction of the extremists [to Pope Benedict XVI’s Regensburg Lecture] was a reasoned position taken by Islamic scholars (‘ulama)—the voice of authoritative and moderate Islam. First came a direct response, an ‘Open Letter’ that contained a point-by-point refutation of the pope’s statement in the lecture about Islam, from a group of the most renowned Islamic scholars of the day. Then, exactly a year later, came an alternative proposal, a highly authoritative and representative document titled ‘A Common Word Between Us and You’. It is addressed to Christian leaders worldwide, but is directed above all to Pope Benedict XVI. On the surface it looks like another interfaith missive — the kind of



First Seminar of the Catholic-Muslim Forum, the Vatican, 2008



Muslims and the Vatican agree to a new World Muslim-Catholic Forum based on *A Common Word*, (L to R) Prof. Aref Nayed, Prof. Tim Winter, Father Ayuso, Cardinal Tauran, Prof. Ibrahim Kalin and Imam Yahya Pallavicini, 2008



Yale University Workshop and Conference on A Common Word, 2008, (Professor Miroslav Volf on the left. From right, Taha Abderrahman and Professor David Burrell)



Professor David Ford at Yale, 2008



Prince Ghazi at Yale, 2008



A Common Word Conference at Lambeth Palace, 2008; (L to R): Prince Ghazi, Al-Muhaqiq Damad, Dr Rowan Williams, Shaykh Ali Gomaa, Al-Habib Omar bin Hafiz and Bishop Yuhanna Ibrahim



95
text that elicits a yawn from ordinary readers. But behind the document stood a young and brilliant Jordanian prince, and it contained one massive surprise: a new proposal about relations between Muslim and Christians. In it some of the most senior Muslim religious leaders from all around the world—grand muftis of many nations, popular preachers with large followings, and scholarly authorities from places like the famed Al-Azhar University—argued that the commands of God unite Muslims and Christians much more than they divide them. Properly understood, God does not widen the chasm between Muslim and Christians as Benedict XVI suggested, but bridges it. ...

00
Tucked in close to the end of the [first] 'Open Letter' is a truly revolutionary idea. It remained largely unnoticed by readers. The text winds down, as many such text do, expressing hope that Muslims and Christians will 'continue to build peaceful and friendly relationships based upon mutual respect, justice, and what is common in essence in our shared Abrahamic tradition'. And then, just as one's hand starts moving to cover the yawn, one is startled by a pearl of surprising beauty and great value. The 'common essence' of Christianity and Islam, states the 'Open Letter' surprisingly, are the 'two greatest commandments' as Jesus Christ formulated them in the Gospels: 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself".' (Mark 12:29–31)

05
Islam is at its heart a violent religion, say many of its fierce critics, including Benedict XVI (at least in the Regensburg lecture). Islam is at its heart about obedience to God's law, the Shari'a, which is based on the Qur'an and authoritative oral tradition (*hadith*) and has been systematized over the centuries in the classic schools of law, say many of its devout advocates. Islam is at its heart about love of God and of neighbor, say the signatories of the 'Open Letter'. In the mind of most people, Christianity is supposed to be about love of God and neighbor (even though it is true that at the heart of Christianity does not lie human love at all, but God's love for humanity). But many—including many scholars of Islam—would need persuading that Islam is about love of God and neighbor.

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As mentioned, exactly one year after the [first] 'Open Letter' on October 13, 2007, a longer text was published that expands upon the arguments. Its title was 'A Common Word Between Us



and You,' and it bore the stamp of authority of the most prominent and representative Muslim leaders in the world. Its birth place was Amman, Jordan. The intellectual and organizational force behind it was Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal.

Here is a bare-bones version of the argument. First, love of God. As recorded in the authoritative oral tradition (*hadith*), Muhammad said:

The best that I have said—myself, and the prophets that came before me—is: 'There is no god but God, He Alone, He hath no associate, His is the sovereignty and His is the praise and he hath power over all things.

'Love' for God does not appear in these words of Muhammad. Indeed, he says nothing about how humans should relate to God; rather, he describes God. And yet in every one of these descriptions of God, a human attitude towards God is implied. To the singleness and universal rule of God corresponds exclusive devotion to God on the part of humans. As the 'Common Word' states, this text 'reminds Muslims that their hearts, their individual souls and all the faculties and powers in their souls ... must be totally devoted and attached to God'.

Second, love of neighbor. Again, according to the *hadith*, Muhammad said: 'None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself'. The 'Common Word' explains: 'Love of the neighbor is an essential and integral path of faith in God and love of God, because in Islam without love of the neighbor there is no true faith in God and no righteousness.'

In Islam, as in Christianity, love of God and love of neighbor are central, argue the signatories of the 'Common World'. Their point is not that Islam is no different from Christianity. They state explicitly that these two 'are obviously different religions'. Their point is, rather, that the two greatest commandments 'are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur'an, the Torah and the New Testament'. (Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, Harper One, USA, 2011, p.21; pp.27–29.)

Since then hundreds more Christian leaders and preachers have responded or endorsed the Open Letter. In the meantime, the Muslim scholars signing the initiative increased to over 400, with over 460 Islamic organizations and associations also endorsing it.



WHERE DID A COMMON WORD SPREAD TO?

During the six years since its launch ACW became arguably the most influential interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in history. Thousands of newspaper reports were written on it and the activities inspired by it (see: <http://bit.ly/acwnews>), and hundreds of thousands of people visited its website (www.ACommonWord.com). It provided a

A Common Word
Between Us and You,
(Logo)



common ground on which thousands of Muslim and Christian religious leaders have been brought together through:

- Initiating a multitude of conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs, university courses etc., including in: Jordan; the Vatican; the USA (Yale University; Georgetown University and the College of William and Mary; Fuller Theological Seminary; ISNA; Portland, Oregon; Richmond Virginia; South Carolina; New Orleans); the UK (Cambridge University, Oxford University, Heythrop College and Lambeth Palace); Oman; Malaysia; Egypt; Sudan; Pakistan; the UAE; the Brookings Institute in Qatar; the Mediterranean Dialogue of Cultures; Germany (the Munich School of Philosophy); the World Council of Churches in Switzerland; the Philippines and Australia (see: <http://bit.ly/acwfruits>).
- Being the subject of books, articles, PhDs and MA dissertations and reports (see: <http://bit.ly/acwpubs>).
- Founding the regular [every 3 years] Catholic-Muslim Forum which was first held at the Vatican in 2008, and then at the Baptism Site, Jordan, in 2011.
- Giving rise to a variety of other events, activities, initiatives and even legislative bills (see: <http://www.bit.ly/acwnewf>).

Thus H.H. Pope Benedict XVI, said of it (during the First Seminar of the Catholic-Muslim Forum held at the Vatican, November 4–6, 2008:

The Open Letter '*A Common Word between Us and you*' has received numerous responses, and has given rise to dialogue, specific



initiatives and meetings, aimed at helping us to know one another more deeply and to grow in esteem for our shared values.

Equally, H.G. Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, said of it (in 2010):

The appearance of the *A Common Word* [Open Letter] of 2007 was a landmark in Muslim-Christian relations and it has a unique role in stimulating a discussion at the deepest level across the world.

In so far as Muslim-Christian relations are concerned, Professor Miroslav Volf of Yale University said of it (in 2011):

The *A Common Word* Initiative is the most significant initiative in Muslim-Christian relations since *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council.

And in so far as Muslim initiatives towards Christians are concerned, Professor David F. Ford (Regius Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge, U.K. and Director of the Cambridge Interfaith Program) said of it (in 2011):

The Open Letter *A Common Word Between Us and You* (2007) was probably the single most important initiative ever taken by Muslim scholars and authorities towards Christians.

The *A Common Word* initiative was awarded the UK's Association of Muslim Social Scientists Building Bridges Award of 2008; Prince Ghazi, Al-Habib Ali Al-Jifri and Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić were awarded Germany's Eugen Biser Award for it in 2008, and Prince Ghazi was awarded the St Augustine Award for Interreligious Dialogue in the Mediterranean (Milan, Italy, 2012) and the Interfaith Harmony and Tolerance Prize by the International Islamic University of Malaysia, Jamia Ma'din and the National Unity and Integration Department, Malaysia.



H.H. Pope Benedict XVI and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi at the King Hussein Mosque Amman, 2009



BENEFIT:

The great benefit of the *A Common Word* initiative is not only that it provides a theologically-correct platform for dialogue based on Love of God and Love of the Neighbour for Muslims and Christians (who together form 55% of the world's population), but also that it has created a truly historic, global inter-religious peace movement.



H.R.H. Prince Ghazi with H.H. Pope Francis, 2013

№ 11

LOVE IN THE
HOLY QUR'AN

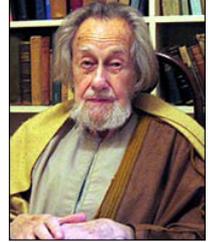
 ISLAM 

(2007–2011 CE)



LOVE IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

Prince Ghazi was educated at Harrow School, U.K., and received his BA *summa cum laude* from Princeton University in 1988 and his first PhD from Trinity College, Cambridge University in the U.K. in 1993. His thesis was entitled: *What is Falling in Love? A Study of the Literary Archetype of Falling in Love*. However, from 1990 until 2005, Prince Ghazi was a devoted private student of Dr Martin Lings (1909–2005), who amongst other things, taught Prince Ghazi on the subject of love in the Islamic tradition. Indeed, when Dr Lings died on May 12th 2005, it was Prince Ghazi who had the great privilege and blessing of being the person to receive Dr Lings' body into his grave (on May 13th 2005) and lay it out there, having participated in washing his body (*ghaseel*) in accordance with Islamic funeral rites.



