

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2001

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DNA Pioneer, Theologian Wins Religion Prize

By BILL BROADWAY
Washington Post Staff Writer

Arthur Peacocke, a British biochemist and theologian whose pioneering research helped define the physical makeup of DNA, has won the 2001 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

Susan Billington Harper, executive director of the Templeton Prize, announced the award yesterday at a news conference in New York. She praised Peacocke's contributions to genetics and to the understanding of evolution and the interplay of science and religion. Prince Philip will present the prize, along with a check for 700,000

pounds—about \$1 million—during a private ceremony May 9 at Buckingham Palace.

Peacocke, the son of a butcher and a homemaker, led a research team at the University of Birmingham in the 1950s that uncovered physical properties of the newly discovered DNA molecule.

At the time, he was a "mild agnostic" who struggled with Christianity's claim of authenticity without applying "the usual criteria" of scientific examination, Peacocke said. His curiosity led him to study the philosophy of religion and science, earn a doctorate in theology and be ordained in the Church of England.

Since then, the scientist-priest has been a fierce advocate of dialogue between scientists and religious leaders. "Progress in religion can come only when the religious quest engages creatively with . . . new scientific perspectives," he said at the news conference.

Peacocke, 76, has written numerous books, including "God and the New Biology" and "Theology for a Scientific Age." His latest, "Paths From Science Towards God: The End of All Our Exploring," will be released next month.

John M. Templeton, a native Tennessean who made a fortune in global investments, established the prize in 1972 to compensate for the

lack of a Nobel prize for religion.

Past recipients include Mother Teresa, the Rev. Billy Graham, Charles Colson and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.