SIR JOHN TEMPLETON

SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL DISCOVERIES

Revised Edition

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This book chronicles the life of a man of extraordinary vision. John Templeton set the pace on Wall Street with an astounding record of mutual fund achievement, and also startled his contemporaries with his keen insights about market forces and his optimism about the growth of the economy. But John Templeton has made the real goal of his life the elaboration of a new concept of spiritual progress. While recognizing and appreciating the great religious insights of the past, he envisions a new era of spiritual discovery that may rival the astounding physical discoveries of the past few centuries brought to us through science.

It was an honor to be asked to write John’s biography, and the revised edition as well. In doing so, I have relied heavily on our twenty-year association. During this time we have written two books together, The God Who Would Be Known and Is God the Only Reality? and I have assisted him in the editing of a number of others. I was also privileged to be a charter member of the John Templeton Foundation board of trustees, along with Sir John, Lady Irene, their son Jack Templeton, and Scottish theologian Thomas Torrance.

In order to work on these biographies over the past several years, I have been fortunate enough to have had relief from some of my administrative duties with the three major Templeton Foundation projects I directed through Gordon College. Professors Jack Haas and Harold Heie have provided tremendous help with the Science and Religion Course Program and Patsy Ames has been indispensable as managing editor of Progress in Theology,
the humility theology newsletter I edited for the Foundation for the past several years. I am also grateful for day-to-day support and wisdom provided by my administrative assistants, Rebecca Keefe and Kathleen Scarpa, my secretary Alyson Lindsay Longacre, and for careful and painstaking editorial assistance from Laura Barrett at Templeton Foundation Press. Above all I am grateful to my wife, Betty, whose critique, encouragement, and word-processing skills have made this book a reality.

Robert L. Herrmann
Sir John Marks Templeton celebrated his eightieth birthday with a great gathering of family and friends on November 29, 1992, at the Union League of Philadelphia. I was privileged to be there and to give the invocation, though I am not a “man of the cloth” but only a biochemist who happens to be a Christian and coauthor with Sir John of two of his many books. Writing the biography of a man with so many accomplishments is a truly daunting task, and whenever I was tempted to forget how enormous the assignment, I just thought back to that joyous night in Philadelphia. The list of attendees would easily pass for a random excerpt from *Who’s Who in America* and *Who’s Who in the World*. The variety of accents emphasized the global nature of Sir John’s relationships: Jewel Templeton, brother Harvey Templeton’s effervescent wife with the delightful twang of the Tennessee mountains; the British Sir Sigmund Sternberg from London; Irish-born Rev. Wilbert Forker, administrator of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion; Mena Griffiths, Sir John’s private secretary of twenty-five years in Nassau, Bahamas; and Wyoming State Senator Gail Zimmerman, spouse of daughter Anne Templeton Zimmerman, to name a few.

Now that he’s over ninety, it is the considered opinion of many of his friends that Sir John remains one of the youngest, most forward-thinking, incisive, and progressive investors of the twentieth century. That may seem an odd description for a man who left the world of stocks and bonds in 1992, selling his $25 billion group of Templeton Funds to Franklin Resources, Inc., but the truth is that Sir John has another investment program under
way, one that he hopes will rival the staggering $10 billion per week the world now invests in scientific research. It is an investment in the spiritual development of human beings. As Sir John expresses it, “The enormous impact of scientific discovery on our physical lives and on our beginnings of an understanding of our place in the universe can show us how to achieve rapid progress in obtaining spiritual information, including information about the Unlimited Creative Spirit, in which we live and move and have our being.” The benefits, he believes, would be staggering. As he said in a lecture at Templeton College, Oxford University, “Unfortunately, too often people focus on the negatives and lose sight of the multitude of blessings that surround us and the limitless potential that exists for the future. The beneficial effects of religion on our attitudes, our motivations, our interactions with people, our goals, and our basic well-being can be of immeasurable value.”

Sir John believes the limitless potential of religion needs to be unlocked. The traditional religions have brought us wonderful and powerful insights and a legacy in sacred art and music, but in recent centuries they have produced little that could be called progress in spiritual information. One solution, he believes, lies in the application of the scientific method, so familiar to us in this age, to the cause of progress in religion. The billions spent on medical research — largely concerned with our physical and mental well-being — have brought us many miraculous cures and greatly increased longevity. Deaths from diseases like tuberculosis, typhoid fever, diphtheria, syphilis, pneumonia, polio, and cholera are now only a tiny fraction of what they were fifty years ago. Infant mortality has dropped sharply and longevity has increased greatly. Indeed, it has been estimated that 65 percent of all the people who ever lived beyond age 65 are alive today.