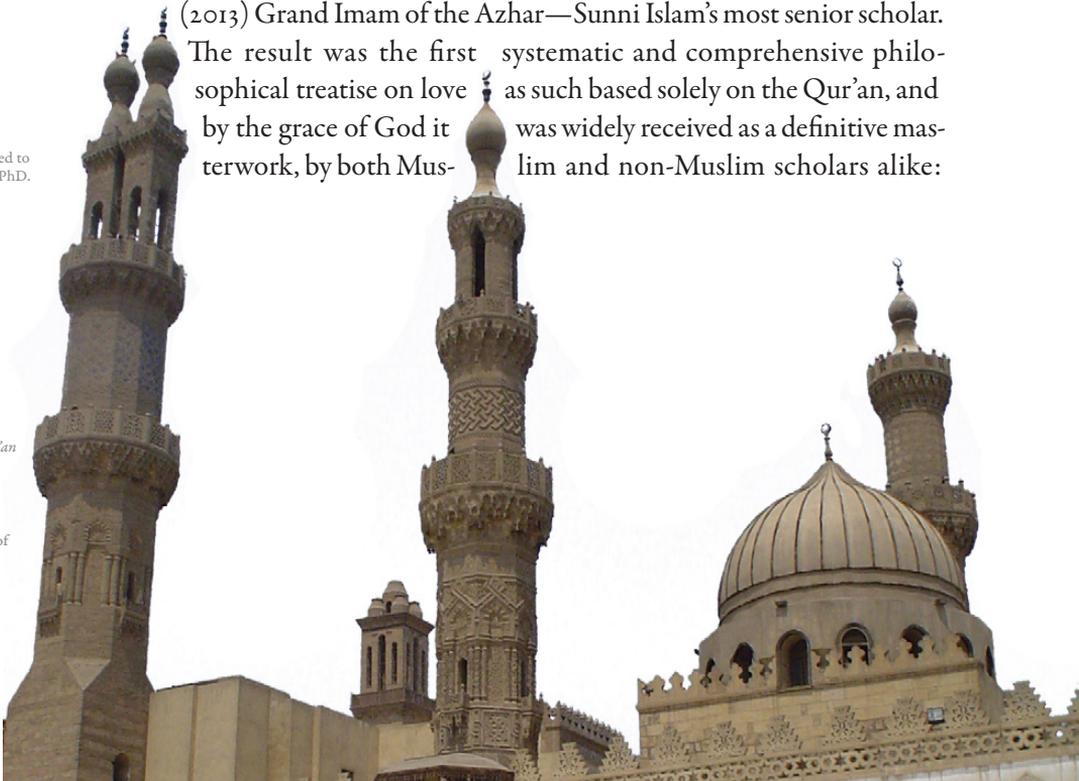
Dr Martin Lings
(1909–2005)

Thus fourteen years after having completed his first PhD on love, and being already (part-time) *Professor of Islamic Philosophy* at Jordan University (Faculty of Graduate Studies), Prince Ghazi decided to return to university to do a PhD in Islamic Philosophy in Arabic on *Love in the Holy Qur'an*. He was privileged to be accepted at Al-Azhar University—the 1000 year-old bastion of Sunni Orthodoxy in Cairo, Egypt, and the largest and second oldest university in the world. His thesis supervisor was Professor Shaykh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, then Rector of the University and currently (2013) Grand Imam of the Azhar—Sunni Islam's most senior scholar. The result was the first systematic and comprehensive philosophical treatise on love as such based solely on the Qur'an, and by the grace of God it was widely received as a definitive muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike:

Prince Ghazi accepted to Al-Azhar for his 2nd PhD.

Love in the Holy Qur'an published in Arabic

English translation of LHQ published





An exceptional thesis, worthy of praise and appreciation for its methodology, for its content and for its language.

— *H.E. the Grand Imam and Shaykh of Al-Azhar*, Professor Dr Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb (the thesis's supervisor at Al-Azhar University).

[This book is] the most precious of gems; the most beautiful of adornments; the firmest in the heart; the closest to the mind, and the most complete in its influence.

— *The Grand Mufti of Syria*, H.E. Shaykh Professor Dr Ahmad Badrudin Hassoun.

It contains what the world should hear as it listens to the Qur'an; it is excellent and beneficial.

— *The Grand Mufti of Egypt*, H.E. Shaykh Professor Dr Ali Gomaa.



A book which plunges into the depths of the truth and retrieves its hidden pearl; for it presents to people what they did not understand about the sanctity of love and its place in the Qur'an [The author] has produced in this work something which no one has ever done before.

— *The Grand Mufti of Oman*, H.E. Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khalili.

This is a work of a mystical and philosophical bent, which I found to contain many beautiful concepts which the author—God keep him—derived by gathering [Qur'anic] verses in a way which has perhaps never been done before, but which does not contradict the principles of Islamic doctrine.

— *The Grand Mufti of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, H.E. Shaykh Prof. Dr Nuh Ali Salman Al-Qudah.



Princess Areej Ghazi, Princess Tasneem Ghazi and Dr Martin Lings, 2000



H.E. Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb



H.E. Grand Mufti
Shaykh Ahmad Al-Khalili



Prince Ghazi in 2007



There has never been an epistle like this before ... and it has come at exactly the right time.

— *The Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, H.E. Shaykh Mustafa Ceric.

An odyssey into the depths of the self; its domain is the orchard of love, watered with wisdom, its branches extending towards a sky of knowledge, its fruit bearing happiness, its flowers scented with the breath of *Shari'ah*. A beneficial work; a wondrous composition.

— *Vice President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and Founder and President of the Global Center for Renewal and Guidance*, H.E. Professor Shaykh Abdullah bin Mahfouth bin Bayyah.



Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah

In the midst of my fruitless searching for someone who has treated the subject of love in the Book of God and wrote about it or spoke about it, I received ... exactly what I was looking for: '*Love in the Qur'an*' by H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad bin Talal Al-Hashemi. ... The value of this book, and this subject, is immense... The book is wonderful... I congratulate [the author] for the

love which inspired [him] to write it ... and I ask the Almighty to make our hearts vessels of His love, that we may be drawn from ourselves to Him, and use it to reach Him.

— *Dean of the College of Shari'ah, Damascus University*, Shaykh Prof. Dr Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti.



Shaykh Al-Bouti, who was assassinated in March 2013

I find this to be an innovative work which clarifies the meaning of love and its forms, components and secrets, deriving all this from the Holy Qur'an. It shows which kinds of love are praiseworthy and which are blameworthy, and the different degrees of love, lovers and beloveds—and it does all this with



Mufti Taqi 'Uthmani



a creative and engaging style of exposition.

—Vice President of Darul ‘Uloom Karachi, Pakistan, Mufti Muhammad Taqi ‘Uthmani.

An invaluable and precise ... study that covers the psychological, philosophical and spiritual aspects [of love]. ... It adds a new and beautiful authentication to the message of Islam.

—H.E. Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr.

A masterwork of scholarship and of inspiration.

—H.E. Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, *Distinguished Senior Scholar, The Library of Congress.*

Love in the Holy Qur’an is bound to become a classic.

—Tamara Sonn, *Kenan Professor of Humanities, College of William and Mary.*

Prince Ghazi has produced a definitive study of love in the Qur’an.

—Professor David F. Ford, *Regius Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge, U.K.*



H.E. Ayatollah Hussein Ismail Al-Sadr



H.E. Cardinal McCarrick

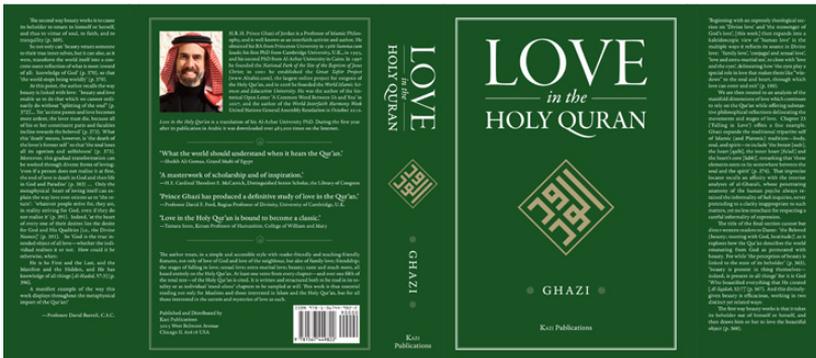


Professor Tamara Sonn



Professor David F. Ford

The book was published immediately (it went through four editions and print runs within the first year), and it was downloaded 485,000 times in Arabic from the Internet within one year (May 2010–2011). It has since been through three more editions (see: <http://bit.ly/lithq>) and translated into English and Bosnian (see: <http://bit.ly/lhqintro>).



Love in the Holy Qur’an (dustjacket)



BENEFIT:

The benefit of the book is first that it explains the mysteries of love completely from the Holy Qur'an; second, that it demonstrates that love is central to the Qur'an and to Islam; third, that it shows how the Qur'an contains all philosophy; and fourth, that it gives theological depth to Islamic initiatives based on love such as *A Common Word* and the *Love Initiative*.

№ 12

COMMON GROUND
BETWEEN ISLAM
AND BUDDHISM

 INTERFAITH 

(2008–2010 CE)



COMMON GROUND BETWEEN ISLAM AND BUDDHISM

Following the success of the *A Common Word* initiative, and building on personal meetings and discussions with H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama in 2005, 2006 and 2008, Prince Ghazi commissioned Royal Academy Fellow Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi to explore the doctrinal common ground between Islam and Buddhism in order to better improve understanding between adherents of the two faiths. The Dalai Lama himself recalled the meetings as follows:

During my first visit to Jordan in 2005 I had a series of private conversations with a noted scholar in ... Islam. He was deeply interested in exploring how Islamic theologians might understand aspects of Buddhism that demonstrate it as a great spiritual tradition. I acknowledged that the absence of a transcendent God and an eternal soul mark Buddhism apart from a religion like Islam, but I pointed out that, unlike secular philosophies, in Buddhism there is a notion of salvation (or enlightenment) that is defined as a sentient beings' ultimate end. There is also an acceptance of higher beings, such as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, whom the faithful may offer prayers to and seek blessings from. Finally, there is the notion of ultimate truth, which the religious seeker can come to know and even to embody. (H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama, *Towards the True Kinship of Faiths*, Three Rivers Press, 2011, p.86)

05
First personal meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama

Second personal meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama

The book that resulted—a scholarly masterpiece entitled *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism*—was arguably the first work in centuries to constructively explore the profound similarities and incompatible differences between the two faiths. The book was then translated into at least five different languages (see: www.IslamBuddhism.com).

Third personal meeting with H.H. the Dalai Lama

BENEFIT:

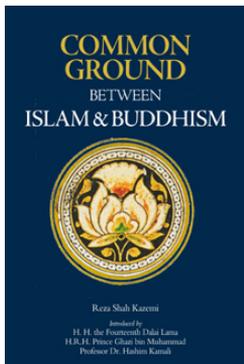
The book created a new and profound philosophical platform for dialogue between the two faiths, something which is particularly important in South Asia and China where hundreds of millions of Muslims and Buddhists live side by side as neighbours.

10
A Common Ground Between Islam & Buddhism published



This is an important and pioneering book, which seeks to find common ground between the teachings of Islam and of Buddhism. It is my hope that on the basis of this common ground, followers of each tradition may come to appreciate the spiritual truths their different paths entail, and from this develop a basis for respect for each others' practice and beliefs. This may not have occurred very often before, because there has been so little opportunity for real understanding between these two great traditions. This book attempts to set that right ... From a Buddhist point of view, the practice of Islam is evidently a spiritual path of salvation. — H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama

Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism is an historic, true beginning of the

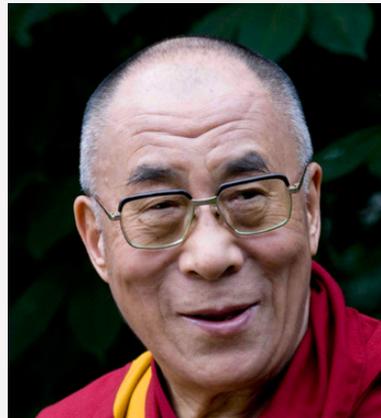


Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism (book cover)

scholarly and spiritual effort to lay a foundation for the mutual understanding between serious believers of these two great world religions which, on the surface seem diametrically opposed. The author's well-informed and insightful analysis reveals, deeper

down, a genuine common ground of transcendental wisdom and merciful compassion. A splendid accomplishment, a transformative read, and a kindling of hope for real peace in days to come!

