

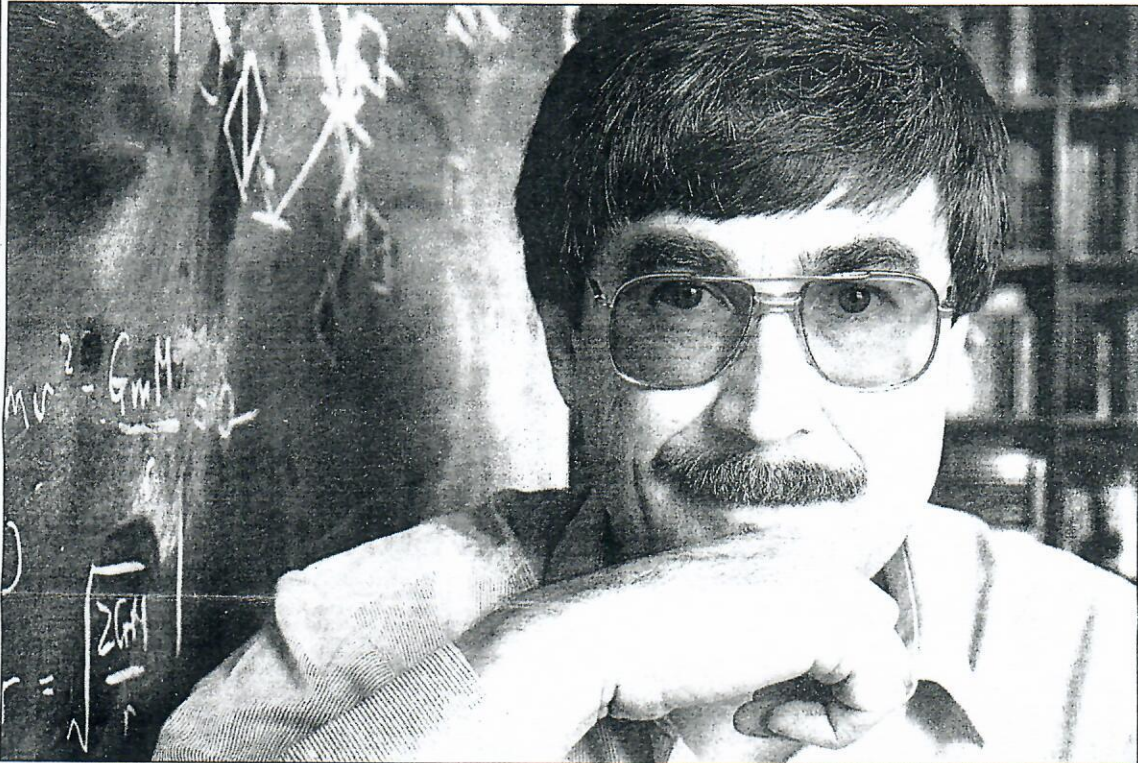
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## Davies' faith in science lands \$1.4m prize



Professor Davies... 'I cannot accept that a universe with these ingenious features, with such mathematical order, harmony and beauty, is a package with no deeper meaning'  
By SUSAN WYNDHAM in New York and PATRICK LAWNHAM

**PROFESSOR Paul Davies**, an Australian-based physicist who once wrote "science offers a surer path to God than religion", has been chosen for the Templeton Prize for progress in religion, believed to be the world's richest annual award.

British-born Professor Davies, a prolific author and a columnist with *The Australian's* Higher Education section, will receive more than \$1.4 million next month for his work in breaching the once cavernous divide between science and religion.

As a result, Dr Davies, the professor of natural history at

the University of Adelaide, will spend more time on his research work, which he said had competed poorly in the past decade with the demands of academic work and public appearances.

He intends to focus on three topics that have "deep theological significance" — the nature of time, the mind-body problem ("the relationship between the mental world of thoughts and emotions and the physical world of atoms and forces") and the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

Professor Davies, brought up in an Anglican household in London, said he turned to science in his early teens when the

local vicar could not answer his questions about creation and the universe.

He abandoned conventional religious beliefs as a teenager and became internationally known for popular presentations of his complex scientific theories about the beginning of the universe, black holes and the nature of time.

Although he rejects the idea of a personal god, his scientific research has led him to "a timeless, abstract physicist's view of God", he told *The Australian* in New York before his win was announced in the city yesterday.

"I cannot accept that a uni-

verse with these ingenious features and felicitous nature, with such mathematical order, harmony and beauty, is a package with no deeper meaning or purpose."

A prolific writer, Professor Davies contributes frequently to *The Australian* and is the author of more than 20 books, including *The Mind of God*, exploring the connection between science and religion.

His three latest books, published this month in Australia, are *About Time: Einstein's Unfinished Revolution*; *Are We Alone? Philosophical Impli-*

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## \$1.4m religious prize for the professor who had faith in science

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cations of the Discovery of Extraterrestrial Life; and *The Last Three Minutes*, a speculative account of how the universe might end.

The University of Adelaide's vice-chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown, told *The Australian* yesterday Professor Davies had brought "tremendous benefits" to the university since he arrived in 1990.

"We are... creating an institute of theoretical physics and I am quite sure that the added stimulus of this award will help to get this institute off the ground," Professor Brown said.

More immediately, Professor Davies will be on the road in Australia next week for a book promotion before a lecture tour of the United States and Britain.

He is the second Australian-based scientist to win the Templeton Prize — famous biologist and

University of Sydney emeritus Professor Charles Birch was selected in 1990.

Professor Davies, 48, came to Australia and Adelaide in 1990, decrying the science policies of the Thatcher government in Britain, saying it had a contempt for research which did not produce an immediately saleable result.

He said it was Britain, not Australia as some believed, that was becoming a scientific backwater.

But the prime minister of the time, now Baroness Thatcher, came through for Professor Davies in the end — she was one of nine judges, along with former US president Mr George Bush, who chose him for this year's award.

Professor Davies, an Australian resident and the recipient of many scientific awards, is the 25th winner of the Templeton Prize.

Previous winners include Mother Teresa, Dr Billy Graham, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Pro-

fessor Birch. The US founder of the prize, Sir John Templeton, 82, a pioneering global investor, adjusts its value each year so that it always exceeds the Nobel Prize, which he thinks unfairly excludes religion as an honoured discipline.

Professor Davies will receive his prize from Prince Philip, set this year at \$650,000 (\$1.4m), in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace on May 5.

He will address a Westminster Abbey ceremony on May 3.