Furthermore, the impact that scientific research has had on our health shows every promise of intensifying. It is estimated that 50 percent of all that is known in medicine has been discovered in just the last fifteen years and 90 percent since 1900.

By contrast, the traditional religions have been largely backward looking, and the newer mystical religious movements of our day are often supersti-
tious and unscientific. What may be needed, John Templeton says, is a new
dynamic, empirical, scientific approach to investigation of spiritual phe-
nomena carried out by those trained in the scientific approach and aware of
the complexities of scientific interpretation. Furthermore, many of the cur-
current discoveries in fields like physics, cosmology, molecular biology, and
neural science strongly suggest questions of a philosophical and theological
nature, pointing to a great potential in these areas for new spiritual under-
standing and research. The power of science has been awesome, but even
science seems to point beyond itself to a deeper, spiritual meaning.

There is fascination and even a hint of irony in the fact that John Tem-
pleton has made progress in religion the great goal of his life. Even though
he was raised in a home where religion was taken quite seriously, he often
expressed the conviction that his gifts did not lie in the Christian ministry.
Instead, because of a habit of thrift and the appreciation of a good invest-
ment — strong influences from both his parents — he trained in economics
at Yale and law at Oxford and became a part of the then new field of invest-
m ent counseling. Actually, Sir John chose investing in part with the idea
that he might make a financial contribution to progress in Christian min-
istry. And, indeed, that intention has been realized on the grand scale for
the benefit of a large number of church organizations, the most notable
being Princeton Theological Seminary, where he served for many years as
chairman of the board. As head of the financial committee, he helped dou-
ble the school’s endowment. And John Templeton is now claiming new
ground in the field of philanthropy. His approach goes beyond the mere
“do-goodism” of ordinary philanthropy to express a deep sense of stew-
ardship, a commitment to use the rewards of his gift as an investor to pro-
mote the moral and spiritual progress of mankind. What better ministry
could one have?

But we might ask if the goal of progress in religion is really attainable. Sir
John’s answer is to point again at the remarkable progress in so many areas
of our lives. At a lecture in Oxford, he said that we live in a period of pros-
perity never seen before in world history. In America, the gross national
product is thirty times what it was just fifty years ago. The average hourly
wage of a factory worker has increased in real terms by over 65 percent. Today, America has more than 3.5 million families with assets over $1 million and worldwide there are over four hundred billionaires. He went on to say,

If you look further back to when Adam Smith wrote his great book called *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, you will see that 85 percent of the world’s population had to work in agriculture just to produce enough food. Today, less than 4 percent work on farms in America and they produce great surpluses. Dire predictions that farming output would be unable to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding population failed to account for the incredible productivity gains that have occurred. In the last thirty years, improvements in crop varieties, pesticides, and fertilizers have helped *triple* agricultural productivity. This has saved the clearing of forests equal in area roughly to the size of North America, the additional acreage that would have been needed for increased food supply. New methods such as high yield and no-till farming hold promise for continued improvements around the world.

Since the time of Adam Smith’s writing, the yearly production of goods and services has increased *one hundredfold*. In fact, more than half the goods produced in history have been produced just in the last two hundred years. Before Adam Smith, there were fewer than one thousand corporations on earth. Today, corporations are being created at the rate of *two thousand* every business day in the U.S. Underlying this growth is the increasing acceptance of the importance of free trade and enterprise within and among nations. The trend toward greater free market economics accelerated in the early 1980s as the number of privatizations began to outpace nationalizations. Privatizations of state-owned enterprises around the world have soared from less than $10 billion in 1985 to more than $300 billion in 1992 as the failures of socialism have grown increasingly obvious and unbearable.
The trend toward greater capitalism unleashes tremendous potential for efficiency gains and greater wealth potential. So does the shift away from regulation and autarchy toward free trade. In real dollar terms, world exports today are more than eleven times what they were just forty years ago. Numerous institutions have arisen to protect the principles that have fostered this dramatic growth and to spread the preconditions necessary for ongoing free trade throughout the world. Consider this: Just sixty years ago, there was no General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, no Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, no United Nations, no World Bank, no Organization of American States, no International Monetary Fund, no European Economic Community, and no North American Free Trade Agreement.

The new International Monetary Fund revisions also indicate that the world output is in fact growing faster. Standards of living in some of the developing countries are rising 8 percent yearly on average. As income levels rise, so will consumer spending, creating new opportunities not only for local businesses but also for companies in industrialized countries, which will find massive new marketplaces opening up for their products. In India, for example, the middle class is estimated to be equal in size to more than the entire population of the United Kingdom and is growing at a rate of 20 percent a year.