— Robert Tenzin Thurman, Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University.



H.H. the Dalai Lama



Dr Reza Shah-Kazemi



H.H. the Dalai Lama with Prince Ghazi and family, 2005

№ 13

THE MUSEUM OF
THE PROPHET
MUHAMMAD

صَلَّى اللهُ
عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ

 JORDANIAN NATIONAL INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2007–2012 CE)



THE MUSEUM OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

In 2007, Prince Ghazi suggested building a small museum outside the beautiful King Hussein State Mosque, in Khalda, Amman—which H.M. King Abdullah II built at his expense in memory of his late father H.M. King Hussein (may God grant him peace)—, dedicated solely to effects of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Prince Ghazi oversaw the construction of the Museum (by Islamic architect Khaled ‘Azzam) for five years until the year 2012 when it was finally completed and inaugurated by H.M. King Abdullah II, who himself financed it.

The heavily-guarded museum currently contains three unique and priceless items: (1) the Prophet Muhammad’s letter to the Emperor Heracilius which is an heirloom in the Hashemite family: previously it had been kept in the Central Bank of Jordan, and this is the first time that it has been shown in public; (2) a graft of the blessed tree (a Western Atlantic Pistachio grafted onto a Palestine Oak) under which the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had sat in the Jordanian desert around 1500 years ago—it is the only graft of dozens that has ever survived (it was grafted in Prince Ghazi’s own garden); (3) a part of a hair of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, on loan and owned by Prince Ghazi’s own son, Prince Abdullah bin Ghazi.

Prince Ghazi also has unique pictures of the house of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Mecca before it was built over during the expansion of the great mosque at Mecca. These pictures will be made available at QuranicThought.com.

BENEFIT:

Thousands of students and visitors tour the Museum every week, for free.

Prince Ghazi suggests building the museum



The Museum of the Prophet ﷺ

Museum completed and inaugurated by H.M. King Abdullah II



Prince Abdullah bin Ghazi loaning the blessed hair to the museum, 2012



Prince Ghazi placing the Prophet's ﷺ letter in the museum, with Princess Areej Ghazi, 2012

№ 14

THE WORLD INTERFAITH
HARMONY WEEK

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 INTERFAITH 

(2010–2013 CE)



THE WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

After the success—by God’s Grace—of the *Amman Message* (2004), which intended to promote peace, harmony and brotherhood between Muslims; and *A Common Word* (2007) which intended to promote peace, harmony and brotherhood between Muslims and Christians, Prince Ghazi sought a way to extend these values to everyone in the world of whatever faith (or no faith) without any exclusion, but in a way in which it would not lose its spiritual authenticity for believers in the One God. So in August 2010, he suggested the idea of a World Interfaith Harmony Week to H.M. King Abdullah II, who immediately approved it, and himself proposed the idea at the 65th Plenary Session of the United Nations on September 26th, 2010 (see: <http://bit.ly/wihwun1>).

The following month, Prince Ghazi flew to New York and introduced the idea at the U.N. (see: <http://bit.ly/wihwun2>), having himself written the text, whilst Jordan’s Ambassador to the U.N. Prince Zeid bin Ra’ad and his embassy team ably lobbied the U.N. states for the resolution. The resolution (A/Res/65/5) was adopted unanimously by the UNGA after being proposed by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and 29 other co-sponsors, namely: Albania, Azerbaijan; Bahrain; Bangladesh; Costa Rica; the Dominican Republic; Egypt; El Salvador; Georgia; Guatemala; Guyana; Honduras; Kazakhstan; Kuwait; Liberia; Libya; Mauritius; Morocco; Oman; Paraguay; Qatar; the Russian Federation; Saudi Arabia; Tanzania; Tunisia; Turkey; the United Arab Emirates; Uruguay and Yemen. It read as follows:



H.M. King Abdullah II at the U.N.



H.R.H. Prince Ghazi at the U.N., October 21st, 2010



H.R.H. Prince Zeid bin Ra’ad, Jordan’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Proposal at the UNGA

Wihw adopted at the UNGA

First observance of the Wihw

First Wihw prizes awarded



The General Assembly,

UNITED NATIONS

1. *Reaffirms* that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;
2. *Proclaims* the first week of February of every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;
3. *Encourages* all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world's Churches, Mosques, Synagogues, Temples and other places of Worship during that week based on Love of God and Love of the Neighbour, or based on Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions;
4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly informed of the implementation of the present resolution.



It will be noted that Prince Ghazi's unprecedented central phrase in the resolution—'Love of God and Love of the Neighbour, or based on Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions'—excludes no one, of any religion or of no faith at all: every person of good will, with or without faith can and should commit to 'Love of God and Love of the Neighbour' *or* 'Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbour'. Loving the Good and the neighbour is, after all, the essence of good will as such. And referring



to 'the Good' obviously does not necessarily imply belief in God or in a particular religion, even though for monotheistic believers 'the Good' is God precisely: Jesus Christ ﷺ said: '*No one is Good but God Alone*' (Mark, 10:18; Luke 18:19, and Matthew 19:17), and 'the Good' ('*Al-Barr*') is one of God's Names in the Holy Qur'an (*Al-Tur*, 52:28). Thus speaking of 'the Good' is an ingenious theologically-correct but inclusive formula—in so far as it goes—that unites all humanity and excludes no one.

This was the first and perhaps the only time the U.N. has approved a



First WIHW prize-giving ceremony, April 15th, 2013



Judges of the 2013 WIHW Prize: (L to R) H.R.H. Princess Areej Ghazi, H.B. Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, Bishop Munib Younan, Professor Minwir Al-Mheid, Father Nabil Haddad, Mr. Nabil Al-Saheb and Mr. Aftab Ahmed



The 2013 WIHW prize-giving ceremony. FRONT: H.R.H. Princess Jennah Ghazi. BACK: Emeritus Grand Mufti Ceric (left) and Dr Amina Rasul (right).



WIHW Prize, logo



Prince Ghazi's family and H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III, 2013 (L to R): Prince Ghazi, Princess Jennah, Princess Tasneem, H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III, Princess Areej and Prince Abdullah



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resolution explicitly based on belief in God. Yet U.N. resolutions do not in themselves guarantee success, so Prince Ghazi in 2011 tasked MABDA to set up a dedicated website and online campaign to promote the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Two years later, Prince Ghazi persuaded RABIT to set up cash prizes for the three best events or texts organized in the world during the U.N. W.I.H.W. (first week of February) which best promote the goals of the W.I.H.W.. In its first year, 2013, the prizes were awarded to (see: <http://bit.ly/wihwp>):

- First Prize: The Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna, Nigeria for their event ‘Imam and Pastor, from Vengeance to Forgiveness’ (awarded to Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye).
- Second Prize: Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy and Noorus Salam for their event ‘*A Common Word* towards a Common Peace’ (awarded to H.E. Santanina Tillah Rasul, Omuhani Mabandes and Dr Amina Rasul).
- Third Prize: Department of National Unity and Integration, Malaysia for their event ‘WIIHW Malaysia 2013’ (awarded to Dato’ Azman Amin bin Hassan, Rev. Dr Thomas Philips and Mr. Wan Burhan bin Wan Ismail).

The judges were:

- Dr Dr H.R.H. Princess Areej Ghazi—Founder and Director of The School of Life (and wife of Prince Ghazi)
- H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III—Greek Orthodox Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, Palestine and Jordan
- H.E. Bishop Munib Yunan—Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and President of the World Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches
- Father Nabil Haddad—Founder and Executive Director of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Centre
- Dr Minwer Al-Mheid—Director of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (RABIT)
- Mr. Nabil Al-Sahib—First Deputy of the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (RABIT)



- Mr. Aftab Ahmed—Director of the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC / MABDA)

BENEFIT:

The great benefit of the W.I.H.W. is that it provides, for the first time ever an official, single, united and defined common purpose—and a recurring operational ‘platform’—for the hundreds, if not thousands, of intra-faith and interfaith groups all over the world (and of all religions) working to alleviate and heal religious tensions in the face of those determined to incite them. As such, it has untold potential to alleviate interfaith tensions and mobilize the world to live in interfaith peace and harmony.

I believe [it] has a unique, historic and unprecedented potential to promote the healing of interfaith tensions in the world I fully lend my support to this call and we at the U.N. are proud to be the platform for its launch.
— U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, January 20th, 2011.

Observance of the World Interfaith Harmony Week will serve peoples of all faiths and beliefs to coexist in peace, harmony and goodwill.
— Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, 2010.

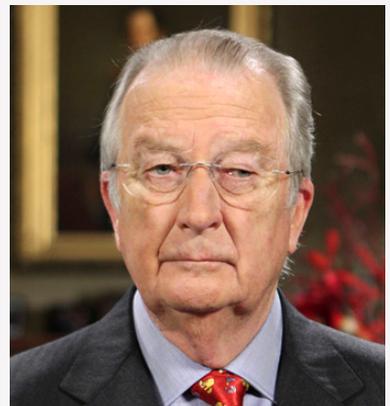
Belgium considers it an important positive contribution to the understanding and peaceful co-existence among nations and faiths.
— H.M. King Albert of Belgium, 2011.



U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon



O.I.C. General-Secretary
Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu



H.M. King Albert of Belgium

№ 15

THE INTERNATIONAL
ISLAMIC INTE-
GRAL PROFES-
SORIAL CHAIRS

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

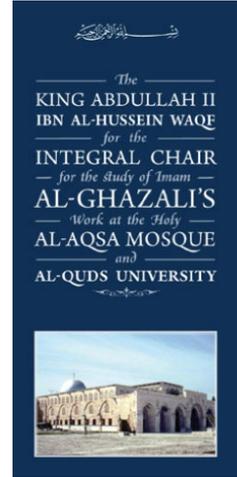
(2011–2013 CE)



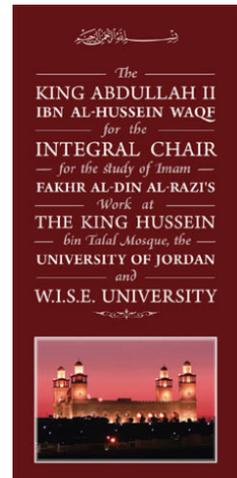
THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC INTEGRAL PROFESSORIAL CHAIRS

In 2011, Prince Ghazi conceived the idea of setting up International Islamic Integral Professorial Chairs as Islamic trusts (*waqfs*) in the Islamic World's leading universities and major mosques to revive traditional Islamic knowledge. By focusing on Islamic scholars rather than on modern academic disciplines, and by combining academic teaching with traditional 'memory and discussion'-based teaching techniques conducted in mosques, Prince Ghazi hoped to re-imbibe the Islamic World not only with a broader and more holistic view of the Islamic Sciences, but also with a love of the traditional teaching methodology and its dedication to logic and precision.

