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## 'Tree hugger' awarded Templeton Prize

### Religion honor is worth \$1 million

By **CHRIS HERLINGER**  
Religion News Service

**New York** — Holmes Rolston III, a self-described "tree hugger" and a pioneer in the burgeoning academic field of environmental ethics, is this year's winner of the Templeton Prize, perhaps the most prestigious award in the field of religion.

Rolston, 70, an ordained Presbyterian minister who teaches philosophy at Colorado State University, joins a long list of recent Templeton winners who have tried to narrow the divide between science and religion. But unlike

other Templeton laureates, Rolston acknowledges having "a lover's quarrel" with both disciplines.

"The trouble is making peace between the two," Rolston said in remarks prepared for the award announcement, made at the U.N. Church Center in New York.

While credited with being in the forefront of a growing discipline that draws on the traditional religious commitment to social justice with a concern for protecting the environment, Rolston's has been a distinctive voice in upholding the "intrinsic value" of nature

itself, with humans part of creation but not at its center.

It is not simply what a society does to its oppressed, Rolston said, "but what it does to its fauna, flora, species, ecosystems and landscapes that reveals the character of that society."

Templeton winners almost always express a mixture of surprise, incredulity and delight at winning the honor, which comes with a hefty monetary award: 725,000 pounds sterling, or more than \$1 million. That makes it the largest monetary award given to an individual, surpassing even the Nobel Prizes.

But Rolston said he was especially surprised that the

award was now being given to an avowed environmentalist.

"I'm a canoe freak and a tree hugger," he said.

Rolston's work has been acclaimed internationally. His "Environmental Ethics" (1987) is something of a landmark in the field, and his acclaimed "Genes, Genesis and God" (1999) was based on the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, where Rolston received his doctorate.

Rolston will receive the prize — whose full title is the Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries About Spiritual Realities — at a private ceremony May 7 in London.