

# Lucrative religion prize given

The Templeton winner, Holmes Rolston 3d, is credited for his push on environmental ethics.

By Jim Remsen

INQUIRER FAITH LIFE EDITOR

The Radnor-based John Templeton Foundation, which promotes harmony between science and religion, has awarded its lucrative religion prize this year to a philosopher-clergyman who is considered the father of environmental ethics.

The award, the foundation's version of the Nobel Prize, was presented to Holmes Rolston 3d of Colorado State University at a ceremony yesterday in New York.

It comes with a cash grant of 725,000 British pounds, or about \$1.14 million, making it the world's largest monetary prize for achievement in any field.

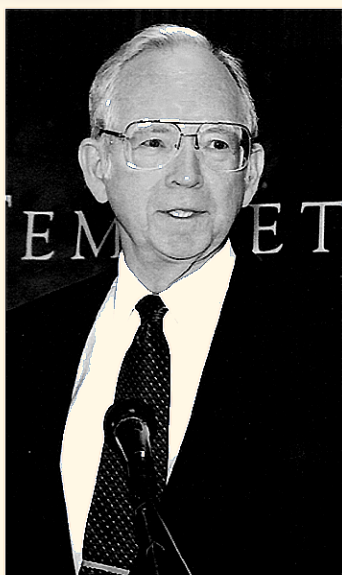
Called the Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries about Spiritual Realities, it is a redefined version of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion that was presented through 2001.

The foundation dipped deep into academia for its latest selection. Rolston is far less prominent than many previous Templeton laureates, who include the Rev. Billy Graham, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Mother Teresa, and last year's winner, Sir John Polkinghorne.

But colleagues say Rolston, 70, distinguished professor of philosophy at Colorado State, has been quietly influential over a long career at the often-contentious crossroads of science and religion.

A 1975 article he authored in the journal *Ethics* is credited with launching environmental ethics as a modern academic discipline. His books *Science and Religion* and *Environmental Ethics* spelled out a theology of nature and rejection of anthropomorphism.

As an ordained Presbyterian



ED BAILEY / Associated Press

**Holmes Rolston 3d**, philosopher and clergyman, said his prize would endow a chair at his alma mater, Davidson University.

minister and onetime church pastor, Rolston gave his conceptions of nature a liberal Christian coloring.

In a phone interview Tuesday, he said he regards creation as "a sacred gift." But his view also embraces Darwinian evolution, which has drawn flak from Christian conservatives, he said.

"Traditional theological accounts," Rolston said, envision God "as a kind of an architect or engineer or designer who makes a perfect world that maybe later is fallen."

Rolston said that conception may apply to astronomy but not to biology and the earth sciences, which are his focus. There, he sees God "as suffering with His creatures. The model of Jesus dying and rising again is the way nature works. Life is perpetually perishing and perpetually regenerating."

Over the years, Rolston has cross-pollinated his ideas to biology and ecology classes at Colorado State and even to foresters and park rangers.

"I find that the applied scientists in the field often have a soft spot for the richness of the landscape and are willing to listen," he said.

Rolston said he will dedicate his prize money "in its entirety" to endow a chair in science and religion at his alma mater, Davidson University in North Carolina.

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