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**Remarks by Dr. Meghan Sullivan at the 2017 Templeton Prize Ceremony
The Field Museum, Chicago, September 24, 2017**

I would like to thank the Templeton Foundation for inviting me to participate in tonight's celebration. And, Professor Plantinga, I'm especially honored to add my voice to this chorus of scholars thanking you for the revolution you inaugurated in philosophy. I've personally admired your work throughout my career, and at different phases, I've been inspired by different virtues in it.

As an undergraduate philosophy major at UVa, what I admired most was the rigor of your arguments. Metaphysicians in the first part of the 20th century had tied themselves in intellectual knots trying to make sense of possibility and necessity. With the *de re de dicto* distinction and armed with the apparatus of possible worlds theory, you cut through the contradictions, in the process giving us new technology for thinking about some of the oldest philosophical problems.

In graduate school, and struggling to find my own writing voice, I came to deeply admire the style, authenticity and humor with which you executed your arguments. Returning to your work after weeks in the logic mines always reminded me that even the most abstract topics can be personal and that writing can and should be a joy.

As a newly minted PhD, I worried about the ways in which my Catholic faith might be a liability in an extremely tight and secular academic job market. What I most admired then was your courage. In many academic circles throughout your career, belief in God was treated more as a historical feature of philosophy... not as what William James would call a "live question". But from the beginning, you've let your faith be visible in your philosophical research. That took *tremendous* courage over the decades, and your example helped many other men and women of faith see they had futures in philosophy. I see many of these philosophers in the audience tonight.

So over the years your example has made me (and others!) more careful, more eloquent, and more intellectually honest. At this phase in my journey as a philosopher, another of your accomplishment speaks even more loudly. What I most admire now is the *sense of wonder* that thoroughly penetrates your work. This summer, in preparation for this event I went down a bit of a rabbit hole re-reading your work, especially the

material on reformed epistemology. I came to realize how central this virtue of wonder is to excellent philosophy. And it is a particularly fitting virtue for a philosopher of faith. A favorite Old Testament passage of mine is Psalm 8. King David pauses from listing some of his favorite features of God, to marvel at how surprising it is that we can even ponder such thoughts. He says:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ***what is mankind that you are mindful of them***, human beings that you care for them?

David, in one of his more reflective moments, acknowledges his smallness while also giving thanks that he nevertheless has the ability to think about God. Professor Plantinga, your work in epistemology, metaphysics and religion emboldened many philosophers to wonder again. The attitude of wonder itself has three interesting features. First it suggests an optimism on the part of the wonderer--there might be answers out there that we might discover, even with our limited abilities. Second it suggests a high value on that answer, whatever it might be. And most of all, wonder entails a surprise and love of the question itself--of its ability to be even be pondered--and of the excitement of entertaining answers.

How amazing to think like David that we might have minds capable of entertaining such truths? In your work, you give us a life-giving example of how our minds can rigorously and fruitfully seek such knowledge.

This prize is also an occasion for us to think more seriously about how we might carry forward Professor Plantinga's work and inspiration, especially in the current landscape of professional philosophy. Two thoughts.

First, I think it is quite natural for scholars to feel a twinge of embarrassment when they become interested in questions like whether a god exists, whether our decisions are genuinely free, why evils occur or whether any of the complex moral, historical, and metaphysical claims of a faith tradition might be true. There is a pressure to back away from such questions -- to need to justify even raising them. Perhaps this is because they can be so hard to make progress on. Or perhaps we worry that thinking deeply about such issues might destabilize us, might threaten the core assumptions we need to navigate our lives. Plantinga argues through his work that wonderers about God do not face any special epistemic burden. These questions are meaningful. They can be reasoned through in better or worse ways. And that we have occasion for great optimism. In the process of such reasoning, we might just find ourselves inadvertently developing better modal logics. Or a new theory of what constitutes evidence. Our wondering minds can be unified, and we should resist pressures to quarantine or dismiss questions of faith. Faith and reason are not two opposed monoliths--faith feeds our reason with questions to entertain and reason gives us the most satisfying way to entertain them. So the first Plantinga lesson we learn is to not let ourselves be fooled into accepting some superficial dichotomy between faith and reason, at the risk of starving both.

Here is the second thought. In his widely circulated 1984 "Advice to Christian Philosophers" Professor Plantinga urged the philosophical community to be more openly courageous in representing their deepest commitments in their choice of research topics. In 2017, we still need courage, though now the landscape is

far more open for this kind of work. Alongside wonder and courage, I'd suggest another virtue is now even more important for Christians who would work in this field: love. Love of the truth, love of the questions themselves. But most importantly, love for our fellow *questioners*. One thing remarkable about Plantinga is the vast number of graduate students he trained, the undergraduates he inspired, and the colleagues who felt empowered by his example. It is easy (and all too common) to measure the success of an academic by the number of articles he's published or the frequency with which he is cited. But how much better to measure impact by the number of other minds he's brought into the search? In Plantinga's writing and teaching, so many others have found a blueprint for asking their own questions about possibility, about freedom, about God and faith, and about the capability of our minds to know. His influence cuts across faiths. It cuts across generations. It is truly a form of love to show others that they have this capacity... to invite them to the debate. We can all, I think, do more in our own writing and teaching to enliven these questions for others. And we should especially seek out those struggling to find a foothold in philosophy. Academic philosophy got much larger and more intellectually diverse by Professor Plantinga's work, but our field could be more expansive and more ambitious still. We were designed to wonder together.

And so tonight, we celebrate the love, courage, and wonder that bring out the very best in philosophy. And we celebrate a philosopher who reminds us of our highest callings. Congratulations Professor Plantinga!

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