

STATEMENT BY

## John M. Templeton, Jr., M.D.

AT THE TEMPLETON PRIZE PRESS CONFERENCE, NEW YORK CITY, MARCH 19, 2003

### I would like briefly to share with you some of the extraordinary background and lifetime work of Dr. Holmes Rolston.

His is a career of remarkable accomplishments, which clearly guided the judges in their selection of him as this year's prizewinner.

Many of the details of his accomplishments are covered in detail in the press packets you have received. Let me highlight, though, some of his life's work especially as reflected in the words of some of his colleagues and reviewers.

Dr. Rolston grew up in Virginia and North Carolina, where his father served as a Presbyterian pastor. His home was rich in Christian teaching and writing, surrounded by the natural wonder of the Shenandoah Valley countryside. His childhood experiences laid the foundation for a life that would challenge the long-standing orthodoxy on the relationship of religion and nature and open new frontiers for understanding values in creation.

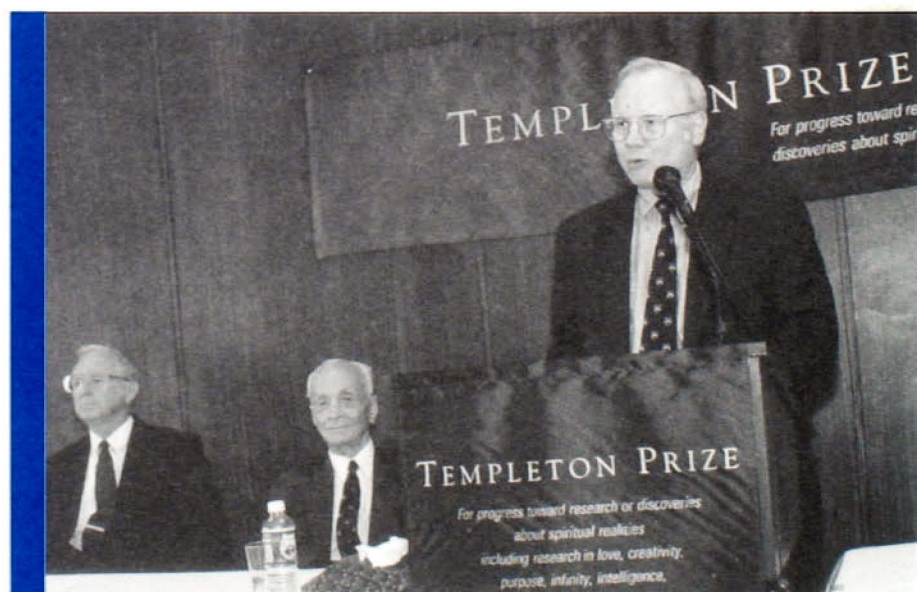
Dr. Rolston began his career in science graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Davidson College in 1953, with a degree in physics and mathematics. Because of his abiding faith and spiritual quest, he then enrolled at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond. He graduated in 1956, first in his class, with a Bachelor of Divinity Degree. Following that, in 1958, Dr. Rolston received a Ph.D. in Theology and Religious Studies from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, under the tutelage of Thomas F. Torrance, who himself won the Templeton Prize in 1978.

He then received his calling to return to Virginia as Pastor of Walnut Grove Presbyterian Church in Bristol,

where he served until 1967. During this period he became an avid naturalist in which he began to recognize evidence of Divinity in discovering more and more about God's extraordinary creativity in nature.

This prompted a further search for a philosophy of nature. As a result, Dr. Rolston entered the University of Pittsburgh and received a Masters in Philosophy of Science in 1968. He then joined the Philosophy Department of Colorado State University in Fort Collins, where he came up through the ranks, receiving tenure in 1972 and becoming University Distinguished Professor in 1992, one of twelve such positions among the University's faculty of 14,000 academics.

During his illustrious career, Dr. Rolston's focus has been on the forefront of the intertwining of Science and Religion, especially on ecosystems and ethics, an emphasis that has coincided with a much larger



*John M. Templeton, Jr., M.D., speaking at the Templeton Prize Press Conference.*

cause. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he became increasingly appreciated as an innovative writer in Science and Religion with an emphasis on environmental ethics. His insightful and challenging books and many dozens of articles led in time to his being invited as a lecturer and consultant throughout the world.