Sir John also reminds us that technologically, we have seen incredible progress. Fiber optics allows for transmission of eight thousand conversations as compared with forty-eight on the old copper wire. In 1940 there were no VCRs, no computers, no photocopiers, no compact discs, no microprocessors, no man-made satellites, no fax machines, no modems, no answering machines, no Internet. More than half the books ever written were written since 1940 and more than twenty-five times as much is now spent on research and development. There are also four times as many scientists and engineers.
More than half the discoveries in natural science have been made since the beginning of the twentieth century. Authors John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, writing in *Megatrends 2000*, told us that the amount of information available is doubling every two-and-a-half years. At that rate, there will be one thousand times as much information available in the next twenty-five years. In 1950, 17 percent of the American population worked in information-related occupations. In 1982 the number had risen to 65 percent. The significance of this continuing information explosion cannot be overemphasized. Sir John says:

Perhaps the most significant implication this information revolution holds for the future stems from its seemingly infinite nature. Our economic prosperity is no longer primarily a function of limited natural resources but is becoming progressively more heavily dependent on the self-perpetuating, limitless body of knowledge. This bodes well for a continuation and acceleration of the underlying trend toward prosperity that has blessed mankind in this century... The more we are able to take advantage of the information explosion around us, the more we are able to liberate our minds from routine tasks and cultivate high degrees of analytical thinking, the greater the prosperity with which we will be rewarded.

Momentous developments in the world economy and in technology lead Sir John to the conviction that we may be poised for a similar revolution in spiritual knowledge. Progress in additional new spiritual information is not only possible, but given these examples of advancement in our physical and intellectual lives, progress is the logical development for our spiritual nature as creatures of the Unlimited Creative Spirit.

The main barrier to our full flowering as spiritual beings, Sir John says, is human egotism. It has been our great sin as God’s creatures to assume far more knowledge than we actually possess. Indeed, our successes in the worlds of economics and technology can easily give rise to a Promethean attitude, in which we are unteachable and self-satisfied. But the scientific
approach, which has made all of this wondrous development possible, has, especially in the past generation, brought us to a place of acute awareness of how infinitesimal we are in the cosmic scheme of things. The end result, John Templeton says, should be a feeling of humility toward the Creator and an eagerness to learn. This awareness, this searching experience directed toward the God of the universe, he has called “humility theology.”

So convinced is Sir John of the necessity for this humility toward God that he has built a major focus of his goal of progress in religion around this idea. He also organized what was originally called the Humility Theology Information Center within the Tennessee-based John Templeton Foundation, first organized in 1987, and brought together a distinguished group of scientists and theologians to form an advisory board. It is to this advisory board that Sir John looks for advice and for participation in programs he is developing to promote progress in religion. Descriptions of some of these programs will form some of the later chapters in this book. They include programs to stimulate the teaching of university courses in science and religion, worldwide lecture programs organized around the concept of humility theology, and prizes for articles on humility theology published in science and religion journals. Another exciting initiative involves high school students in Sir John’s own Franklin County, Tennessee. Essay contests begun there several years ago offer prizes for essays on a student’s own choice of moral or spiritual principles to live by. The Foundation is involved in a large expansion of this program to communities worldwide. Other programs include an in-depth study of spiritual factors in health and a program for medical schools to encourage the teaching of courses integrating medical science and religion.

The forerunner of these many new initiatives by the Foundation was the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, a program John Templeton began with his award to Mother Teresa of Calcutta in 1973. The prize has been awarded every year since then, the amount of the prize being always slightly larger than the various Nobel prizes, to signify Sir John’s feeling that progress in religion is the most important goal of all.

All of these activities are a great source of personal joy and expectation for
John Templeton. One can sense his excitement and pleasure at meetings of the advisory board. He is clearly quite optimistic about these plans and about this group of advisors and staff members, which is not surprising given that optimism has been a hallmark of John Templeton since early childhood. This attitude developed partly because of a remarkable sense of self-assurance, and partly because of a belief that his mother, as a devoted follower of the Unity School of Christianity, had instilled in him very early in his life. She taught him that God wanted our material prosperity and provided for us an inner strength and wisdom, a kind of divine spark, which would enable us to prosper materially as a natural consequence of intelligent planning and spiritual preparation, especially as we seek to help and love everyone.

