

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
of
ERIC A. CORNELL
Co-Winner of the 1997 King Faisal
International Prize for Science
(*Physics*)

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

I feel deeply honored to be invited here to Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, a country which holds so much spiritual significance for so much of the world.

It is very appropriate that an International Prize for Science should have been established in the name of King Faisal. His Majesty the late King Faisal was renowned as both a spiritual man and a practical man.

The King Faisal International Prize for Science then is perhaps a recognition that science as well has both its spiritual side and its practical side. Part of what motivates the scientist is a desire to understand better the true nature of things, which is ultimately a spiritual desire. Another part of what motivates a scientist is the ambition to use his understanding of the physical world to invent things, change things, make things better. And that represents the practical side of science.

We hope that eventually the Bose-Einstein condensate will bear fruit, practical fruit, for humankind. But it is very early yet, and impossible to predict if this practical outcome will ever come to pass. In the meantime,

however, during the long effort required to create the condensate, we have come to understand a little better the true nature of things when they become very, very cold. Thus in some sense the spiritual aspect of Bose condensation has already been blessed with a small share of success.

I am most delighted to be sharing this Prize with my longtime colleague Carl Wieman, an extraordinarily talented scientist who has taught me an untold amount. Not named in the Prize presentation, but equally important to creation of the Condensate, are the many dedicated and inspired graduate students and postdocs who have worked in our labs for the last seven years.

I thank you very much for the honor you have accorded us, an honor of which I truly do not feel worthy. And I thank you also for the marvelous hospitality you have extended to us and our families during our visit here in Riyadh. Good night.