

Speech by
Professor Wael Hallaq

Bismillahi al-Rahman al-Rahim,

Your Majesty, Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn, King Salman b. Abd al-Azizi; Honorable Committee members of King Faisal Prize; distinguished guests, respected scholars, and fellow attendees,

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh;

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation that I stand before you today to accept the prestigious King Faisal Prize in Islamic studies. It is an immense honor and privilege to be recognized for my work in a field that has fueled my passion for more than four decades, and to which I have made a commitment whose end I do not wish to see ever.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to His Majesty as well as to the Committee overseeing the King Faisal Prize for both its hard work and valued recognition. Your acknowledgment of my lifework in Islamic Studies is not just a validation of my efforts but also an affirmation of the importance of promoting understanding and knowledge to a field of study that is proving to have global significance. Your foresight makes for a great support for a kind of discourse that will one day contribute to solving serious problems that we are facing as we chart our path in late modernity.

I want also to express my gratitude to my family members without whose exemplarity and support I would not be standing here today.

I wish to acknowledge that I stand on the shoulders of numerous giants, without whom I would not have learned much. It is often my feeling that the old adage, “there is nothing new under the sun,” is so very true, and so it is my conviction that I am a small part of a cycle of intellectual life that works with an inexplicable dialectic. Without talent and inspiration, also inexplicable, we have no hope of intellectual and artistic achievement, and so I am extremely grateful for whatever I have been endowed with, and for any hand that lent me help. I never take any of these for granted.

The power of such awards transcends the limits of time. It is an acknowledgement of past work, in my case more than four decades of labor, but it is also an exhilarating moment of the present. For me, it is the encouragement that feeds the soul which is the most significant, encouragement to continue my work with vigor, and in pursuance of the higher goals that I set myself a long time ago.

Jazakum Allahu Khayran wa-Waffaqakum Jami`an.