

# Colorado Professor Wins Templeton Religion Prize

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Holmes Rolston III, a philosopher, clergyman and scientist whose explorations of biology and faith have helped foster religious interest in the environment, has been awarded the 2003 Templeton Prize.

The prize, established in 1972 by Sir John Templeton, is awarded each year to an individual to encourage and honor those who advance spiritual matters. It is valued at more than \$1 million. Past recipients include Nobel Peace Prize winner the late Mother Teresa and evangelist Billy Graham.

Rolston is a 70-year-old University of Colorado philosophy professor, ordained Presbyterian minister and student of physics and mathematics. He is credited with laying the groundwork for a faith-based environmental ethic that has been a major development in Western religious traditions in the last two decades. His works have been translated into 18 languages.

Early in his career, Rolston challenged religious and scientific precepts he believed contributed to environmental crises. In a 1975 article in the journal *Ethics*, he took to task the idea that humans are to subdue and dominate the Earth. He also criticized the assertion that science must be "value free."

"Science thought nature to be value-free. Monotheism thought nature fallen owing to human sin. They agreed that



**ON BIOLOGY, FAITH:** *Holmes Rolston III says the crisis of the environment is basically one of the spirit.*

humans were the center of value on Earth. I had to fight both," Rolston said Wednesday.

In his writings, Rolston has argued that humans must be seen as part of — and not apart from — the natural world. He ascribes fundamental value and goodness to plants and animal species and to ecosystems. He does not foreclose human use of resources, but insists on an ethic of service to both human and nonhuman nature.

"There is intrinsic value in nature," Rolston said in an interview this week. "Nature is what it is in itself, independent of goods to be obtained."

Rolston argues that the cri-

sis of the environment is essentially a crisis of the spirit.

"Our planetary crisis is one of spiritual information, not so much sustainable development, certainly not escalating consumption, but using the Earth with justice and charity," he said. "Science cannot take us there; religion perhaps can."

But he said that while virtually every major denomination has now spoken out in defense of the environment, much remains to be done.

"The promise sort of out-reaches performance," he said. "I don't want to tell anybody in the religious community they can relax, that they've accomplished what they ought to be doing."