On January 30th 2012—H.M. King Abdullah's 50th birthday—the first two chairs, the *King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein Waqf for the Integral Chair for the Study of Imam Al-Ghazali's Work at the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Quds University* and the *King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein Waqf for the Integral Chair for the Study of Imam Al-Razi's Work at the King Hussein bin Talal Mosque, the University of Jordan and W.I.S.E. University* were inaugurated. The chairs were largely paid for by RABIIT, but generous contributions to the Ghazali Chair were made by the Palestinian Authority (from its grant via the Islamic International Development Bank), and to the Razi Chair by Jordan University. The chair requirements were very difficult and thorough: in addition to being scholars specialised in the thought of those whom the chairs were dedicated to (e.g. Ghazali, Razi), the applicants had to know foreign languages and know the Qur'an by heart. However, the chairs were endowed not only with very generous professorial salaries for life, but also with funds for administrative costs, free video-channels, student scholarships, and bi-annual prizes. After international contests in 2011 and 2012, Dr Mustafa Abu Swayy was selected for the Ghazali Chair and



Al-Ghazali Chair (booklet cover)



Al-Razi Chair (booklet cover)

Idea conceived

First 2 chairs inaugurated

Professor of the Ghazali Chair appointed

Professor of the Razi Chair appointed



Dr Faruk Hasan Kumayl was selected for the Razi Chair.

Over 60 chairs dedicated to the greatest thinkers in Islamic history are envisaged all over the world, God willing, and in 2013 an Integral Chair (modelled on the Ghazali and Razi Chairs) was set up in Abu Dhabi for the Study of Imam Malik’s work.

In recognition of all his 23 years of work, in October 2011 when Prince Ghazi decided to formally retire from government and work pro-bono for king and country, he was formally appointed *Chief Advisor* to H.M. King Abdullah II *for Religious and Cultural Affairs*, a title never before granted in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in addition to being the Personal Envoy of H.M. King Abdullah II.



Dr Mustafa Abu Swayy, Professor of the Integral Chair for the Study of Imam Al-Ghazali’s Work, teaching at Bab Al-Rahmah in the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque

BENEFIT:

The IIIPC chairs have the potential to revive traditional Islamic learning and thus combat both fundamentalism and secularism. They also free top scholars from the tyranny of personal financial constraint, and of academic administration and budgeting, and make sure that they have the tools and the languages to communicate with the modern world.



Dr Faruk Hasan Kumayl, Professor for the Integral Chair for the Study of Imam Fakr Al-Din Al-Razi’s Work



Abdel Hamid Shoman, Chairman of the Islamic International Arab Bank, which generously undertook the running costs of the two International Islamic Professorial Chairs



Signing ceremony for the Ghazali and Razi Chairs, 2012



H.M. King Abdullah II signing the Waqfs of the Ghazali and Razi Chairs, 2012

№ 16

THE NIGERIA
INTERFAITH
RECONCILIATION
INITIATIVE

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

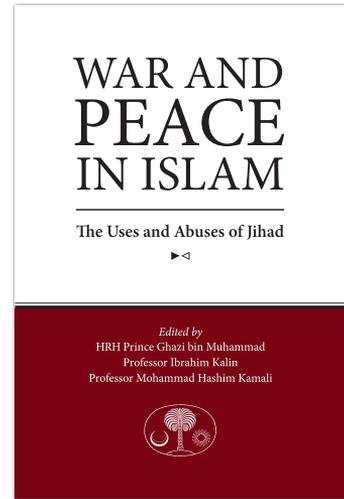
 INTERFAITH 

(2012–2013 CE)



THE NIGERIA INTERFAITH RECONCILIATION INITIATIVE

In 2012, Prince Ghazi co-organised (on behalf of RABIIT) and participated in—together with Rev. Dr Olave Fykse Tveit the Secretary General of World Council of Churches—a high-level joint interfaith fact-finding trip to investigate interfaith tensions in Nigeria, and co-wrote the *Report on the Inter-Religious Tensions and Crisis in Nigeria by the International Joint Delegation of The World Council of Churches and The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, May 2012* (available at www.Mabda.jo). Nigeria is the country where there has arguably been the most Christian-Muslim communal violence in the world over the last 30 years (excepting those countries with outright civil war), and the visit of this joint delegation was the first time a non-African interfaith delegation had even engaged with the problems there. Prince Ghazi then co-edited a seminal book in English—*War and Peace in Islam: The Uses and Abuses of Jihad* (Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge)—consisting of essays by some of the Islamic World’s leading scholars in order to clarify the issue of *legitimate Jihad* once and for all for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. More joint work is planned, God willing.



War and Peace in Islam: The Uses and Abuses of Jihad (book cover)

BENEFIT:

Aside from a valuable balanced analysis of the inter-religious tensions in one of the most religiously conflicted countries in the world, the very fact of international joint action by Muslims and Christians as such working together in harmony is an invaluable precedent for the future, God willing.



Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali, the Chairman of the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IIAIS), Malaysia



The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute
for Islamic Thought, logo



**World Council
of Churches**



THE RABIIT-WCC delegation with the Governor of Kaduna, Nigeria, 2012



H.R.E. the Sultan of Sokoto
Muhammad Sa'd AbuBakr,
2012



Prince Ghazi, H.R.E the Sultan of
Sokoto, and WCC Secretary Gen-
eral, Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, Abuja,
Nigeria, 2012



H.H. the Emir of Kano, 2012



Cardinal Onaiyekan and Arch-
bishop Michael Jackson, 2012

№ 17

THE PRINCE
GHAZI TRUST
FOR QUR'ANIC
THOUGHT

 ISLAM 

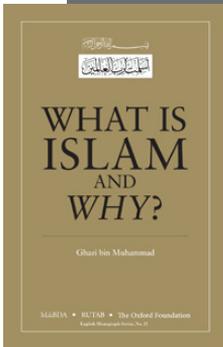
(2012–2013 CE)



THE PRINCE GHAZI TRUST FOR QUR'ANIC THOUGHT

In 2012 Prince Ghazi established a religious endowment entitled 'The Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur'anic Thought' with four major goals in mind:

1. to support, promote and propagate Islamic philosophy based on the Qur'an (including Prince Ghazi's own Qur'anic philosophy works such as *Love in the Holy Qur'an* [2010] and *What is Islam and Why?* [2013])—in the face of all those who reject philosophy in Islam, and those who reject Islam as comprising philosophy (see: www.QuranicThought.com);
2. to institutionalise all the work he has done without the involvement of RABIT, and to make sure that RABIT continues the work done without changing its spirit;
3. to make sure his children and descendants continue his life's work;
4. and to provide an institute to launch his future initiatives (God willing—for example, FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com and GreatTafsirs.com are owned by the Prince Ghazi Trust).



What is Islam and Why, cover

'A beautiful and deeply Qur'anic-centered explanation of *What is Islam and Why?* I hope it gets wide readership.'

—Hamza Yusuf Hanson



'A timely, relevant and concise introduction to Islam at a time when diametrically opposed (mis)representations proliferate'

—Moez Masoud





BENEFIT:

In addition to institutionalising Prince Ghazi’s work, the Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur’anic Thought has the potential to benefit the Islamic World in that one of the major problems Islamic scholars face when grappling with modern issues is that they fail to understand them properly according to Islamic philosophical principles. Thus they issue judgments based on sound legal principles but mistake the essence of the context they are being applied to. A deeper understanding of philosophy as such—and of traditional Qur’anic philosophy in particular—can rectify this situation¹. Therefore promotion of sound Qur’anic thought is essential for the health of Islamic civilisation.



Prince Ghazi in 2011

¹ Prince Ghazi writes (www.QuranicThought.com):

Some Islamic Scholars forbid music as such, arguing that it was not played during the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Some say that singing was allowed, others say that singing and drum accompaniment only is allowed. Few, however, if any, bother to understand the philosophy behind music starting from Orpheus and Pythagoras—how music in the Middle Ages was used as a cure for stress and even lunacy; how reciting the Qur’an is a kind of music enjoined in the Qur’an itself (73:4), not to mention the music of the great movements of nature—and therefore few are able to discern between a commendable kind of music based on beauty and harmony, and psychologically-perturbing noise.



Prince Ghazi’s long-standing staff. ABOVE: (L–R) Office Director Lotfi Asfour, typist Haitham Malkawi, ADC Colonel Omar Abu Sabbah and Private Office Director Samir Al-Sahib; RIGHT: Palace Director Abd Al-Thahir Haroun.

№ 18

THE PROTECTION
of JERUSALEM'S
HOLY SITES

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

 INTERFAITH 

(2012–2013 CE)



THE PROTECTION OF JERUSALEM'S HOLY SITES

The Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound (*Al-Haram Al-Sharif* with its 144,000 dunums, which includes the Qibli Mosque of Al-Aqsa, the Mosque of the Dome of the Rock and all its mosques, buildings, walls, courtyards, attached areas over and beneath the ground) is one of the three holiest sites in the world (together with Mecca and Medina) for the world's 1.7 billion Muslims. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (which comprises the Holy Sepulchre, the Rock of Golgotha, and the Stone of Unction and many other Christian sacred spots) is one of the three holiest sites in the world (if not the holiest, together with the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Baptism Site) for the world's 2.2 billion Christians.

On April 18th, 2012 Prince Ghazi visited the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound (*Al-Haram Al-Sharif*) in Jerusalem with H.E. Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa of Egypt to inaugurate the Imam Al-Ghazali Professorial Chair there, and also laid a concrete commemorative plaque at the site of H.M. King Abdullah I's assassination in 1951 inside the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. They also visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre together.

In 2013 Prince Ghazi discreetly proposed and led the negotiations which concluded a crucial treaty between President Mahmoud 'Abbas of the State of Palestine and the P.L.O., and H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan on Jerusalem and its Holy Sites (see Appendix IV). The treaty—which was signed on March 31st 2013 in Amman, Jordan—recognised H.M. King Abdullah II's Custodianship of *Al-Haram Al-Sharif* and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem (which comprises the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—its inclusion was at the request of the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III) and Palestinian sovereignty over the whole of East Jerusalem (including of course the Holy Sites).



مع أطيب الأمنيات ٢٠١٣ ١٤٣٤

Prince Ghazi with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, 2013



BENEFIT:

Hashemite Custodianship of the Holy Sites started in 1924, and Jerusalem was physically part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 1948 until 1967, and legally until 1988, when Jordan severed ties with the West Bank (excepting only the Holy Sites and the *Awqaf* or Religious Trusts). Thus from 1988 until 2013, there was some ambiguity as to the status of the Holy Sites. After Palestine became recognised as a state in November 2012, a treaty between Jordan and Palestine became absolutely necessary not merely to avoid any disputes between Jordan and Palestine, but more importantly, to enable Jordan and Palestine to jointly legally protect the Holy Sites in Jerusalem against Israeli (official or unofficial) incursions, physical destruction and illegal annexation.

