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## Environmentalist wins \$1m prize

By Helen Sewell

BBC News Online science staff

**Professor Holmes Rolston III, a philosopher leading the international debate on environmental ethics, has been awarded the one-million-dollar Templeton Prize.**

It is the world's most lucrative annual prize for an individual and is given to raise awareness of how scientific research can lead to discoveries about spirituality.

Previous recipients have included Mother Teresa of Calcutta; Paul Davies, a mathematical physicist who examined the philosophical and theological implications of discoveries in quantum physics and cosmology; and mathematician John Polkinghorne who sought to reconcile the Big Bang with religious perceptions.



“ Global warming is a bigger threat to the world than Saddam Hussein ”

Prof Holmes Rolston

Holmes Rolston, Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University, US, is sometimes referred to as the "father of environmental ethics".

### Greater threat

He has published his thoughts in a wide range of academic journals, exploring the relationship between genetics, evolutionary biology, ethics and religion.

He believes that a more spiritual approach could help to solve global problems.

"Our planetary crisis is one of spiritual information," he told BBC News Online, "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."

Professor Rolston has criticised the US Government for paying too much attention to Iraq while failing to address the bigger problem of global warming. "Global warming is a bigger threat to the world than Saddam Hussein," he said.

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## Judging panel

"The US is about to commit the resources and soul of the nation to a war in Iraq, but it has shown no leadership whatsoever in addressing the problems arising from global warming."

He would like to see more international effort "to figure out humankind's appropriate place on the planet and to use the Earth's valuable resources with care and concern."

The Templeton Prize forms part of an annual \$40m investment by Sir John Templeton into exploring spirituality.



Sir John Templeton with last year's winner, John Polkinghorne

It is awarded by a panel of judges from the major religions of the world.

## Giving back

Sir John made his fortune in global fund management and Professor Rolston said that as a radical environmentalist he was very surprised to win the award from such a well-known capitalist.

However he is glad his work has been recognised and he hopes the award will bring attention to the deepening of respect and reverence for the natural world.

He plans to give the \$1m prize money to fund a new professorship in science and religion at Davidson College in North Carolina, where he studied physics 50 years ago.

"That is where I got my start," he said, "and in the future I want the same possibilities for others to think about science and religion."

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