

TEMPLETON REPORT

NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

July 23, 2008

Dialogue in Doha

In the U.S. and Europe, scholarly dialogue between scientists and theologians can be uneasy and difficult at times. In the Muslim world, it is largely non-existent, for fear of offending religious traditionalists. An important step toward remedying this situation was taken recently in Doha, Qatar, at a conference titled “Science, Cultures, and the Future of Humanity.” The gathering, held from May 30 to June 1, was jointly organized by the Al Jazeera Center for Studies (the think tank of the Arabic television network Al Jazeera) and the Interdisciplinary University of Paris (IUP), whose Science and Religion in Islam program is a major grantee of the Templeton Foundation.



Opening panel (from left to right): Keith Ward, Charles Townes, Mustapha El Mourabit, Roald Hoffmann, and Nidhal Guessoum

For Dr. Jean Staune, founder and general secretary of the IUP, the gathering in Doha was a unique opportunity “to create dialogue and debate between Muslim experts in science and religion and their Western counterparts.” No less important, he told the *Templeton Report*, was the chance it presented “to make known the research of Muslim scholars in the Muslim world.” The conference was entirely funded by Al Jazeera, which also gave the event extensive coverage. All fifteen hours of the conference were broadcast live on Al Jazeera Mubashir, a public affairs channel, and three hours of interviews with conference participants were broadcast on the main Al Jazeera channel, with an average audience of more than 60 million viewers.

The framework for the meeting was set in the opening session. Staune suggested that both science and religion “must be exercised with humility.” Roald Hoffmann of Cornell University, the 1981 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, told the attendees that “he did not wish to minimize the differences between science and religion,” but that both are “ways of trying to understand the world.” Nidhal Guessoum, an astrophysicist at the American University of Sharjah in the UAE, spoke about issues in the Arab world. “When Qur’anic verses are turned into equations and physical quantities are numerically derived from the Holy Qur’an,” he said, “one must look at such approaches carefully and critically.” He suggested that the key to a positive relationship between the two domains was for science “to give up its imperialistic dreams” and for religion “to be less ‘dogmatic’ and more open to contributions from other fields.”

To the surprise of everyone present, the opening session of the conference was attended by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the host of a weekly program on Al Jazeera and one of the most influential theologians in the Islamic world. After the session ended, al-Qaradawi congratulated Guessoum on his remarks. The conference also won wide coverage and positive notices in the Arab press and on Arabic websites. Of special interest to Muslim commentators were the views of Nidhal Guessoum; Dr. Bruno Abd-al-Haqq Guiderdoni, an astrophysicist who directs the Observatory of Lyon; and Eric Geoffroy, an Arab philologist and specialist on Sufism at the University Marc Bloch in Strasbourg.



Nidhal Guessoum and Yusuf al-Qaradawi

Other participants in the conference included Charles Townes of the University of California-Berkeley, winner of the 1964 Nobel Prize in Physics (and of the 2005 Templeton Prize); Denis Alexander, director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at Cambridge University; Philip Clayton, professor of religion and philosophy at Claremont Graduate University; Keith Ward, the former Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University and a Fellow of the British Academy; Ehsan Masood, a London-based journalist and contributor to *Prospect*, *Nature*, and *New Scientist*; the Iranian philosopher and theoretical physicist Mehdi Golshani; and the epistemologist and biologist Mustapha El Mourabit, director of the Al Jazeera Center for Studies.

One of the most discussed sessions of the conference was a presentation by Denis Alexander on the relationship between theology and the theory of

evolution, an increasingly sensitive subject in the Muslim world. “Although evolution itself cannot be used to support any particular ideological position,” he said, “believers since the time of Darwin have realized that the theory can be accommodated quite easily within a theistic worldview.” Darwin’s ideas, Alexander suggested, are “entirely consistent with a Creator God who has intentions and purposes for the world that He has brought into being.” The speech was translated into Arabic and posted on the Al Jazeera website. Another session outlined the many scientific objections to creationism and intelligent design as alternatives to evolutionary theory.

The conference concluded by issuing the “Doha Declaration,” which proclaims that “the so-called ‘warfare between science and religion’ is unnecessary and destructive—to religion, to science, and to the future of our species and our planet.” Dr. Charles L. Harper, Jr., Senior Executive Vice President of the Templeton Foundation, hailed the meeting for its “attractive vision of modernity” and for “avoiding the familiar fundamentalist dialectics of science versus spiritual vision.”

