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WHO AM I? Why am I here on planet Earth? What does the future hold? How can I set out on my own into a world that sometimes seems filled with conflict and strife? How can I get along better with the people in my life? How do I cope with day-to-day pressures? How can I be successful in my work? How do I find peace in the midst of turmoil? How can my life be useful and happy?

These are questions often asked by many people today. Do you want to be a constructive participant in building “heaven on earth”? Well, we can help create a more meaningful and fruitful world—by our thoughts, feelings, consciousness, and actions. In addition, we can reflect that inner realization of unlimited love, compassion, kindness, honesty, integrity, strength, and a sense of our purpose in life to every person and situation in our area of experience. Fortunately, there are positive responses and definite and helpful guidance that can enrich the life of every individual who is sincerely seeking to learn. And many people have a deep, inner desire to live life in a manner that can bring body, mind, and spirit into a harmonious alignment with everyday experiences.

Evidences are increasing that “There’s more to why you’re here than what you presently know!” Your search for that “something more” can be a sacred adventure into new insights, provocative choices, unexpected turning points, an enthusiasm to enter the unknown. Daily living can become more joyful, successful, and useful. Our spiritual lessons are often the myriad life situations that come our way, especially the ones we may not immediately comprehend. These are times when knowing, understanding, and practicing the laws of life can be of important assistance in helping a person to be happy and to contribute to life in effective ways.

These laws are simply a “set of rules” by which we can guide the way we live. They are found in a vast array of sources, such as: the major religions of the world; various schools of philosophical thought, both ancient and modern; storytellers from all nations; scientists; and historians, to name a few. There seem to be literally hundreds of such laws, and most families and religions seek to teach the laws they were taught. Some laws are so clear that most people can agree that they are true. For example, honesty and truthfulness rank high as values in cultures and societies around the world.

Followers of the ancient Chinese sage Lao Tzu understood spiritual law as the Tao Teh Ching. The simplest interpretation of the Tao, or spiritual law, is: “This is how things work.” One way to comprehend this law is to realize that it expresses the relationship between a person’s mind and the thoughts and ideas of the mind, a person’s emotions and how they are expressed, and the physical activities that give expression to those thoughts, feelings, and ideas. A definite relationship exists between the invisible thoughts and feelings of our mind and heart and the visible actions we take because of them.

Finding effective words to speak of universal spiritual truths may be somewhat difficult. How do we express the unconditional, the ultimate, the source, the inconceivable within which all things are created? God, Buddha, Allah, Brahma,
Muhammad, Wakantanka, the Divine, the Creator? The words and the understanding of the words may vary in different spiritual traditions and, in some instances, may not be simply interchanged. Yet, cannot the universal language of unlimited love perceive the basic goodness that is the essence of every living being?

The world operates on spiritual principles just as it operates on the laws of physics and gravity. It is up to us as individuals to learn what these laws or principles are, and then choose to live by them. Let’s look at understanding this idea more clearly.

You might ask, “What is a spiritual law?” We may answer that it is a timeless law or principle and, being of spirit, is not visible. However, spiritual law is quite real. Spiritual law is not shaped or determined by any person’s current opinion or whim. Spiritual laws are impartial in that they apply equally to everyone, everywhere throughout our world. They work without prejudices or bias at all times and in all places. These laws are self-enforcing and are not dependent on human authority or commandments.

Our stay on this small planet called Earth is a brief one and we have an excellent opportunity to leave the world a better place than we found it through our choice of how we live our life. One way to accomplish lasting improvement is to master the laws of life.

We often create our own realities by the choices we make in perceiving and interacting with the world around us. Certainly, many of these choices may be made unconsciously through conditioned responses. Yet, we are the only ones who can choose to move in a different direction. How can we grow through various inputs of knowledge to become wise by working through the ways of wisdom? As we begin to work with the laws of life where we are, in the situations in which we find ourselves, to ask for understanding, to try to be loving in our thoughts, in our words, and in our actions, we can find our understanding increasing. It becomes easier for us to look beyond the appearances of a situation to the heart of the situation to the heart of another person.