In contrast to other advocates for a dialogue in Science and Religion, who often begin in religion and move to embrace science, or vice versa, Rolston has spared neither religion nor science. He has challenged each discipline and heritage to engage with nature as a source of deep spiritual value.

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His agenda took a significant turning point in 1975, when Dr. Rolston published an article, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?", effectively launching environmental ethics as philosophical inquiry. The discipline has since become inseparable from his name. In his engagement with philosophical ethics, there has been a growing elaboration of his conviction that nature is not only to be respected but is also to be referenced as a sacred gift.

In 1979, Dr. Rolston co-founded the journal *Environmental Ethics*. For more than 20 years he has served on the editorial board of *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science*. In 1986, Rolston published *Philosophy Gone Wild*, a series of essays arguing for intrinsic values in nature and respect for nature, including the spiritual values to be found in nature. Among his books is *Science and Religion: A Critical Study*, published in 1987. Professor Ian Barbour, a

previous winner of the Templeton Prize, said, "This first-rate book can be highly recommended to anyone seeking access to the best of recent thought."

Among many other positive reviewers, Professor Charles Birch, also a winner of the Templeton Prize in 1990, said that (Rolston's) "*Science and Religion* is quite the best on that subject."

Dr. Rolston subsequently published in 1988, a book entitled *Environmental Ethics: Values In and Duties To the Natural World*. Professor E. O. Wilson of Harvard University said of this book that, "It is packed with information and a good deal of wisdom obviously acquired through long experience."

In commenting on Dr. Rolston's continuing productivity and challenging assertions about environmental ethics for the field of Science and Religion, another reviewer of Rolston's work said, "There is no more powerful portrait of the human emotional, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual potential to be found in nature than his writings."

In recognition of his growing impact and importance in the field of Science and Religion, he was invited to deliver the world-famous Gifford Lectures in 1997-1998. These lectures were subsequently published in 1999 by Cambridge University Press in a book entitled, *Genes, Genesis and God*. Reviewers of this book give all of us some insight into the fertile mind and the contribution that Dr. Rolston has provided. "This book is a long song in praise of self-transcending creativity. That is the kind of God the exuberant earth reflects, and in its living, worships."

Another reviewer said, "Rolston's Gifford Lectures comprise a massively erudite overview of genetics, evolutionary biology and their relations to ethics in religion, saturated with an impressive grasp of recent developments in biology... Rolston's themes include powerful criticisms of sociobiologists' representation of genes as selfish and of individuals' action (reproductive and otherwise) as propelled by such egoistic genes... Rolston proceeds to defend religions against the charge that because they serve a social function they are not regarded as embodying truth."

Reverend John Polkinghorne, the 2002 Templeton Prize Laureate, in reviewing this book said, "The phenomenon of emergence, exemplified time and again in the course of biological history, makes it clear to Rolston that there are significant limitations to a purely scientific explanatory scheme." He quotes Rolston, "Laws plus initial conditions are no good at explaining how more evolves out of less." Polkinghorne notes, "A further limitation of science is its inability to answer ethical questions." He again quotes Rolston, "Science is never the end of the story, because science cannot tell humans what they most need to know: the meaning of life and how to value it." In the conclusion of his review, Dr. Polkinghorne states, "To read the lectures is to travel along important paths of enquiry in the company of a mind that is humane and perceptive, careful for truth, and valiant for value."

In view of Dr. Rolston's breadth and command of the importance of environmental ethics as a part of Science and Religion, he was invited to be distinguished lecturer at the Kyoto Japan Zen Symposium Seminar for Religious Philosophy in 1989 and to address environmental ethics and policy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing in 1991. Numerous other invitations to lecture have taken him since then to Australia, India and Europe. In 2000, Dr. Rolston returned to Brazil to address the Second Brazilian Congress on Conservation on the Intrinsic Values of Nature. In the meantime, he has served on the Task Force on Religion and Environment for the Presbyterian Church USA and as a member of the Working Group on Ethics of the World Conservation Union. More recently, he was named, one of "Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment."

Finally, in his citation nominating Dr. Rolston, the Reverend Dr. Perry Biddle wrote the following: "Rolston has made original spiritual progress by discovering deeper dimensions of value in created nature, transcending humans, signifying the Divine Spirit and the genesis of life. This discovery produces an increased spirituality for humans, now called to reverential respect for value in nature... (prompting us) to re-examine nature for signs of the Divine Presence in, with, and under such goodness in creation."