John Templeton has followed the principle of opening every board meeting of his Global Fund meetings — as well as any other meetings where he was in charge — with prayer, thanking God for multiple blessings and opportunities. I recall one special occasion, in 1984, when my wife and I attended the dedication of Templeton College in Oxford, England. The audience was a prestigious one, and those on the platform included the minister of education of the United Kingdom and the chancellor of Oxford University — complete with his starched Elizabethan collar — and various other school officials and dignitaries. At the end, Sir John made his address, dedicating the college to the memory of his parents and then concluding with an expression of deep thankfulness to God for the many blessings that had been poured out upon everyone attending, but especially for the blessing of his own parents and his associates in the development of the college. I recall the look of surprise on the faces of many of the academics as God was acknowledged, and I was proud that John had shown appreciation for the true source of Templeton College or any other institution put together with human hands but ultimately an expression of the Creator’s love and generosity.

For John Templeton, optimism and gratitude go hand in hand. During an interview on the Canadian television program Cross Currents, he said of his philanthropy that he did not inherit his wealth, but that at the time of his marriage to Judith Folk, they began a pattern of saving in which they
pledged half of their income to the church and investment. This led to a
game of bargain hunting, budget control, and careful investment, which
provided the foundation for his wealth. Coupled with this lifestyle of thrift
and saving was a desire instilled in him from early childhood to help others,
and he suggested that this willingness to be helpful and useful was actually
a source of optimism, just as optimism was a basis for being helpful and use-
ful. As he said, “The two go hand in hand.” And then he added some
thoughts about gratitude:

Thanksgiving and gratitude will revolutionize your life. If you
wake up every day and think of five new things that you are over-
whelmingly grateful for, your day will go better, people will like
you better, you’ll be more successful. Try it! A girl said to me once,
“I can’t think of anything to be grateful for.” So I said, “Just stop
breathing for three minutes and you’ll be very thankful you can
breathe again.”

Optimism and thankfulness have certainly characterized John Temple-
ton’s career, but they have always been accompanied by serious attention to
in-depth study and thorough preparation. “Is it cost-effective?” is one of
his favorite responses.

As we look to his many new investment programs for the encouragement
of spiritual progress, we recall the stupendous results of his careful prepa-
ration and persevering optimism in the past. Those of us working with him
in these new endeavors are learning the lessons that have been so productive
for him throughout the past years. After all, who can question the effec-
tiveness of the Templeton Growth Fund? An investment of $10,000 in the
fund in November of 1954 was worth $3 million forty-three years later if
dividends were reinvested. And, as Sir John points out, that was a gain in
material benefits. Who can estimate the gain on an investment in the largely
untapped spiritual potential of mankind? John Templeton believes it could
dwarf even that global fund in its fruitfulness.

As a revised edition of Sir John Templeton: Supporting Scientific Research for
Spiritual Discoveries is published, Sir John has celebrated his ninety-first
birthday and is still going strong. He’s had a few medical problems to cope with, the most notable being heart-valve surgery, but he still walks on his home veranda overlooking tropical gardens or in shoulder-deep water at the beach at Lyford Cay. And he’s still at his desk every day, making the final decisions for the growing Templeton Foundation programs.

Likewise, his writing continues, with some half-dozen new books reflecting even sharper insights and enhanced breadth. His *Possibilities for Over One Hundredfold More Spiritual Information: The Humble Approach in Theology and Science* emphasizes Sir John’s commitment to a major scientific effort to obtain solid empirical data about spiritual realities, particularly about, as he says, “those realities, neglected basic invisible realities such as love, purpose, creativity, intellect, thanksgiving, prayer, humility, praise, thrift, compassion, invention, truthfulness, giving, and worship.”

His expansive thinking is further reflected in *Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways toward Heaven on Earth,* and in a searching volume *Why Are We Created? Increasing Our Understanding of Humanity’s Purpose on Earth,* written with Rebekah Dunlap.

In discussing his view of creativity, however, he is eager to reach beyond the human component and emphasize the much wider dimensions of the divine plan. He points out that thinking about this omniscient Creator raises numerous questions. He asks,

Is our human consciousness only a tiny manifestation of a vast creative consciousness that is often referred to by a variety of names such as God, Allah, Spirit, Yahweh, Brahman, or the Creator? Has our human concept of this creative source been too small? Is our concept too centered on our human species? What is our relationship with this infinite divinity? Toward what ultimate purpose do we aspire? What evidences indicate that the invisible can be realized through ongoing creativity, change, and innovation? How can we learn to encourage progress and discovery in ways that tap the deep symphonies of divine creativity and involve us in God’s purposes?