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\$1.4 million Templeton Prize hails S. African

By Jim Remsen
INQUIRER FAITH LIFE EDITOR

A South African mathematician who toils in the rarefied field of theoretical cosmology has won this year's \$1.4 million Templeton Prize, billed as the world's largest monetary award for achievement in any field.

The Radnor-based John Templeton Foundation, which promotes harmony between science and religion, announced yesterday that George F.R. Ellis, professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town, is its 2004 laureate.

Ellis, 64, was honored for metaphysical writings that assert that *kenosis*, self-sacrificing love, is part of the character of the universe.

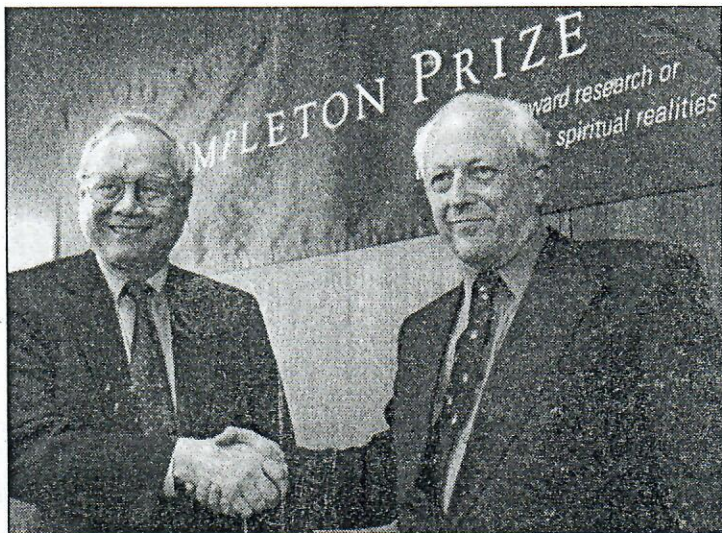
William Stoeger, an astrophysicist at the Vatican Observatory Research Group, nominated Ellis for the award. He said Ellis has shown "that our universe seems to be particularly suited for fostering that attitude and practice [of *kenosis*], and to require it for harmonious functioning at every level."

Theoretical cosmologists study the universe as a system and develop theories about its evolution and nature.

Ellis said his observations about *kenosis* embody his work in the realm of metaphysics, not his scientific research into stars and the birth of the universe.

Ellis is a protege of British cosmologist Stephen Hawking,

**The recipient,
George F.R.
Ellis, a
mathematician
who stood up
to apartheid,
sees love as a
natural force.**



DIANE BONDAREFF / Associated Press

George F.R. Ellis (right), a University of Cape Town professor, with John Templeton Jr., president of the Radnor-based Templeton Foundation, which promotes harmony between science and religion. The award was announced yesterday in New York.

with whom he wrote the standard work *The Large Scale Structure of Space-Time*, in 1973. But Ellis, a Quaker activist, is far more religious than the famously atheistic Hawking.

In an interview from New York, where the award was announced, Ellis said

he believes that morality, "the letting-go of one's own interest," is part of the "deep reality" of the world.

"We discover morality and don't invent it," Ellis said. "Just as we believe any advanced civilization would discover the laws of basic

mathematics, we believe they would discover the deep-lying nature of morality."

Evidence of universal *kenosis* "isn't to be seen in the physical world" of hard science, he said. "It is a hope. The evidence is that it is a trans-religious phenomenon."

Born an Anglican, Ellis became a Quaker in 1974 and wrote several critiques of the South African apartheid government's housing practices. The works were de-

nounced by the regime, but later helped guide housing reforms.

Ellis said his nation's renewal under the "transformatory" leadership of Nelson Mandela was proof that the world is best understood through a blend of rationality and "extra-rational hope."

"George was courageous, hiding people in his house, giving them asylum at great risk to himself," said physicist Abhay Ashtekar, director of the Center for Gravitational Physics and Astronomy at Pennsylvania State University. "I think he sees his life and science in some sense as coming from above, as globally religious."

Ellis said he would apply half of his prize money to his university research and donate the rest to Quaker and other charities in South Africa.

The Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries About Spiritual Realities is valued at 795,000 British pounds, more than \$1.4 million. Past winners include Billy Graham, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Mother Teresa.

Contact Jim Remsen at
215-854-5621 or
jremsen@phillynews.com