It is with great pleasure, therefore, that I would like now to present to you Professor Holmes Rolston, the winner of the 2003 Templeton Prize.

PRESENTATION OF THE

## 2003 Templeton Prize

AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE, LONDON, MAY 7, 2003



*The Duke of Edinburgh with Holmes Rolston, III, and his family and friends at the Buckingham Palace ceremony.*



*Holmes Rolston, III, receives the 2003 Templeton Prize from The Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace.*

STATEMENT BY

## Holmes Rolston, III

AT THE TEMPLETON PRIZE NEWS CONFERENCE, MARCH 19, 2003

Life is full of surprises, and a big surprise is finding myself here. This is New York but I really don't belong here. I have a wild streak in me.

My East Coast friends thought that I had gotten myself lost. I had gone out West and was doing theology of nature. Surprise! Here I am at an up-town press conference because I am judged to have discovered something.

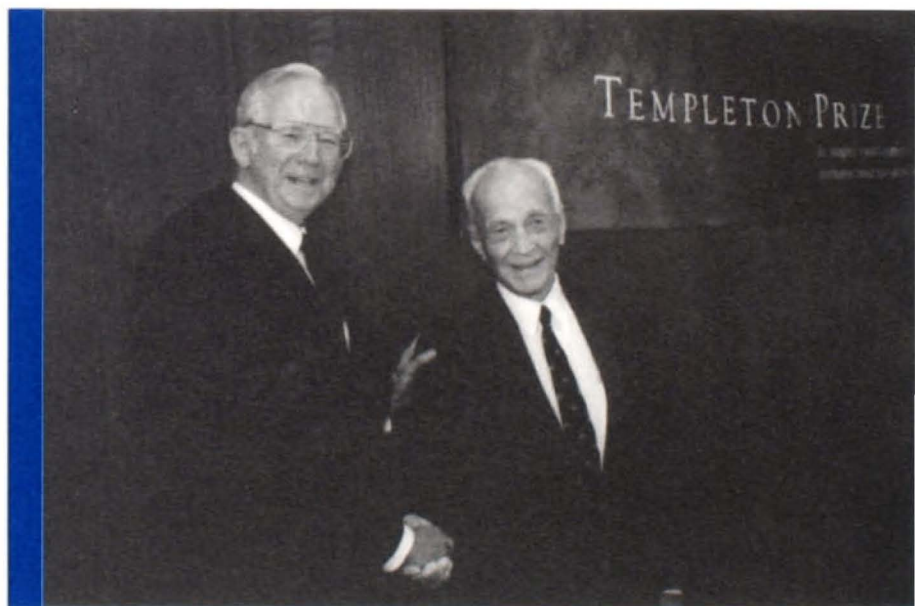
I have spent my life in a lover's quarrel, not with my wife of four decades, but with the two disciplines I love: science and religion. I once started a Science and Religion class with the claim that these are the two most important things in the world. A student promptly objected, "No, professor you are wrong: that's sex and money." I convinced him otherwise by the time the semester was over. But I was still trying to keep science and religion in dialogue, and have been ever since. That's why I wrote *Science and Religion*.

The trouble is making peace between the two; but equally I have had to quarrel with both about values intrinsic to nature. Science thought nature to be value-free. Monotheism thought nature fallen owing to human sin. They agreed that humans were the center of value on Earth. I had to fight both theology and science to love nature.

Denied a theology of nature, I took a philosophical turn. I found philosophy of science, the only reputable kind of philosophy—so the logical positivists then said. Philosophy of nature was too romantic and committed the naturalistic fallacy. So I equally had to fight philosophy to love nature. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." I found out that life in an unexamined world is not worthy living either. That's why I wrote *Philosophy Gone Wild*.

I am gratified to receive the Templeton Prize, indicating that those judges at least think I have been raising the right questions, maybe even making the right fight.

I could put it this way: I've been lucky that my own personal agenda, figuring nature out has, during my lifetime, turned out to be the world agenda, figuring out the human place on the planet. Living locally led me to think globally. My autobiography is "writ large" in the Earth story. I didn't want to live a de-natured life; it turns out that humans neither can nor ought to de-nature their planet. My sense of wonder turned to horror when I encountered the oncoming environmental crisis. No sooner did I discover that nature is grace, than I found we were treating it disgracefully.