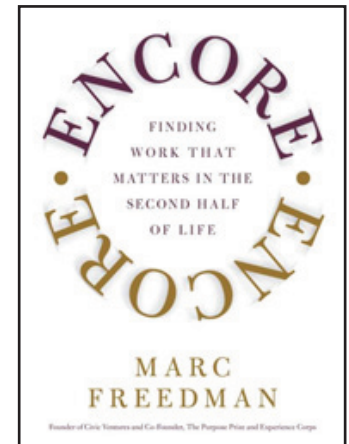
NOTEBOOK

Nicholas Kristof on “Encore Careers”

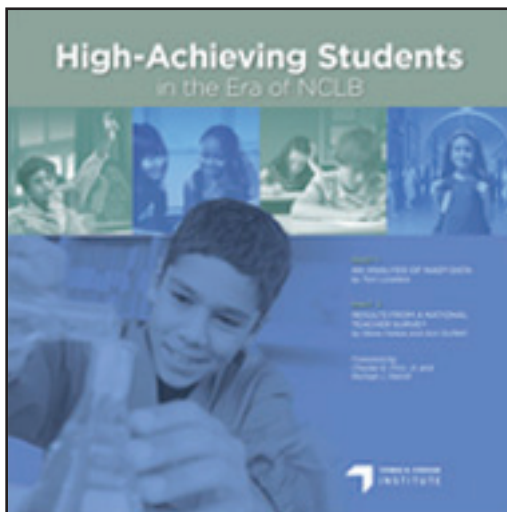
In his *New York Times* column this past Sunday, Nicholas Kristof discussed the growing trend of “encore careers” as an alternative to retirements focused on leisure. Such careers, he noted, typically aim “to provide a dose of personal satisfaction by ‘giving back.’” A recent study found that half of today’s baby boomers want to devote their later years to activities with a “positive social impact.”

Kristof cites in particular the work of JTF grantee Marc Freedman, who coined the term “encore career” and is the leading authority on this trend. As Freedman told him, “adolescence is a relatively modern concept; until the 19th century teenagers normally were treated as adults. In the same way . . . a new life stage is emerging—the period of 10, 20, or even 30 years after one’s main career is completed but before infirmity sets in.”

Freedman is the founder and president of the San Francisco-based Civic Ventures, which sponsors a range of programs to encourage older Americans to commit themselves to civic and social projects. In 2005, with the help of a major grant from the Templeton Foundation, he launched the Purpose Prize, which annually awards \$100,000 to five people over 60 “who are taking on society’s biggest challenges.” He is the author of *Encore: Finding Work that Matters in the Second Half of Life*, which will be published in paperback this September.



High-Achievers & “No Child Left Behind”



No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the landmark education reform law that took effect in 2002, has been associated with a dramatic improvement in the achievement of the lowest-performing American students. But its apparent effect on the nation’s top students has been very different; their scores have stagnated. These are among the key findings of “High-Achieving Students in the Era of NCLB,” a multiyear, five-part investigation conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

The first two phases of the study were released in June. Part I, “An Analysis of NAEP Data,” by Brookings Institution scholar Tom Loveless, examines achievement trends for students who performed at a high level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Part II, “Results from a National Teacher Survey,” by Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett, reports on how teachers see high-

achieving students being treated in the NCLB era. The researchers found that most teachers want all of their students to have challenging material and a fair share of attention. Under NCLB, however, they have felt pressure to focus on their lowest-achieving students.

The reports have received extensive media coverage, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Education Week*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *New York Times*. Chester E. Finn, the president of the Fordham Institute, considers JTF a natural partner for the multiyear study, whose future parts will assess the impact of NCLB on student tracking and Advanced Placement programs. As he and Michael J. Petrilli write in the report’s forward, the Templeton Foundation “had already waded into these waters with their landmark 2004 report, *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students*.” They note that “Templeton insisted, and we happily agreed, to appoint an independent review committee to help steer these studies.”

A Revolution in Foreign Aid

The flow of private money to the developing world, in the form of investment, philanthropy, and remittances, now far exceeds the flow of public money. Today government aid constitutes less than 25 percent of developed countries' economic dealings with poor countries. These are among the more surprising conclusions of the recently released 2008 Index of Global Philanthropy, published by the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Prosperity (CGP) with significant support from the Templeton Foundation.

Now in its third year, the Index details the sources and magnitude of private international giving. This year's report introduces a new feature: a survey of U.S. religious giving to relief and development projects in the developing world. The study, conducted by the University of Notre Dame's Center for the Study of Religion and Society, found that a stunning \$8.8 billion in religious donations passed from the U.S. to the developing world in 2006, as compared to \$23.5 billion in official development assistance.

The structure of philanthropy is changing too. The Index provides multiple examples of how the traditional "donor-to-recipient" model of foreign aid is being supplanted by public-private partnerships. Increasingly, government agencies are leveraging official aid with new private programs run by foundations, corporations, charities, universities, and religious organizations. "New and diverse private players are creating new business models for foreign aid," said Carol Adelman, director of the CGP. "But most importantly . . . poor people are helping themselves through partnerships that are locally owned, transparent, and accountable—with better, more lasting results than government aid has had in the past."

**Please note that the Templeton Report will not be published in the month of August.*



For more information, write to communications@templeton.org.

JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION
SUPPORTING SCIENCE ~ INVESTING IN THE BIG QUESTIONS