

**Physicist Wins
Million Dollar Religion Prize**

Physicist Paul Davies, author of *God and the New Physics* and *The Mind of God*, recently won the prestigious Templeton Prize for "Progress in Religion." The prize—no less than \$1 million—is funded by Wall Street investment fund mogul John Marks Templeton, who says "The prize is not for saintliness or mere good works. It is for progress." This year's judges were Robert John Russell, founder of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley, James Dillet Freeman, founder of the Unity School for Religious Studies near Kansas City, former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and former President George Bush. Previous winners have included Mother Teresa and Billy Graham. In accepting his award Davies admitted "it is impossible to be a scientist, even an atheistic scientist, and not be struck by the awesome beauty, harmony, and ingenuity of nature." Although he gave a disclaimer that "science cannot prove the existence of a design, or a designer," he followed this by claiming that science "can reveal the sheer depth of ingenuity that goes to make up this marvelous universe—our home." The Templeton Prize committee explained that Davies received the award for "his contention that humankind's ability to understand math and science—which in turn allows for comprehension and calculation of the physical universe—evidences purpose and design to human existence." Raised in an Anglican home, Davies appears to accept the Anthropic Principle that rejects stochastic and chance explanations for the structure of the universe: "How can one accept a scheme of things so cleverly arranged, so subtle and felicitous, simply as a brute fact, as a package of properties that just happens to be?" Plenty of cosmologists, astronomers, and scientists in general can, and the new Inflationary Cosmology allows numerous universe bubbles to form, only one of which

becomes our universe with this particular structure (giving rise to intelligent life forms that ask such questions). To his credit, Davies blames religious fundamentalism for the warfare model of science and religion held by so many scientists and theologians in America. "I see a big difference between the United States and the rest of the English-speaking world. Because of religious fundamentalism, which is very strong in the United States, many scientists take a militaristic, atheistic line as a matter of principle because they feel they have a position to defend."

**Harvard Professor
Investigated
for Alien Beliefs**

Dr. John Mack, a tenured professor of psychiatry at the prestigious Harvard University, is now being examined by a special peer review committee for his book *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens* (Charles Scribner's Sons), and, especially, for his many appearances on talk shows such as Oprah* and Larry King* in which he takes at face value claims by his patients that they were abducted by large-eyed, grayish aliens who sexually abused them. A controversy immediately erupted on the campus, with some hoping Mack might be kept in check and not further embarrass the university, and others claiming that such an investigation violates his rights of academic freedom. Dr. Arnold Relman, former editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine* and an emeritus professor at Harvard's medical school, heads the committee, and is accompanied by two lawyers from the Harvard counsel's office. After his initial cooperation with the committee, Mack retained Boston lawyer Roderick MacLeish, Jr., who says, "It's an issue of academic freedom. History has not been kind to individuals and entities that tried to suppress controversial or unorthodox viewpoints, and this is that kind of case." In defense, Medical School Dean Daniel Tosteson, who established the committee, said

that "this is not a disciplinary or tenure matter," and that the committee is interested in learning why Mack did not publish such controversial claims in a peer-reviewed journal, and why he did not seek a second opinion from another psychiatrist on the claims his patients made. The reason is patently obvious to skeptics—such claims would never get past a neutral and objective observer who did not already believe. As demonstrated clearly in *Skeptic*, these claims are part of a psychological and sociological movement parallel to the Satanic Panic hoax and the Recovered Memory movement (see this issue of *Skeptic*, as well as V.2, #3).

WOW... BUT NOT IT.

**Philadelphia Skeptics
Association**

The Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking encourages responsible scientific investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims, and the dissemination of the factual results of such studies. They also promote scientific investigation, critical thinking, and science education. The group is headed by Eric Krieg, and they publish a newsletter called *Phactum*. For further information call 215/884-3885, or e-mail Krieg at: eric@omni.voicenet.com

**History of
Skepticism Course**

Professor James R. Bennett, in the Department of English at the University of Arkansas, is organizing a course in the history of skepticism, to be sponsored as well by the Humanities and World Literature programs. Subjects include skepticism from classical Greece and Rome to the 20th century, with special emphasis on Spinoza, Mark Twain, Robert Ingersoll, Bertrand Russell, and many others. Dr. Bennett is encouraging other universities and colleges to offer such a course and will make his syllabus and bibliography available to anyone interested. Write: 333 Kimpel Hall, Fayetteville, AR, 72701; e-mail: jben-net@comp.uark.edu

* JONAS - DO YOU HAVE A COPY OR TRANSCRIPT OF THESE INTERVIEWS? I'D LIKE TO SEE THEM SOMEDAY! THANKS! SAC