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Physicist Wins Religion Prize

Ian Barbour, a physicist and theologian at Carleton College, is the 1999 winner of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Established by global investor John Templeton, the prize goes annually to "a living person who has shown extraordinary originality in advancing humankind's understanding of God and/or spirituality," and carries the world's highest monetary award (designed to beat out the Nobels). This year, it is worth \$1.24 million.

Barbour holds a 1949 PhD from the University of Chicago, and early in his career did research in high-energy physics. But after a few years on the physics faculty at Kalamazoo College, he began gravitating toward ethical and philosophical questions, and so decided to go back to school to study religion, earning a theology degree at Yale University in 1956. He then took

a joint position in Carleton College's physics and religion departments, becoming emeritus professor of science, technology, and society in 1986.

Barbour first gained international attention with his 1965 book, *Issues in Science and Religion*. "My concern has

been to promote dialog about conceptual and ethical issues, not to merge religion and science," says Barbour. "I moved from having them in watertight compartments to finding fruitful areas of interaction."



BARBOUR

"You can do physics without asking wider questions," he continues. "But if you start thinking, particularly in cosmology, it pushes you to ask fundamental questions: Why is there a world at all? Why does it have the structure it does? Religion doesn't necessarily answer the questions that science leaves open, but it can provide a reasonable framework in which to interpret things."

Barbour is also actively involved in discussions of ethical issues related to science and technology, including weapons control and, more recently, environmental issues, genetic engineering, and cloning. "Many scientists find that science raises questions that science itself doesn't answer," he notes.

Barbour plans to give \$1 million of his award to the Center for Theological and Natural Sciences, in Berkeley, California, to be used for academic activities.

The first recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion was Mother Teresa, in 1973. Physicists who have previously won the prize are Stanley Jaki (1987), who is also a Benedictine monk, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker (1989), and Paul Davies (1995).

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