

Speech of Professor
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Co-Winner of King Faisal International Prize
For Medicine 1986/1406H.
Sunday 9th March 1986 (28.6.1406A.H.)

Your Royal Highness,
My Lords,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with deep emotion I stand here today to receive one of the most prestigious international prizes awarded in Medicine.

I would first like to thank you, your Royal Highness, your presence confers on this occasion the high dignity which it deserves.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Chairman of the Prize Board, whose initiative in instituting this award keeps the memory of his renowned father, King Faisal, alive today as I am sure it will do for many years to come. King Faisal's personal reputation and life style will not be forgotten. His example emulates the enlightened spirits of the Arab Princes who contributed to the establishment of the rapid progress of civilization around the world between the 9th and 11th centuries of the modern era. They were the first to believe in the importance of the life sciences and strongly supported and encouraged their development. We cannot forget today that it was thanks to their positive approach that outstanding physicians, such as Ar-Razi and Ibn Sina had a chance to freely generate the basis of modern medicine at a time when most of the world was steeped in the dark ages of mediaeval Europe.

Apart from their original contributions to their specialized fields, these remarkable Arab scientists have transmitted a fundamental

message for our generation: they were masters of many interrelated disciplines and their attitude to the progress of general knowledge inspired the renaissance men who appeared in the West several centuries later.

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On this special occasion which is a milestone in my thanks to the International Scientific Committee whose final decision was, I believe, not an easy one, in view of the distinguished achievements, by many of my colleagues around the world who are dedicated to the task of spreading new light on the mysterious events that culminate in human diabetes. The fact that the Committee could chose only three individuals for the Prize does not detract from the importance of the contribution to the subject made by the other research workers in our field.

My votes of thanks are also extended to the Scientific Personalities and Institutions who nominated me for this Prize. In particular I would like to thank Professor Mario Austoni, my first teacher at Padua University, who graciously agreed to come to Riyadh today in order to enjoy the occasion with me. Professor Austoni and all the other friends had confidence in my research from the very beginning and constantly encouraged my hesitating steps through the maze of the unknown, I am most grateful to them.

It is impossible at this stage not to acknowledge the special relationship with Professor Deborah Doniach, the lady who initiated me into the subject of autoimmunity. With her insight and experience, she disclosed all the secrets available to her and it was only thanks to Professor Doniach that I found myself ideally situated to open the gate and to build up new venues into the fascinating story of the Pathogenesis of insulin-dependent diabetes.

Looking at the rapid progress of Science at the present time, most people believe that major scientific discoveries can only be made when there is close collaboration between basic scientists and physicians, working together in the laboratory. Today I consider myself the ambassador of my colleagues and collaborators with whom I have experienced so many exciting moments during the past 10 years. I would deeply like to share this honour with them.

It gives me particular pleasure to receive the King Faisal Prize for Medicine 1986 together with Professors Lelia Orci and Albert Renold, two friends whose personal example and scientific integrity have been in inspiration to me throughout the years.

Medical science has successfully eradicated some of the infectious diseases which caused much human suffering in the past. Following the example of the great scientists of previous generations we must continue our research without being afraid to pursue new hypotheses. I am sure that this will lead to new insights into the causes of diabetes: the ground has been prepared but we cannot relax: the mgsaw-puzzle must yet be assembled and I can assure you, your Royal Highness, that we are determined to confront this onerous task.

I am personally convinced that a humanitarian attitude is fundamental for any scientist approaching human disease and it gives me great pleasure to conclude my remarks by referring to Abu Al-Ala-al Maari, who, as a basic theme is his poetry, always had a loving compassion for mortal suffering, which he would relieve through the recognition of a common truth, which is that human destiny, being the same for all, unites them in a bond of brotherhood.

I am citing him from the Luzumiyyat which reads:
To human kind, Oh brother, consecrate
Thy heart, and shun the hundred Sects that prate
About the things they little know about
Let all receive thy pity, none thy hate
For my religion is live, and love alone.

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Thank you once again for the honour you have conferred on me today.