Outside the Dome of the
Rock with Jerusalem
notables, 2012





Prince Ghazi and Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa at the Blessed Rock



Prince Ghazi, Egyptian Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa and Palestinian Grand Mufti Muhammad Hussein inside the Aqsa Mosque, 2012



The Dome of the Rock



H.M. King Mohammed VI of Morocco with H.R.H. Prince Ghazi in Fez, 2013



Prince Ghazi with Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa and Patriarch Theophilos III in the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, 2012



(L to R) H.B. Patriarch Theophilos III, Prince Ghazi, Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa and Lutheran World Federation President Bishop Munib Younan, on top of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 2012



The Jordanian-Palestinian negotiation team (with President Abbas), (L to R): Director of the Office of H.M., Imad Fakhoury; Prince Ghazi; President Abbas; Dr Wasfi Kailani and Palestinian Minister of Religious Affairs, Mahmoud Habbash, 2013



Prince Ghazi outside the Dome of the Rock, 2012



Plaque placed by Prince Ghazi in Al-Aqsa, 2012



The Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque

№ 19

THE 'LOVE
INITIATIVE'

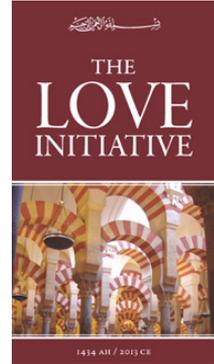
 INTERFAITH 

(2012–2013 CE)



THE ‘LOVE INITIATIVE’

Following his work on love and the establishment of the International Islamic Integral Professorial Chairs, Prince Ghazi and RABIIT co-organized—together with Rev. Prof. Paul S. Fiddes, Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Oxford and Director of Research, Regent’s Park College, Oxford—a two-day open symposium on ‘Love in Three Abrahamic Religions’ at Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford, celebrating the fifth year of the issuing of *A Common Word*, on October 12–13th 2012. This has led to the establishment of a fellowship at Regent’s Park College, a Permanent Private Hall in the University of Oxford, dedicated to the study of Love in Religion, co-funded by RABIIT and Prince Ghazi’s friend, American industrialist Sam Nappi. The fellowship post is to be held by a Muslim *Hafith* of the Qur’an and a Christian clergyman alternately, and Mr. Sam Nappi and RABIIT will equally share the costs. It will be the first fellowship dedicated specifically to the study of love as such in a major university for centuries, and God willing, the beginning of many such fellowships in major universities all over the world.



The Love Initiative
(booklet cover)

BENEFIT:

Love is the greatest open secret in the world. Everyone feels love; everyone needs love; everyone thinks about love; everyone talks about love; and



Principal Dr Robert Ellis, Prince Ghazi, Mr. Sam Nappi and Professor Paul Fiddes at MOU signing ceremony, Regent’s Park College, Oxford University, February, 2013

much—if not most—of life’s activity and effort (whether people know it or not) are spent in pursuit of love, in pursuit of something one loves, or in pursuit of being loved. Yet despite the fact that most of life’s activity and effort is expended on the search for love, there does not exist today anywhere in the world a single mainstream school or college offering love as a subject of study and thus teaching people about what they will in reality spend their lives thinking about and doing.

The first great benefit of the Love Initiative is to rectify this situation so that students at universities are no longer only taught that love is merely ‘heightened’ and/or ‘sublimated libido’ (as taught by modern psychology); a ‘social evolutionary mechanism’ (as taught by modern anthropology); a ‘hormone/pheromone-induced state’ (as taught by modern chemistry), or a ‘mere strategy’ to pass on ‘selfish genes’ (as taught by modern biology). Knowing what love truly is can help people practice it better, and this opens the door to happier human beings and a happier world, God willing.

The second benefit of teaching Love in Religion as such is that it can serve as an interfaith bridge: as the *A Common Word* Open Letter explains, Love of God and Love of the Neighbour are at the core of authentic religions, and thus love can serve as an interfaith platform.

The third benefit of the Love Initiative is that it marks the first time an academic institution within a major western university has accepted having the memorisation of the entire Qur’an (*hifz*) as an academic credential, and this in itself opens the door to Islam being taught by Muslims at universities in the West (since to date no non-Muslims have learnt the entire Qur’an by heart—and God is Wiser).



Regent's Park College, Oxford

№ 20

www.FREEISLAMIC
CALLIGRAPHY.com

 MAJOR INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS INITIATIVE 

 ISLAM 

(2013 CE)



FREEISLAMICCALLIGRAPHY.COM

In 2013 Prince Ghazi launched the Prince Ghazi Trust-owned website www.FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com. Having noticed that the Divine Name, key Qur'anic verses and sacred formulas were not available free online in the most perfect and beautiful styles of Arabic calligraphy, Prince Ghazi commissioned prize-winning calligrapher Mothana Al-Obaydi and other calligraphers to draw them and digitize them onto 'word documents' so that they could be adapted, coloured and printed out as required. The website also allows people to upload their own samples of calligraphy to it in order to make it a hub for free Islamic and Qur'anic calligraphy. The website also contains advice on paper printing and colouring.



Calligrapher Mothana Al-Obaydi

BENEFIT:

Instead of paying for decorating their home with drawings or western posters, or instead of paying for expensive name-brand calligraphy, any Muslim in the world can adapt the most beautiful pieces of calligraphy and decorate his or her home with it for the price of a piece of a paper. This, God willing, will not only make people's homes more beautiful, but also their lives more beautiful as they see and remember God's Name more often.



Calligrapher Hasan Kan'an



Eastern Kufic,
Classic



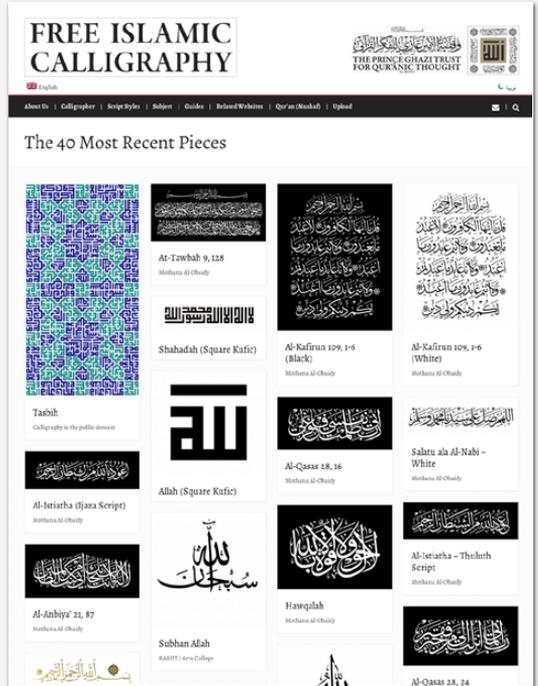
Basmallah, 18th
century Ottoman



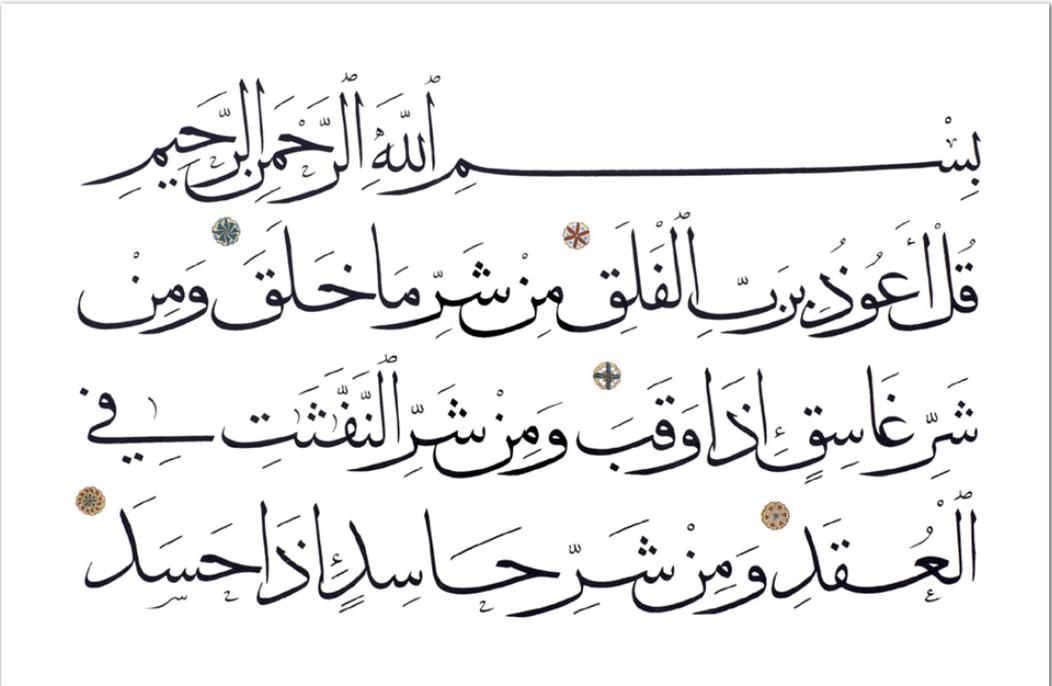
Al-Baqarah, 2:155,
RABIIT / Arts College



The Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur'anic Thought, logo



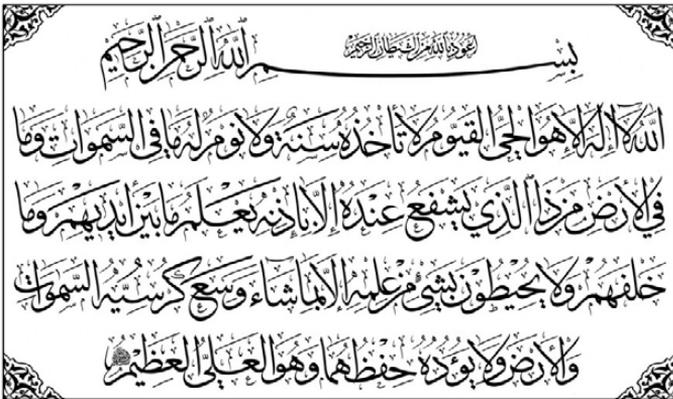
Screenshot of website: FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com