Holmes Rolston, III, and Sir John Templeton

Facing the new millennium, the four principal, inter-related challenges are: war and peace, population, development, and environment. Science alone doesn't teach us what we most need to know about any of the four. Politically and ethically we confront value questions as sharp and as painful as ever: who we are, where we are, how to value people, nature, what we ought to do. That's why I wrote *Environmental Ethics*.

Earth is a kind of providing ground, where the life epic is lived on in the midst of its perpetual perishing. Life persists because it is provided for in the evolutionary and ecological Earth systems. Today we say: life is generated "at the edge of chaos." Yesterday, John said: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1.5). I think the Twenty-Third Psalm is pretty good experiential

If anything at all on Earth is sacred, it must be this enthralling generativity that characterizes our home planet. If there is any holy ground, any land of promise, this promising Earth is it.

The biblical faith originated with a land ethic. Within the covenant, keeping the commandments, the Hebrew people entered a promised land. Justice is to run down like waters, and the land flows with milk and honey. That blessing can be received only if the land is inhabited justly and charitably. No people can live in harmony with their landscape, in a sustainable relationship with their natural resources, unless there is social justice. The Land of Promise is now the Planet of Promise.

It is not simply what a society does to its slaves, women, blacks, minorities, handicapped, children, or

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biology: Life is lived in green pastures and in the valley of the shadow of death, nourished by eating at a table prepared in the midst of its enemies.

The root idea in the word "nature" is "birthing," of a woman in labor. "Travail" is a key to understanding these evils. What I experienced in nature is the power of survival, of new life rising out of the old. Systemically, death is not the last word—at least it has never yet been across three and a half billion years of re-birthing. Such good resurrected out of evil reveals that nature, though a gift, is also cruciform. New life comes by blasting the old. There is a suffering and resurrecting power that redeems life out of chaos.

future generations, but what it does to its fauna, flora, species, ecosystems, and landscapes that reveals the character of that society.

God loves "the world," and in the landscape surrounding him Jesus found ample evidence of the presence of God. Not even Solomon is arrayed with the glory of the lilies, though the grass of the field, today alive, perishes tomorrow. The power manifest in the wild flowers of the field is continuous with the power spiritually manifest in the kingdom he announces. There is a bond between nature and spirit, from mustard seed to saving grace. There is in every seed and root a promise. Jesus knew that, and when I re-discovered it, I was moved to write "The Pasqueflower."

Humans need elements of the natural to make and keep life human. A society attuned to artifacts forgets creation; maybe that's New York versus the Rocky Mountains. What does it profit a man to gain the world only to lose it? To consume the world and lose soul in the tradeoff. Nature invites us to think of our sources, of the Great Source, more than of resources. The most authentic wilderness emotion is the sense of the sublime. We get transported by forces awe-full and overpowering, by the signature of time and eternity.

Humans do belong on the planet; we are Earth's keepers, the salt of the earth. Nature is intrinsically valuable, but nature is not a moral sphere. Scientists and theologians are right that there is no conscience in wild nature, no compassion, charity, justice, honesty. One does not learn the Ten Commandments in the wilderness. Humans need ethics to live well on Earth.

Biologists have discovered how a first-level ethics is generated: Tribes with more cooperators do well against tribes with fewer cooperators. This produces altruism blended with enlightened self-interest—the patriot in battle. But in the global village where we must live in this new millennium, tribalism, now nationalism, even if altruistic, is the problem, rather than the answer, because we have not surpassed group competition. We need global community, solidarity. My Gifford lectures, *Genes, Genesis and God*, tries to sort out the natural origins of values and ethics, and the distinctive human cultural possibilities and genius.

This is where the Templeton research initiatives have so remarkably focused on possibilities for a larger altruism, all the more remarkable because here is a consummate capitalist funding research on altruism. 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. Science cannot take us there; religion perhaps can. After we learn altruism for each other, we need to become altruists toward our fellow creatures. We must encounter nature with grace, with an Earth ethics, because our ultimate Environment is God—in whom we live, move, and have our being.



*Holmes Rolston, III, with Templeton Prize laureates, the Rev. Canon Dr. Arthur Peacocke (2001) and the Rev. Dr. John C. Polkinghorne (2002) at the Templeton Prize Breakfast Media Briefing.*