

People

News in the [April 21, 2009](#) issue

Bernard d'Espagnat, a French physicist and philosopher of science whose research has focused on "veiled reality," has won the 2009 Templeton Prize, believed to be the largest yearly monetary award given to a single individual. Announcement of the prize March 16 was made in Paris instead of New York City because d'Espagnat, 87, professor emeritus of theoretical physics at the University of Paris-Sud, said he did not want to leave his wife for an extended time. In prepared remarks, d'Espagnat spoke of what can and cannot be explained about the nature of being. While only science "yields true knowledge," he said, realms like religion and the arts offer a glimpse of the "ground of things," an area where "science has no such privilege." The prize was created by the late U.S.-born philanthropist John M. Templeton.

Retired bishop **Melvin E. Wheatley**, 93, who chanced censure in the United Methodist Church in 1982 by appointing the denomination's first openly gay pastor, died March 1 in Mission Viejo, California, after a long illness. Wheatley appointed Julian Rush, who separated from his wife because he was gay, to a church in Denver, Colorado. Wheatley was accused of heresy but was absolved by a seven-member panel that decided there was "no reasonable ground" for persecution. Wheatley served Westwood United Methodist Church near the UCLA campus in Los Angeles from 1954 to 1972. There he "had passion for civil rights, he questioned the war in Vietnam," and he was in the forefront of a struggle for gay rights in the church, according to the present Westwood pastor, John Woodall. Donald Messer, president of Iliff School of Theology in Denver, called Wheatley a Martin Luther of the United Methodists. "He freed us all to be less prejudiced, biased and dogmatic," Messer said.