

# TEMPLETON REPORT

NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

October 29, 2008

## “Does the free market corrode moral character?”

That is the Big Question posed in the latest of the Templeton Foundation’s advertorials, which has been running this fall in newspapers and magazines in the United States and the UK. The advertorials bring together different combinations of the thirteen distinguished commentators and public figures who have written essays responding to the question. Contributors include former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, the Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Vanguard founder John Bogle, the author and former Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, theologian Michael Novak, the French philosopher and author Bernard-Henri Lévy, former world chess champion Garry Kasparov, and the political theorist Michael Walzer.



Robert B. Reich

**We’d rather  
not know.**

The advertorials began running in late September and will continue through early December. Readers have encountered them in the pages of the *Atlantic*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, the *New Yorker*, the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, *Prospect*, the *London Review of Books*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Republic*, and *Commentary*, as well as online at the *Wall Street Journal*, *Slate*, *National Review*, and the *Huffington Post*. The essays are available in their entirety

at [www.templeton.org/market](http://www.templeton.org/market), where the full texts can be read, printed as PDFs, or requested in a free printed booklet. For the design of the advertorial and booklet, the Foundation was pleased to work again with the famed graphic artist Milton Glaser.



Ayaan Hirsi Ali

**Not at all.**

The project is especially timely in light of the issues raised by the current global financial crisis, but the relationship between markets and morals has long been a primary concern of the Templeton Foundation. “We’re interested in how various economic arrangements contribute not only to wealth creation but to the development of strong personal character,” said Gary Rosen, the Foundation’s

Chief External Affairs Officer. “Though we’re great supporters of free-market principles and enterprise-based solutions to poverty, we recognize that there are many different informed views on these questions, and we’re delighted to convene such a wide-ranging conversation.”

JTF is sponsoring several initiatives to complement the advertorial and the booklet. The Foundation has commissioned BigThink.com to produce videos of many of the contributors discussing their essays and the current economic crisis. The videos, to be released in early November, will be hosted on the Foundation’s website as well as on other sites. On December 3rd in London, the Foundation will host a panel discussion featuring Jagdish Bhagwati, John Gray, and Bernard-Henri Lévy, moderated by the BBC’s Stephanie Flanders, and an event in Washington, D.C. is also being planned.



Bernard-Henri Lévy

**We’d rather  
not know.**

The advertorial is the fourth in a series of “Templeton Conversations” about the Big Questions. The previous questions, which can be found on the Foundation’s website at [www.templeton.org/bigquestions](http://www.templeton.org/bigquestions), asked “Does the universe have a purpose?,” “Will money solve Africa’s development problems?,” and “Does science make belief in God obsolete?”

## NOTEBOOK

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### Emergence and Complexity



**C A M B R I D G E**  
TEMPLETON CONSORTIUM

Researchers from a variety of disciplines—including archeology, astrobiology, chemistry, physics, and computer science—gathered on October 20 at Corpus Christi College at the University of Cambridge to share their research on questions related to the emergence of biological complexity. The one-day symposium marked the end of the three-year, \$3 million Templeton-Cambridge Consortium, an effort to stimulate and sponsor research projects related to the great debate over purpose as it applies to biology, ranging from the biochemical level to the evolution of life to the appearance of society and culture.

Questions addressed at the gathering included: Are biological molecules “fine-tuned” so that the development of advanced nervous systems and consciousness is almost inevitable? Do fundamental physical constants have direct consequences for the chemistry of life? What lessons can rock art and material remains teach us about the development of human self-awareness and the search for meaning? Can experiments using a digital evolutionary model explain why intelligence evolved?

### Religious America, by the Numbers



A majority of Americans who claim to be irreligious actually engage in prayer, and a third of them pray often. Traditionally religious people are much less likely to believe in Bigfoot and UFOs than are professed atheists. And 46 percent of Americans are at least “quite certain” they will get into heaven. These are just a few of the findings that have been culled from the latest Baylor Religion Survey, the most extensive and sensitive study ever conducted of American religion and spirituality. With the support of the Templeton Foundation, the Gallup Organization (on behalf of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion) surveyed 1,648 adults in the fall of 2007 about their attitudes toward a variety of religious questions.

Released in September, this second wave of data from the multi-year project has been published and analyzed in a new book, *What Americans Really Believe*, by the institute’s co-director, the sociologist Rodney Stark. For observers of the American religious scene, some of the survey’s most interesting findings are related to American megachurches. As Stark observes, “None of the things we all believe about the megachurch is true.” For instance, though megachurches with more than 1,000 members are often thought of as deeply impersonal organizations, they are actually more intimate communities than congregations of less than 100 members. It turns out that members of megachurches attend services and Bible study groups more often than their peers in small congregations. They are also more likely to tithe, to engage in volunteer work, and to have religious and mystical experiences.

Researchers will be able to see how these trends play out over time, as new data are gathered every two years. The latest findings of the Baylor Religion Survey have received widespread coverage in the national press, including *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*.

### “The Dark Night of Atheists and Believers”

On September 17, the Templeton Book Forum hosted an event at the Harvard Club in New York featuring Templeton Prize laureate Michael Novak and his new book, *No One Sees God: The Dark Night of Atheists and Believers*. Novak’s book is a reasoned response to today’s “new atheists”—writers like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris—as well as an exploration of the “dark night of unseeing” often experienced by believers themselves.

The book was prompted in part by a lengthy exchange two years ago, in print and online, between Novak and the Manhattan Institute’s Heather Mac Donald, a vocal nonbeliever and a critic of the role of religiosity in American public life. Mac Donald served as the interviewer for the Templeton Book Forum event, and she and Novak had a lively exchange about their philosophical and theological differences.



For more information, write to [communications@templeton.org](mailto:communications@templeton.org).

**JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION**

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