

Speech of

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Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz,
Your Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

Praise be to Allah "Who hath guided us to this felicity; never could we have found guidance, had it not been for the guidance of Allah".

May peace and blessings be upon his Servant and Messenger, Mohammad, and upon the family and all companions and followers of Mohammad until the Day of Judgment.

Let me first greet you with the greeting of Islam, the greeting of peace. May Allah have peace, mercy and blessings on you all.

On this occasion, I thank Allah for rewarding me twice: firstly, by enabling me to perform my duties towards Islamic religion, defending it and conveying its message; and secondly, by favouring me with this generous award in recognition of my efforts. This is somewhat like the double reward bestowed on Moses's mother: having her infant back between her arms and, at the same time, receiving material award for feeding it.

"O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for the favours, which thou has bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please thee; and admit me, by the Grace, to the rank of thy righteous servants".

Allah's Apostle, peace be upon him, taught us that thanks to Allah cannot be complete unless we thank his servants as well. Abu Huraira and others narrated that Allah's Apostle has said "He who doesn't thank people, doesn't thank Allah".

So let me express my sincere thanks to those who have nominated me as well as those who have selected me for this prestigious Prize. Thanks must also be extended to the founders of the Prize, the moral significance which by far exceeds its material value.

It is a Prize that emerges from a land embracing the holiest Muslim shrine, the Holy *Qa'ba* in Makkah: the House that Allah has chosen as a safe haven and a place of assembly for all Muslims, and to which Muslims, throughout the world, turn their faces five times each day, and come to visit from all directions and by all means of transportation at a particular time each year to perform *Haj*, and at all other times of the year to perform *Umrah*.

It is Prize that emerges from a land that contains the Mosque and the grave of Allah's Apostle—a land that has been honoured by the task of serving the two Holy Mosques.

It is a Prize that emerges from the only land whose flag is never lowered, because it carries the truest emblem that "there is no God but Allah; and Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah".

Apart from all of these gracious features of the Prize, there is one additional feature, namely its coinage to the name of a dear man beloved by all Muslims: the late King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz, may his soul rest in peace, who symbolized Islamic solidarity and led the call for the liberation of the *Aqsa* Mosque.

In fact, I do not consider this Prize merely as a personal honour because it represents recognition of a certain trend which I believe in and defend; that is the trend of moderation and blend between fundamental concepts of Islam and the needs of modern Muslim societies, such that we hold firmly to the basic fundamentals but ease our judgments on less fundamental aspects; and such that we learn from our predecessors, but neither ignore the present needs for overlook the future.

It is a trend that considers independent judgment of theological questions, or *Ijtihad*, both a duly required by the religion and a necessary imposed by the present needs of our society; a trend that respects the other point of view, as long as it comes from a learned person; a trend in which we follow suit of Sulaiman bin Saeed Al-Thouri, renowned Faqih and Muslim thinker of his time, who stressed these ideals by calling for unanimity between learned Muslims with regards to indisputable, basic principles of the religion, and for tolerance between them with respect to other matters that are subject to independent judgment.

Islam is our greatest source of happiness because it is the religion that Allah has chosen for us as a law and a way of life. He has said in the Holy Qur'an, "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion".

Since the Qur'an is the last of Allah's books and Mohammad is the seal of His Messengers, then Qur'anic jurisprudence is the seal of divine jurisprudence, and must be suitable for all times and all lands.

It is my firm conviction that Islamic jurisprudence, with its rich sources, well-established foundations, rules of *Ijtihad*, schools of thought and intellectual prosperity, is capable of providing our nation with sound and logical answers and directives on all matters needed for the guidance and welfare of Muslim communities.

To develop and flourish further, however, our current status of knowledge of the religion requires two main things:

First, it requires contemporary, independent thinking that looks into the past with

one eye and the present with another, and takes from the teachings of the Prophet's companions, and other Muslim predecessors of different inclinations and schools of thoughts the most appropriate, most appealing, and most authentic judgments and the best of them that fulfill the objectives of the religion, realize the needs of Muslims and accommodate the change commensurate with time, place, tradition, and status quo. The same approach must also be applied to more recent judgments on many diverse issues concerning today's Muslims. These judgments, too, must be viewed in the light of the Qur'an and Sunna without fanaticism to an old thought nor blind veneration to a new one. Instead, we must rest with the view that Qur'anic and Sunna texts can accommodate a wide range of issues and that our predecessors were more inclined towards easing the judgments such that they serve the noble intentions of the religion rather than serving mere words. We must also provide support and encouragement to contemporary Islamic thought, stressing the ideas put forth by Imam Ibn Al Qay'im that "the foundation and structure of Islamic jurisprudence is based on the judgments that realize what best suits people both in their worldly life and in the hereafter" and that "Islamic jurisprudence is full of justice, mercy, wisdom and all other good deeds—hence, anything that contradicts those principles and leads to injustice, unmercifulness and evil, or opposes the welfare of people in any other way is not part of the Islamic jurisprudence".

The second point is that Islamic jurisprudence must be put into effective practice, rather than leaving it on bookshelves, because nothing will revive this jurisprudence other than applying it in *Fatwa* and jurisdiction. In that way Islamic jurisprudence will become part of everyday life in Muslim communities, as it had been for 13 centuries when our nation knew of no other judiciary reference but that of Islam, even though some people had unfortunately used it excessively unjustly on some occasions.

One of the most dangerous constraints of our present life as Muslims has been the elimination of Islamic jurisprudence from being applied to all aspects of our life, except in familial and personal affairs and, in some Islamic countries, even those latter applications have not been adhered to.

Also one of the gravest matters that occurred when Muslim countries came under occupation was the introduction of non-Islamic laws to replace Islamic *Shari'ya*, thereby preventing it from directing the life of the people; no country other than the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was spared from applying those introduced laws.

If these two points are dealt with effectively, we will be able to regain the vitality and richness of Islamic jurisprudence and accommodate the immense developments of recent times.

May Allah guide our nation along the paths of righteousness, piety and solidarity. Praise be to He, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds.