Falaq Muhaqqq, RABIIT / Arts College



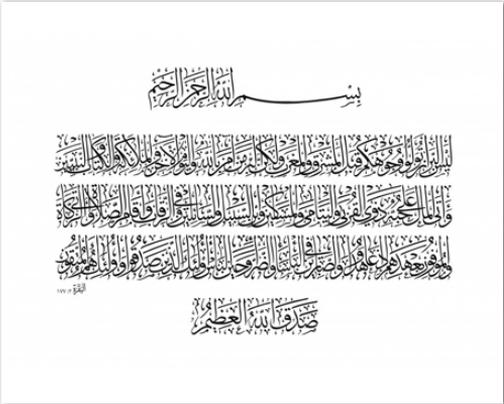
Al-Shams 91 (Gold), Mothana Al-Obaydi



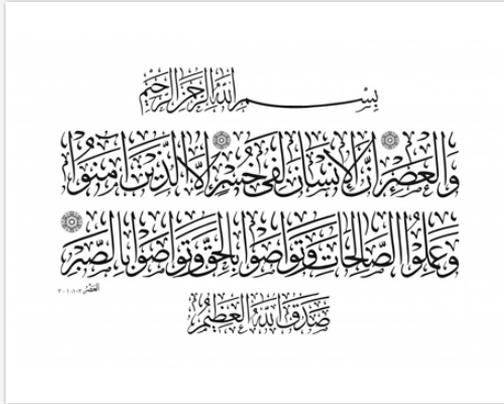
Ayat Kursi 1, Mothana Al-Obaydi



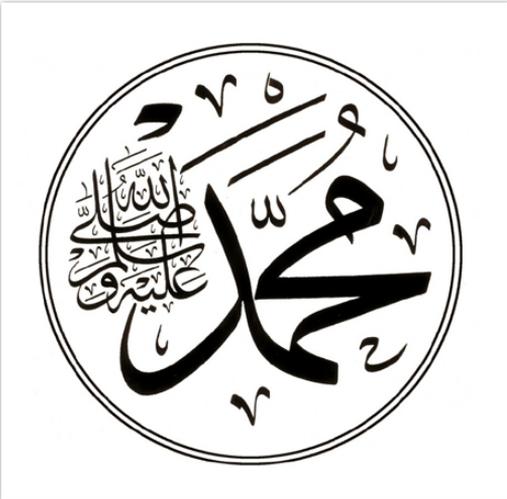
Divine Name long Aleph centre,
Hasan Kan'an



Al-Baqarah 2, 177
Jawahir Al-Qur'an



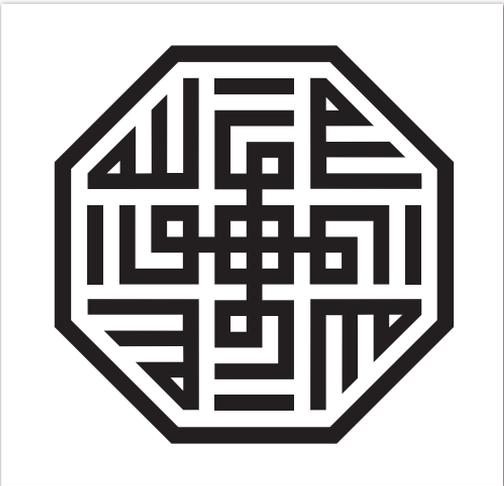
Al-Asr 103, 1-3
Jawahir Al-Qur'an



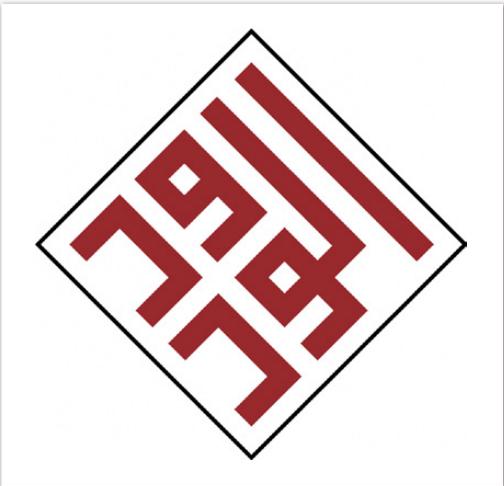
Muhammad, Mothana Al-Obaydi



The Divine Name Allah, Mothana Al-Obaydi



Octagonal Huwa Allah, Unknown



Al-Wadud, Prince Ghazi design

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الْعَلِيِّمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ
 وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ
 الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ
 غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Al-Fatihah 1, 1-7 (Gold, Muhaqqq Script),
 RABIIT / Arts College

الله

Divine Name (Chinese Script), public domain

الله

The Divine Name Allah, F.I.C. Adaptations

الله

Ayat Al-Nur, 24:35, Mothana Al-Obaydi

الله

Divine Name (Fatimi Kufic Script), F.I.C. Adaptations

SUMMARY

SUMMARY

LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOUR

The central proposition of the *A Common Word Between Us and You* Open Letter is that Love of God and Love of the neighbour are at the heart of both Islam and Christianity. Prince Ghazi writes in *A Common Word* about love of God in Islam as follows:

Love of God in Islam is thus part of complete and total devotion to God; it is not a mere fleeting, partial emotion.... God commands in the Holy Qur'an: *Say: Lo! my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of the Worlds. / He hath no partner. (Al-An'am, 6:162–163).* The call to be totally devoted and attached to God heart and soul, far from being a call for a mere emotion or for a mood, is in fact an injunction requiring all-embracing, constant and active love of God. It demands a love in which the innermost spiritual heart and the whole of the soul—with its intelligence, will and feeling—participate through devotion.

And in *Love in the Holy Qur'an*, Prince Ghazi elaborates:

A person's love for God requires—and inevitably leads to—love for what reminds him or her of God, and this means love of the Messenger of God ﷺ as well as: (a) love for religion and worship in general; (b) love for prayer and invocation in particular; (c) love for the Holy Qur'an; (d) love for nature as God's creation wherein one can see God's works and creatures, and (e) love even for fate and destiny, wherein one can see God's will manifested. (*Love in the Holy Qur'an*, Chapter 12, pp.104–105, 6th Edition, Kazi Books, USA, 2010).

Equally, in *A Common Word*, Prince Ghazi writes about Love of the Neighbour in Islam as follows:

There are numerous injunctions in Islam about the necessity and paramount importance of love for—and mercy towards—the neighbour. Love of the neighbour is an essential and integral part of faith in God and love of God because in Islam without love of the neighbour there is no true faith in God and no righteousness. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: '*None of you has faith until you love for your brother what you love for yourself.*' (*Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Iman, Hadith no.13.*) And: '*None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself.*' (*Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Hadith no.45.*)

And in *Love in the Holy Qur'an*, Prince Ghazi elaborates:

[B]ecause God's mercy 'embraces all things' (*Al-A'raf*, 7:156), He creates mercy and love between all people, albeit in differing degrees and with specific conditions. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that every person is ultimately related to every other person, since all human beings are the progeny of Adam ﷺ and Eve. (*Love in the Holy Qur'an*, Chapter 17, pp.151, 6th Edition, Kazi Books, USA, 2010).

And:

God has given each and every human being inalienable rights, and has obliged Muslims to have respect for all human beings; not to commit aggression against anyone; to be peaceful and to be just; to be merciful; to empathize with all human beings; to forgive them; to pardon them; to restrain themselves from anger; and even to repay evil deeds with kindness and 'turn the other cheek'—and to do this with all people, whoever they may be and regardless of their faith (or lack of it) all the time, so long as they are not first waging war against Muslims.

God enjoins upon Muslims—in addition to having respect, justice and mercy in general towards all humanity—to have affection and admiration for the People of the Scripture in general (notably Christians and Jews).

In addition to respect, justice, mercy, affection and kindness, God requires believers to love one another more than they love themselves. (*Love in the Holy Qur'an*, Chapter 40, pp.402–403, 6th Edition, Kazi Books, USA, 2010).

Looking at Prince Ghazi's religious initiatives over the twenty year period between 1993–2013, it could be said that *all* of them are not only motivated by Love of God and Love of the Neighbour, but that they all specifically aim to manifest and encourage Love of God and Love of the Neighbour. Thus:

- (A) *Love in the Holy Qur'an*, A Common Word, the World Interfaith Harmony Week and the Love Initiative are based on love of God;
- (B) the Museum of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is based on love of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ;

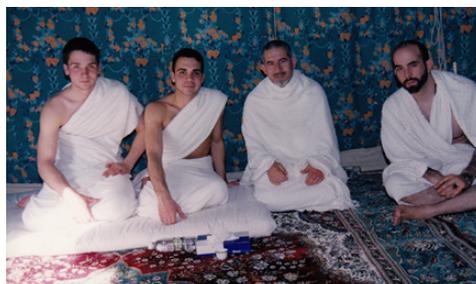
- (C) the Islamic Holy Sites Initiative, the Defence of Jerusalem Holy Sites, and the Baptism Site are based on love of holy sites;
- (D) Altafsir.com and GreatTafsirs.com, the Prince Ghazi Trust for Qur’anic Thought, and also *Love in the Holy Qur’an* are based on love of the Qur’an;
- (E) RABIIT, MABDA and the Muslim 500, the Islamic Studies Curriculum initiative, W.I.S.E. University, the Independent Grand Mufti Legislation, and the International Islamic Integral Professorial Chairs are based on love of Islam;
- (F) the Traditional Islamic Arts College and FreeIslamicCalligraphy.com are based on love of Islamic Art;
- (G) the *Amman Message* and the Prince Ghazi Fund for Iraqi Students are based on love towards Muslims;
- (H) the Nigeria Interfaith Reconciliation Initiative, and of course A Common Word and the Baptism Site are based on love towards Christians;
- (I) *Common Ground between Islam and Buddhism*, and also the World Interfaith Harmony Week are based on love towards all human beings.

The common thread underlying all these religious initiatives is that they are based on faith in and love of God—and what reminds human beings of God—and love of the neighbour, and indeed reflect them. Indeed, the epigraph of *Love in the Holy Qur’an* is (God’s words in the Qur’an):

... *But those who believe love God more ardently ...*
(Al-Baqarah, 2:165)

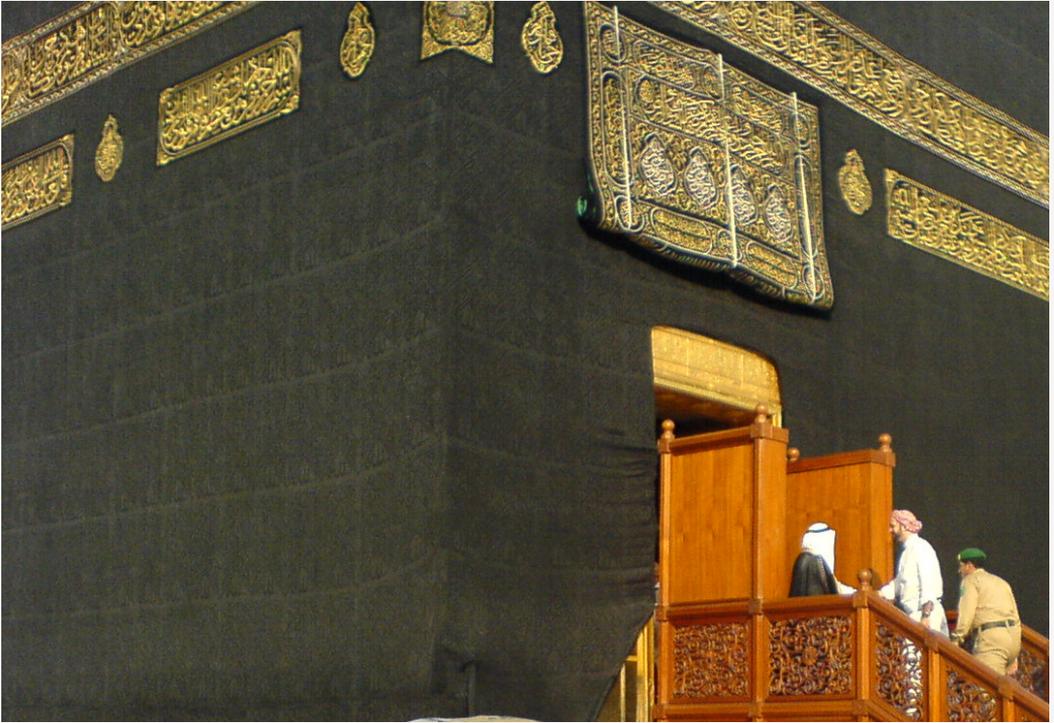


Prince Ghazi at the Black Stone at the Blessed Ka’bah during Umrah, 2006



(L to R) H.R.H. Prince Hashem bin Al-Hussein, H.R.H. Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein, H.E. Shaykh Ahmad Hlayyel and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad during Hajj,

