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## **PHILOSOPHER ALVIN PLANTINGA AWARDED 2017 TEMPLETON PRIZE AT CHICAGO CEREMONY**

CHICAGO, IL – Alvin Plantinga, an American scholar whose rigorous writings over a half century have made theism – the belief in a divine reality or god – a serious option within academic philosophy, received the 2017 Templeton Prize at a ceremony today at The Field Museum James Simpson Theatre in Chicago, Illinois.

Plantinga's pioneering work began in the late 1950s, a time when academic philosophers generally rejected religiously informed philosophy. Today, however, university philosophy departments around the world include thousands of professors who bring their religious commitments to bear on their work, including Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers.

"I've argued that belief in God, and more specifically Christian belief, is not irrational. Some beliefs are such that you can properly or rationally accept them even if you have no evidence or argument for them," said Dr. Plantinga in his prepared remarks at the ceremony. "Now suppose I'm right in all this. The main consequence would be that people who believe in God but don't believe on the basis of arguments – and that would certainly be most of us who believe in God – are perfectly sensible and perfectly OK from an intellectual view in believing in this way. That's what I've spent most of my life arguing. It may be a small point, but I think it's important."

Three scholars on whom the influence of Alvin Plantinga has been profound celebrated his work at Sunday's ceremony: Dr. Hamza Yusuf, president of Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, America's first accredited Muslim liberal arts college; Dr. Yoram Hazony, president of the Herzl Institute in Jerusalem; and Dr. Meghan Sullivan, professor of philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.

"Plantinga's Christianity hit the sleepy old atheism of the university philosophy departments like a tornado plowing into a haystack," said Dr. Hazony. "Belief in God became an open possibility again. All of us who've come after him are in his debt."

"We will always have to grapple with the "why" questions that our material sciences are unable to answer," said Dr. Yusuf. "So we must honor Alvin Plantinga for his singular contributions to addressing the whys, and

for harnessing his extraordinary powers of intellect and directing them to the pursuit of theology. We are all the beneficiaries of his enduring work that has put theism back on the philosophical agenda.”

“From the beginning, you’ve let your faith be visible in your philosophical research: that took *tremendous* courage over the decades, and your example helped many other religious men and women feel like they had futures in philosophy,” said Dr. Sullivan. “In your writing and teaching, so many others have found a blueprint for asking their own questions about possibility, about freedom, about God and faith, and about the capability of our minds to know. It is truly a form of love to show others that they have this capacity.”

The Prize was presented to Dr. Plantinga by Heather Templeton Dill, the president of the John Templeton Foundation, and by Lord Brian Griffiths, a friend and colleague of the late global investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, who created the Prize in 1972.

“Alvin Plantinga has recognized that religious beliefs or arguments based on religious principles need not conflict with serious philosophical work,” said Dill. “Rather, his life, his work, and his career demonstrate that perspectives rooted in religious faith can make crucial contributions to addressing perennial problems in philosophy.”

The ceremony also featured performances by the Calvin College Alumni Choir, and by pianist Dr. Leon Plantinga, professor emeritus of music at Yale University and Alvin Plantinga’s brother.

The Templeton Prize, valued at £1.1 million (about \$1.4 million), is one of the world's largest annual awards given to an individual and honors a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works. Plantinga was announced as the 2017 Templeton Prize Laureate on April 25.

The Prize is a cornerstone of the John Templeton Foundation’s international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the deepest and most perplexing questions facing humankind. The Foundation supports research on subjects ranging from complexity, evolution, and emergence to creativity, forgiveness, and free will.

Dr. Plantinga, 84, is the John A. O’Brien Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame, where he taught for 28 years until retiring in 2010. Prior to that, he was a professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan from 1963 to 1982.

He joins a group of 46 former recipients, including Mother Teresa, who received the inaugural award in 1973, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1983), and philosopher Charles Taylor (2007). The 2016 Laureate was Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. He was preceded in 2015 by Canadian philosopher and theologian Jean Vanier, founder of L’Arche, the international

network of communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together as peers. Czech priest and philosopher Tomáš Halík was awarded the Prize in 2014, Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 2013, and the Dalai Lama in 2012.

### **Notes to Editors**

- Videos, still pictures, and biographical information on Alvin Plantinga, along with bios of previous Templeton Prize Laureates, are available at [www.templetonprize.org](http://www.templetonprize.org).
- Follow the Templeton Prize on Twitter using @TempletonPrize and the hashtag #TempletonPrize2017.
- Everyone is a potential nominator for the Templeton Prize. For nomination details, go to: <http://www.templetonprize.org/nomination.html>.

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