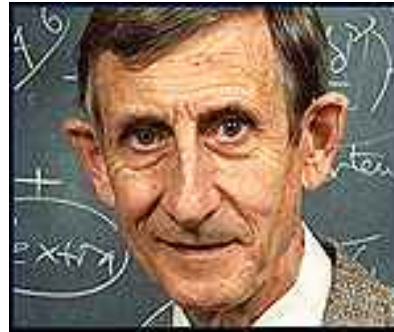


You are in: [Sci/Tech](#)[Front Page](#) Tuesday, 9 May, 2000, 15:45 GMT 16:45 UK[World](#) **Scientist wins \$1m religion prize**[UK](#)[UK Politics](#) **By BBC News Online science editor Dr David Whitehouse**[Business](#)[Sci/Tech](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Sport](#)[Entertainment](#)[Talking Point](#)[In Depth](#)[AudioVideo](#)

Professor Freeman Dyson, one of the world's pre-eminent physicists, who once said that theologians should be abolished, has won the 2000 Templeton Prize for progress in religion.



Freeman Dyson: Science and Religion are equal

He received the award from Prince Philip at a ceremony in London on 9 May.

The citation says his futurist views have consistently challenged mankind to reconcile technology and social justice, eliminating the wedge that technology drives between the haves and have nots.

The award is given each year for outstanding originality in advancing the world's understanding of God or spirituality. The prize of £600,000 (\$948,000) makes the Templeton one of the world's richest awards.

The award was started in 1972 by global investor Sir John Templeton to remedy what he saw as an oversight by the Nobel Prizes, which do not honour the discipline of religion. The award is always set at an amount that exceeds the value of the Nobels.

Previous winners include the Rev Dr Billy Graham (1982), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1983), physicist Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker (1989), and Benedictine monk and professor of astrophysics Stanley L. Jaki (1987). The first winner was Mother Teresa in 1973.

### Man of culture

In nominating Dyson for the prize, Dwight E. Neuenschwander, professor of physics at Southern Nazarene University in Oklahoma, described him as "one of the outstanding physicists of our time".

He added that Dyson "has written extensively on the meaning of science and its relation to other disciplines, especially religion and ethics.... He is truly a man of a third culture that is in the making".

Freeman John Dyson, born in England in 1923 and an American

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citizen since 1957, has long enjoyed a reputation as a writer with a knack for turning intricate scientific theories into easily understood concepts.

His 1979 book, *Disturbing the Universe*, a "scientific autobiography", describes in lay terms how a scientist looks at the world and is regarded by many as an essential read for a professional scientist.

In another book, *Imagined World's*, he writes of distant timescapes populated by our descendants spread throughout the galaxy in alliance with other intelligent beings. They would be unrecognisable to us, he says.

### **Science equal to religion**

"Science is the most powerful driving force of change," he wrote in *Imagined Worlds*. Religion, he says, "has at least an equal claim to authority in defining human destiny".

Indeed, he has said that the only two human institutions that can think about the long-term development of mankind are science and religion.

Professor Dyson has criticised science for concentrating too much technology on "making toys for the rich" such as cellular phones and ever-smaller laptop computers.

Instead, he says, science should be spreading knowledge, well being and wealth around the world so that one day "every Egyptian village can be as wealthy as Princeton".

He says the reason for this is that pure scientists have become more detached from the mundane needs of humanity, and the applied scientists have become more attached to immediate profitability.

### **More respect**

Responding to his award, Professor Dyson said that there should be more respect and understanding between scientists and theologians.

Science and religion he said are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big Universe outside, trying to understand why we are here.

The two windows give different views, but both look out at the same Universe. Both views are one-sided; neither is complete. Both leave out essential features of the real world. And both are worthy of respect.

"I am saying to modern scientists and theologians: don't imagine that our latest ideas about the Big Bang or the human genome have solved the mysteries of the Universe or the mysteries of life."

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