2000



Prince Ghazi entering the Blessed Ka'bah, 2005



Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds (Al-Fatiha, 1:2)

APPENDIX I:

THE PATERNAL
HASHEMITE LIN-
EAGE of H.R.H.
PRINCE GHAZI
bin MUHAMMAD

THE PATERNAL HASHEMITE LINEAGE OF GHAZI BIN MUHAMMAD

- | | |
|---|--|
| (41) Ghazi [®] ('Abdullah) (b. 1386 AH/ 1966 CE) | bin |
| bin | (16) Idris [®] bin |
| (40) Muhammad [®] bin | (15) Muta'in bin |
| (39) Talal ^d bin | (14) 'Abd Al-Kareem bin |
| (38) 'Abdullah ^d bin | (13) 'Isa bin |
| (37) Al-Hussein ^{a c c} bin | (12) Al-Hussein bin |
| (36) 'Ali [®] bin | (11) Sulayman bin |
| (35) Muhammad ^a bin | (10) 'Ali bin |
| (34) 'Abd Al-Mu'een bin | (9) 'Abdullah al-Akbar bin |
| (33) 'Awn (Ra'i al-Hadla; Jidd Dhawi 'Awn) bin | (8) Muhammad al-Tha'ir bin |
| (32) Muhsin ^a bin | (7) Musa al-Thani bin |
| (31) 'Abdullah bin | (6) 'Abdullah al-Shaykh al-Kamil bin |
| (30) Al-Hussein bin | (5) Musa al-Jawn bin |
| (29) 'Abdullah ^a (Jidd al-'Abadillah) bin | (4) 'Abdullah al-Mahd bin |
| (28) Al-Hasan ^a bin | (3) Al-Hasan al-Muthanna bin |
| (27) Muhammad Abu Numayy ^a al-Thani bin | (2) Al-Hasan al-Sibt ^b bin |
| (26) Barakat ^a al-Thani bin | 'Ali ^b bin Abi Talib and (1) Fatimah al-Zahra |
| (25) Muhammad ^a al-Awwal bin | ♀ bint |
| (24) Barakat ^a al-Awwal bin | |
| (23) Al-Hasan ^a bin | |
| (22) 'Ajlan ^a bin | |
| (21) Rumaythah ^a bin | |
| (20) Muhammad Abu Numayy ^a al-Awwal bin | |
| (19) Al-Hasan ^a Abu Sa'ad bin | |
| (18) 'Ali Al-Akbar bin | bin (I) 'Abdullah bin |
| (17) Qutada ^a (r. 597 AH/1201 CE - 617/1220) | (11) Abd al-Muttalib bin |

The Prophet
MUHAMMAD ﷺ
Messenger of God

bin (I) 'Abdullah bin
 (11) Abd al-Muttalib bin

(III) Hashim; d. 10 AH; 632 CE (Jidd Beni Hashim) bin

(IV) 'Abd Manaf (Al-Mughirah) bin

(V) Qusayy (Zayd) f (b., c. 406 CE) bin

(VI) Kilab bin

(VII) Murrah bin

(VIII) Ka'ab bin

(IX) Lu'ayy bin

(X) Ghalib bin

(XI) Fahr (Quraysh) (Jidd Beni Quraysh) bin

(XII) Malik bin

(XIII) Nadr (Qays) bin

(XIV) Kinanah bin

(XV) Khuzaymah bin

(XVI) Mudrikah ('Amro) bin

(XVII) Ilyas bin

(XVIII) Mudar bin

(XIX) Nizar bin

(XX) Ma'ad bin

(XXI) 'Adnan (Jidd al-'Arab al-'Adnaniyin) (b., c.132 BCE).

'Adnan was descended from Kedar the son of the Prophet Ismail ﷺ, the son of the Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ.



Prince Ghazi and his son Prince Abdullah atop Ghar Hira in Mecca, 2013



Three generations at the blessed tree, 2012 (L to R) H.R.H. Prince Abdullah, H.R.H. Prince Mohammed, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi

LEGEND:

- a. Emir wa Sharif Mecca (Prince and Sharif of Mecca)
- b. Khalifat Rasul Allah (Caliph; Successor of the Prophet ﷺ)
- c. Malik al-Hijaz (King of Hejaz)

- d. Malik al-Urdun (King of Jordan)
- e. Malik al-'Arab (King of the Arabs)
- f. Malik Mecca (King of Mecca)
- g. Emir (Prince)

APPENDIX II:

The PUBLIC ROYAL
LETTER from H.M.
KING HUSSEIN
bin TALAL to H.R.H.
PRINCE GHAZI,
3RD JULY, 1998

THE PUBLIC ROYAL LETTER FROM H.M. KING HUSSEIN BIN TALAL TO H.R.H. PRINCE GHAZI, 3RD JULY, 1998

From July 1998 until October 2003, Prince Ghazi served first H.M. King Hussein and then (after H.M. King Hussein's death on February 7th 1999) H.M. King Abdullah II as Advisor for Tribal Affairs, which, since at least 60% of the population in Jordan is tribal, is a very sensitive post. This slowed down — but did not completely stop — Prince Ghazi's religious initiatives.

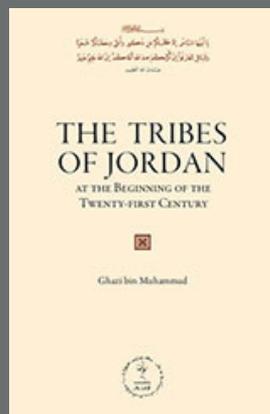
The following (starting on the next page) is the text of the letter of H.M. King Hussein to Prince Ghazi charging him with the post, but also recognising Prince Ghazi's religious work:



H.M. King Hussein with
H.R.H. Prince Ghazi, 1990s

‘This is a fine and intelligent study. It deals with some sensitive and living issues relevant to tribalism, not usually studied, like the relationship between tribal concepts and Islam. It is generally analytical and uses literary sources as well as personal experience. It is instructive when it deals with points like ‘What makes them Tribes?’ It is also highly learned and detailed when it deals with ‘Tribal Honour Crimes’, looking into their roots, and discusses both Islamic and Tribal (*urf*) points of views. This issue is widely debated now. Finally, ‘The Predicament of the Tribes’ tackles a significant issue and is very interesting and useful for comparison with other tribes in Arab countries.’

— Professor Abd Al-Aziz Al-Douri



Prince Ghazi's book,
*The Tribes of Jordan at the
Beginning of the Twenty-first
Century*

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

**His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad,
may God protect him,**

Assalamu 'alaykum wa rahmatu Allah wa barakatuh,

It brings me great pleasure to extend to you greetings of love, appreciation and pride in you and in your journey of outstanding contribution as you have undertaken your responsibilities during the past years. I have followed with great interest, confidence and ease of mind the dynamism with which you have carried out your duties. Your ability to achieve and excel has been crowned by your aptitude, altruism, asceticism, and self-effacement.

I am heartened, gratified and filled with peace by the fact that you have always been that Hashemite Prince who is committed to embodying the gracious nature and benevolent character that your noble lineage requires; and committed to the duties you have towards yourself and others as prescribed by the tolerant creed of Islam. You have always been vigilant, ever since you were a young boy, to endow yourself with learning and knowledge and to fortify yourself with piety through an enlightened understanding of our Islamic faith. You have always been committed to your creed's noble humanitarian values, something which has made you a paragon of morality, integrity, good repute and given you the ability to shoulder responsibility with the utmost competence and excellence.

The tribes of our great country have always enjoyed, and will continue to enjoy, our trust and pride. They have been the focus of our patronage and care ever since the Almighty blessed us with the primary position of responsibility in this country. The tribes are our kin who have remained constant and unchanged by circumstance or difficulty; they have never lingered when duty called and they have always been loyal to the beloved land of Jordan to which they belong. The tribes of Jordan are our companions during difficult journeys, the children and grandchildren of the true men who were companions of the founding forefather Abdullah bin Al-Hussein; they rallied around the banner of the Great Arab Revolution and then contributed to the founding and building of this country, making great sacrifices for their homeland along the way.

Therefore, based on the above, I see in you the best person to whom I may entrust the task of following up the affairs of the tribes. It is my hope that you will work on promoting bridges of communication and dialogue between us and this good and loyal segment of our larger and united Jordanian family. I trust that you will come to know their concerns and aspirations and then study their conditions and the challenges they face as a result of their lifestyle or as a result of the period of change and transition our young society is going through. I hope that you will lay the groundwork for solutions to these challenges and problems and elevate the quality of life for the tribes of Jordan on the social, educational and economic levels. I also hope that you will lay the foundations for providing them with the means for decent living which will further strengthen their belonging to their homeland and their ability to contribute in building it.

I congratulate you on your new appointment as Advisor for Tribal Affairs and reiterate my absolute and complete confidence that you are the right person for this task. I offer you my complete support, backing and care in addition to those of the state and all its institutions.

I pray that the Almighty keeps you well and blesses you and all your endeavors as you undertake your responsibilities.

Wassalamu 'alaykum wa rahmatu Allah,

Your Uncle,

Al-Hussein bin Talal

Amman, 9 Rabee'ul Awal, 1419 AH /
July 3rd, 1998 CE.



