

## His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Hyung Jin Moon and the Templeton Prize

Frank Kaufmann

April 3, 2012

*Dr. Kaufmann is founder and president of Filial Projects, director of the Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace (IRFWP), editor-in-chief of Dialogue and Alliance, and editor-in-chief of The New World Encyclopedia. He has worked in more than 65 countries, including in conflict-ridden and violent environments, and engaged 500 international scholars for New World Encyclopedia. Dr. Kaufman was nominated for the Guru Nanak Interfaith Award, along with other nominees including the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu.*

On Thursday, March 29, 2012, 76-year-old Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, received the 2012 Templeton Prize worth \$1.7 million.



*From left to right: The Dalai Lama shakes hands with Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, international president of the Unification Church, who traveled with Dr. Frank Kaufmann in December, 2007 for their meeting in India.*

Despite statistics estimating that 80 percent, or 5 billion people in the world, are religious, many extremely so, curiously, almost no religious leaders rise to the level of international prominence or recognition. Stop your average woman on the street and ask her to name four religious leaders, and most will have trouble. But, if she can make any progress at all on the question, surely "the Dalai Lama" will be on her list. Political figures, entertainers, and even corporate leaders fare better.

Similarly, the overcrowded world of prizes and awards is not widely known. Few can get past Nobel and Pulitzer, and surely very few know of the Templeton Prize, even though it is the largest prize in the world, far exceeding the sums awarded by either Nobel or Pulitzer.

Many award- and prize-giving institutions are self-serving, far more interested in the cache they get from association with awardees, than in how their foundation benefits prize winners. Those past the climbing phase often become politicized. The Templeton Prize however, seems quite the exception in both cases. It is unique in its focus on spirituality, it is genuinely generous, and its roster of prize winners is broad and diverse.

So, what are we to make of this year's prize? Arguably the best-known religious leader alive named to the largest prize in the world, a once-in-a-lifetime moment, like some close-flying meteor we wake up in the middle of the night to watch because it happens only every 25,000 years. So, who exactly is "the Dalai

Lama," and what exactly is the Templeton Prize? Do they deserve each other? Are both well-served by their newfound association?

## Rev. Hyung Jin Moon visits the Dalai Lama

In December 2007, I brought Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, youngest son of Reverend Sun Myung Moon, to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamsala, India, seat of the The Central Tibetan Administration, commonly referred to as the Tibetan Government in Exile. After 27 unending hours of travel, 14 by air and 13 by road, we arrived in Dharamsala with only enough time to throw down our luggage and race to the residence of His Holiness. We arrived punctually, and after a rather sophisticated security check, were welcomed by a gentle aide de camp, serene with perfect English, into a humble, unpretentious waiting parlour. Guests from the world over came and went in what could only be fleeting meetings. Some seemed to come only for Blessings, others on matters of business.

Who people commonly call "The Dalai Lama," or those more schooled, "His Holiness," is more accurately the 14th and current Dalai Lama, the most influential figure in the Gelugpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetans traditionally believe him to be the reincarnation of his predecessors and a manifestation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, in short, the highest embodiment of compassion, or the "presence" of compassion in the world today.

What does it mean that His Holiness is "the 14th"? This has to do with him being a *tulku*. In Tibetan Buddhism, a *tulku* is a particularly high-ranking lama (e.g., the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, the Karmapa) who can choose the manner of his (or her) rebirth (more accurately, re-manifestation -- a subtle but significant Buddhist technicality). Only a *tulku* can do this. All other sentient beings, including other lamas, have no choice as to the manner of their rebirth. For those with spiritual sensibilities the chance to be in the presence of this lineage is simply jaw-drop stuff. But the international renown and attention enjoyed by His Holiness does not really come from these Buddhist-bound notions.

Arguably, the inordinate levels of respect, attention, and fame His Holiness enjoys derive from the manner in which he has championed the cause of a displaced (refugee) community, and the exquisite mastery with which he has tendered his status as both a spiritual and political authority. Fighting for a righteous cause and carrying political authority as a spiritual figure are very taxing on spiritual life. Few can fault the remarkable lightness and beauty with which His Holiness has managed his cause and his leadership responsibilities. For such a life of integrity and consistency, it is easy to imagine him worthy of a prize as grand and distinguished as the Templeton Prize. But neither his cause, nor his quality as a leader and a champion, are why he got the prize.

### **The Templeton Prize:**

*"honors a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works... The Prize celebrates no particular faith tradition or notion of God [and] has been awarded to scientists, philosophers, theologians, members of the clergy, philanthropists, writers, and reformers."*

The focus and emphasis of Sir John and presently the foundation run by his son, Dr. Jack Templeton, is "the quest for progress in humanity's efforts to comprehend the many and diverse manifestations of the Divine." This passion for charting the dramatic horizons where science and spirit converge, make the selection of His Holiness, a match made in Heaven.

**The Templeton page** announcing this year's award has this to say:

*[His Holiness] encourages serious scientific investigative reviews of the power of compassion and its broad potential to address the world's fundamental problems - a theme at the core of his teachings. Within that search, the "big questions" he raises - such as "Can compassion be trained or taught?" - reflect the deep interest of the founder of the Templeton Prize, the late Sir John Templeton.*

Not everyone knows the long history of His Holiness' unbound support, ease, interest, and investment in science, for example, his noted address, "Science at the Crossroads," given at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience on November 12, 2005 in Washington, D.C., or his 2005 book, *The Universe in a Single Atom*, introduced by the publisher, who says:

*After forty years of study with some of the greatest scientific minds as well as a lifetime of meditative, spiritual and philosophical study, the Dalai Lama presents a brilliant analysis of why both disciplines must be pursued in order to arrive at a complete picture of the truth. The record of His Holiness in this area abounds.*

As we waited in the bustling waiting room of His Holiness, our gentle host explained apologetically, "His Holiness is quite ill. I am afraid he will have just 5 minutes for you," and given the pace of disappearing and reappearing visitors, this warning felt true. If ever there was a time for non-attachment, I guess this was the time. After 27, unending hours of travel, including 13 hours on Indian roads with drivers who make Indiana Jones seem tame, this was not happy news. In due course we were ushered into a humble, quiet, room where His Holiness awaited us. Indeed, there sat before him a little packet of cough lozenges. The condition described was sincere.

I have worked in religion for 30 years and have met most top leaders, saints, monks, and reformers in all traditions, the inner lattice-work of world order flowing through prayers and service. I no longer imagine a cross, a hat or a robe, necessarily to mean much. Some deserve their robes, some don't. My religion eyes and palate are like a jaded food critic for the *New York Times*. But this time was different. From the first moment I entered his presence, and for all the moments of our next two hours together, His Holiness emanated and bestowed pure, still, peace and presence, the pristine innocence of a child. A true wonder.

His Holiness calls himself "a simple Buddhist Monk." This I can testify is true. And where better for the fullness of compassion to reside?

Has the noble team at the Templeton Foundation made a good selection for this year's prize? Yes. That too.