H.M. King Hussein with Prince Ghazi, 1973



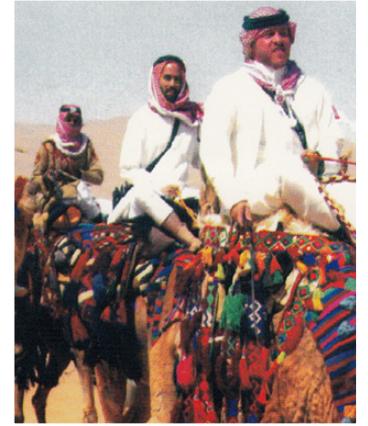
H.M. King Hussein with Prince Ghazi, 1973



H.M. King Hussein with Prince Ghazi, 1993



(R to L): H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, H.R.H. Prince Hamzah bin Al-Hussein, H.R.H. Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein and a tribal notable during a visit to a Jordanian tribe, 2002



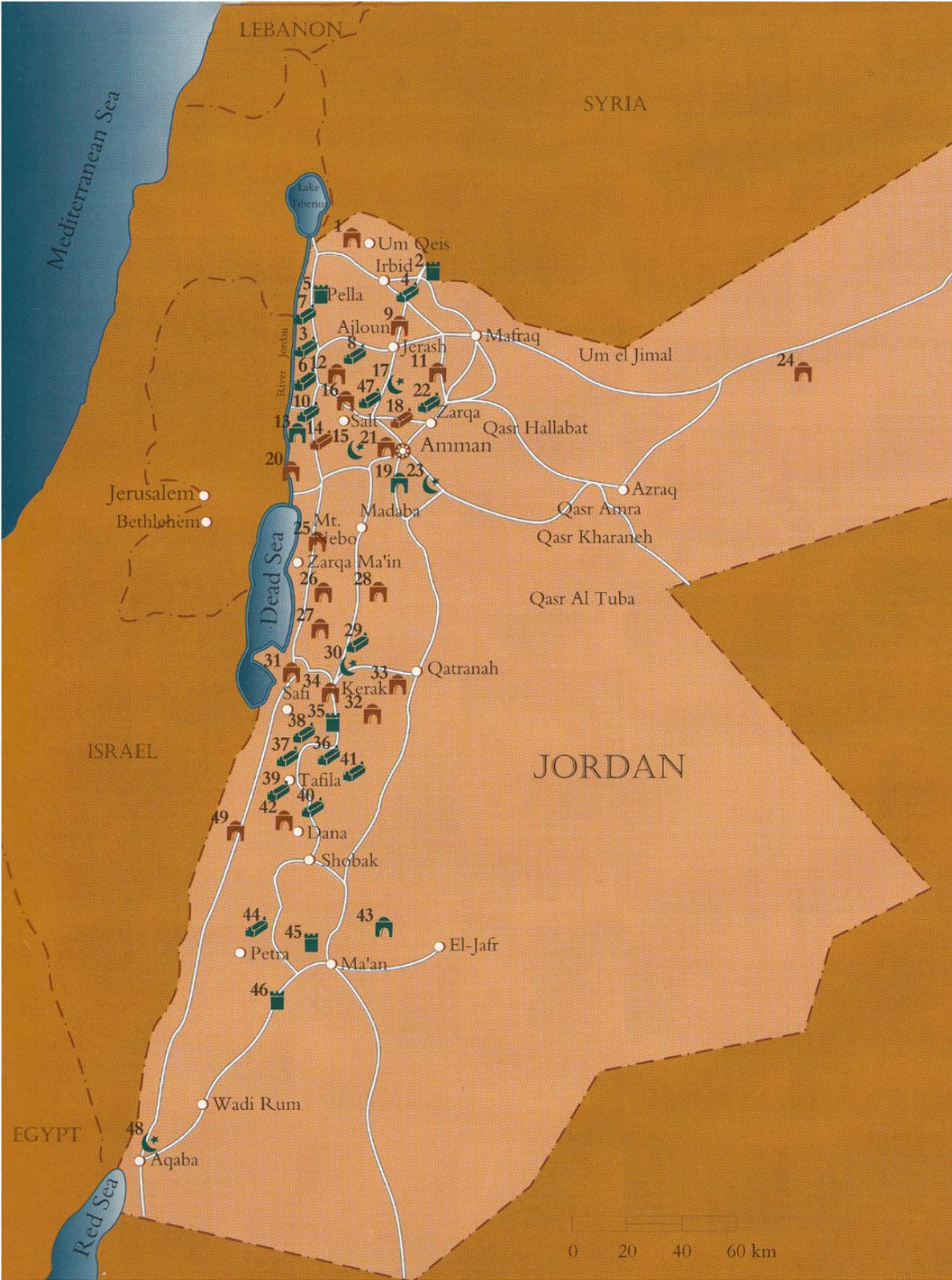
H.M. King Abdullah II and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi with the Desert Police Force



H.M. King Abdullah II and H.R.H. Prince Ghazi during a visit to one of the Jordanian tribes, 2003

APPENDIX III:

A LIST and MAP
of JORDAN'S
ISLAMIC
HOLY SITES



A LIST AND MAP OF JORDAN'S ISLAMIC HOLY SITES

1. Prophet 'Isa
2. Battle of Yarmouk
3. Mu'ath bin Jabal
4. Abu Al-Darda'a
5. Battle of Fahl
6. 'Amir bin Abi Waqqas
7. Shurhabil bin Husnah
8. 'Ikrimah bin Abi Jahl
9. Prophet Khidr
10. Dirar bin Al-Azwar
11. Prophet Hud
12. Prophet Dawud
13. Abu 'Ubaydau 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah
14. Prophet Yosha'
15. Gadur
16. Prophet Ayyub
17. Hazir
18. Prophet Shu'ayb
19. Bilal bin Rabah
20. Prophet 'Isa
21. Prophet Khidr
22. Abd Al-Rahman bin 'Auf
23. The Cave of the Sleepers
24. Prophet Muhammad
25. Prophet Musa
26. Moses' Springs
27. Prophet Yahya
28. Prophet Muahammad
29. Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari
30. Zeid bin Ali bin Al-Hussein
31. Prophet Lut
32. Prophet Nuh
33. Prophet Khidr
34. Prophet Sulayman
35. Battle of Mu'tah
36. Ja'far bin Abi Talib
37. Zeid ibn Al-Harithat
38. Abdallah bin Rawahah
39. Jabi bin Abdallah
40. Al-Harith bin 'Umayr Al-Azadi
41. Farwa bin 'Amro Al-Jadhami
42. Sheeth
43. Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari
44. Prophet Harun
45. Jabal Al-Takhim
46. Humayma
47. Maysarah bin Masruq Al-Abassi
48. 'Uthman's Mosque at Ayla
49. Ka'ab bin Umayr Al-Ghifari

SAUDI ARABIA

KEY

-  Tomb (Prophet)
-  Shrine (Prophet)
-  Tomb (Companion)
-  Shrine (Companion)
-  Religious Site
-  Historical Site
-  City
-  Highway
-  Border

APPENDIX IV:
TREATY BETWEEN
JORDAN AND
PALESTINE
REGARDING
JERUSALEM'S
HOLY SITES

TREATY BETWEEN PRESIDENT MAHMOUD 'ABBAS AND H.M. KING ABDULLAH II BIN AL-HUSSEIN ON JERUSALEM AND ITS HOLY SITES.

Agreement between His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, the Custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, and His Excellency Dr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, Head of Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and President of the Palestinian National Authority.

Glory to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to Al Masjid Al Aqsa, the environs of which We have blessed, that We might show him of our signs! Indeed He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (The Holy Koran, Al Isra', 17:1)

Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly. (The Holy Koran, Al Saff, 61:4)

This agreement has been made by and between:

His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem,

And:

His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas, in his capacity as President of the State of Palestine, and Head of The Palestine Liberation Organisation, the representative of the Palestinian people, and President of the Palestinian National Authority,

PREAMBLE

A. Recalling the indissoluble bond between all members of the Arab and Muslim Umma;

B. Recalling the special status of Jerusalem as a holy and sacred city in Islam, and recalling present and eternal association of the holy sites with Muslims of all lands and all ages; and bearing in mind the significance of Jerusalem to those of other faiths;

C. Recalling the unique religious importance, to all Muslims, of Al Masjid Al Aqsa with its 144 dunums, which include the Qibli Mosque of Al Aqsa, the Mosque of the Dome of the Rock and all its mosques, buildings, walls, courtyards, attached areas over and beneath the ground and the Waqf properties tied-up to Al Masjid Al Aqsa, to its environs or to its pilgrims (hereinafter referred to as “Al Haram Al Sharif”);

D. Recalling the role of King Al Sharif Hussein Bin Ali in protecting, and taking care of the holy sites in Jerusalem and in the restoration of the holy sites since 1924; recalling the uninterrupted continuity of this role by His Majesty King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who is a descendant of Al Sharif Hussein Bin Ali; recalling that the Bay’ah (oath of allegiance) according to which Al Sharif Hussein Bin Ali held the custodianship of the Jerusalem holy sites, which custodianship was affirmed to Al Sharif Hussein Bin Ali by the people of Jerusalem and Palestine on March 11, 1924; and recalling that the Custodianship of the holy sites of Jerusalem has devolved to His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein; including that which encompasses the “Rum” (Greek) Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem that is governed by the Jordanian Law No. 27 of the year 1958;

E. The continuity of Hashemite King of Jordan’s custodianship of the holy sites since 1924 makes His Majesty more able to maintain the holy sites and to preserve Al Masjid Al Aqsa (Al Haram Al Sharif);

F. Recognising that the Palestine Liberation Organisation is the sole legitimate and legal representative of the Palestinian people and;

G. Recognising that the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people is expressed in realising the State of Palestine whose territory encompasses the land within which Al Masjid Al Aqsa (Al Haram Al Sharif) is situated;

H. Recalling the terms of the official statement by His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, concerning Jordan's qualified disengagement from the West Bank, made on 31 July, 1988; the statement excluded the Jerusalem holy sites;

I. Recalling the terms of the official statement by the Jordanian Government on its role in Jerusalem, made on 28 July, 1994, reaffirming Jordan's invariable position and historic, exclusive role over the holy sites;

Intending to establish legal obligations and to affirm their recognition of the legal status of the parties set out in this agreement, the parties to this agreement have agreed and declare as follows:

ARTICLE 1:

The "Preamble" to this agreement shall be an integral part of this agreement and is to be read and construed with it as a whole.

ARTICLE 2:

2.1. His Majesty King Abdullah II, as the custodian of the Jerusalem holy sites, exerts all possible efforts to preserve the Jerusalem holy sites, especially Al Haram Al Sharif, which is defined in item (c) in the Preamble to this agreement, and to represent their interests so as to:

A. assert the respect for the Jerusalem holy sites;

B. affirm that all Muslims, now and forever, may travel to and from the Islamic holy sites and worship there, in conformance with freedom of worship;

C. to administer the Islamic holy sites and to maintain them so as to (i) respect and preserve their religious status and significance; (ii) reaffirm the proper identity and sacred character of the holy sites; and (iii) respect and preserve their historical, cultural and artistic significance and their physical fabric;

D. to represent the interests of the holy sites in relevant international forums and competent international organisations through feasible legal means;

E. to oversee and manage the institution of Waqf in Jerusalem and its properties in accordance with the laws of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

2.2. The King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem, will continue to endeavour to procure that the duties referred to in Article 2.1. here be fulfilled.

2.3. The Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian National Authority recognise the role of the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan set out in paragraphs (1) and (2) of this Article 2 and undertake to respect it.

ARTICLE 3:

3.1. The Government of the State of Palestine, as the expression of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, shall have the right to exercise sovereignty over all parts of its territory, including Jerusalem.

3.2. The King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian President will consult and coordinate with each other concerning the holy sites when necessary.

*Signed at the Royal Palace in Amman on Sunday,
March 31, 2013 on Jumada Awwal 19, 1434 Hijri.*