While we are attending school, whether it is grade school, high school, public school, private school, college, graduate school, or the school of life, we can have a wonderful time. We can take pleasure in learning, in improving our minds, and in preparing ourselves for a useful future. On the other hand, we can be discontented and complain and cause ourselves and others around us to be uncomfortable. It is up to us. The physical world with its work, duties, laws, opportunities, obligations, relationships, and responsibilities is a school for our spiritual being. It is the place where we come for an education. Ask yourself these questions: What kind of student am I? Do I learn my lessons well? Do I apply myself to “homework” such as prayer or meditation or expressions of gratitude? Am I working at keeping my relationships with other people happy and harmonious? Do I fulfill whatever duties may be mine to do effectively and with a spirit of humility? Do I take advantage of opportunities to be a responsible person?

When we deny our personal responsibilities and attribute to external causes the limits we may place on ourselves, we can make the process of learning more difficult. Perhaps one of humanity’s greatest challenges is to acknowledge our individual responsibility for our lives. Growth is often synonymous with accepting responsibility—perhaps a bit at a time—as we become more able to handle situations. Each individual can be sincerely accountable for performing with honesty and integrity and in a sound, prompt, and conscience manner.

One of my favorite poets—first read in high school—is Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. I particularly like the poem “A Psalm of Life.” In these verses, we can learn what the young man said to the Psalmist as he moved through his process of “growing in wisdom.”
Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!—
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not the goal:
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Finds us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world’s broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, how’er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o’erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.

Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

The truth of this poem can be demonstrated if we look to the lives of some of the famous people as well as the unsung heroes of the past and present. Here we can find many models for useful, happy living. Moreover, when we examine their words and deeds, we can often discover the principles that inspired and sustained their benefits to present and future generations. It is my belief that the basic laws or principles for leading a “sublime life,” to paraphrase Longfellow, can be examined and tested just as science examines and tests natural laws of the universe.

Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways toward Heaven on Earth is designed to offer people of all ages and all nations an opportunity to learn a little more about the spiritual laws, principles, and teachings of a variety of great spiritual practices. I hope that in this book we can offer a Scripture verse or story or parable or discipline or quote that may show you the world in a way more helpful than you have seen it before. The materials presented in this book can provide an opportunity for learning and “growing in wisdom.”

There are clear scriptural and philosophical bases for advocating the need for an inquiring and open mind. For example, according to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one who asks, receives, and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened” (Luke 11:9-10). Can the value in learning to see a different world lie not in replacing the one you have, but in providing a basis for an opportunity to see from a different, or larger, perspective? Can the timeless universal principles of life that transcend modern times or particular cultures help people in all parts of the world live happier and more useful lives?

Growing in Wisdom

What is “wisdom”? Webster’s Dictionary defines “wisdom” as “the quality of being wise . . . [it] implies the ability to judge and deal with persons,
situations, etc. rightly, based on a broad range of knowledge, experience, and understanding.” In
other words, a wise person may be one who has the ability to look for the deeper, inner meaning of things. There is a definite difference between acquiring knowledge and information and possessing wisdom. A person may acquire knowledge and meaningful information from attending a university, through travels, through relationships, through books that are read and studied, and through a variety of activities in which one may participate. But is the person also gaining wisdom?

How happy are you in your life right now? How are you working with the “tools” you presently have? For example, how do you perceive the people and situations around you? Is your outlook positive? Are you open and receptive to the ideas of others? Are you willing to make progressive changes? Do you take time to come apart from daily activities, even for a few minutes, and be still and listen to your thoughts and feelings? Are you a seeker—after greater understanding and wisdom?

Wisdom, as a personal quality, can be a mental and behavioral activity that can require a depth of understanding, such as perception—or how you “see” or perceive what is happening around you. Wisdom can also be a quality of everyday behavior—or how you conduct your daily life. Can emotions also constitute a substantial component of a capacity for practical wisdom? Perhaps, if we consider that through our emotions we track what is meaningful to us and communicate to others what we morally care about.

Achieving wisdom is a journey that can emphasize learning how to be observant about life, to be open and receptive to situations around you, to ask questions, to have patience, to be willing to learn, and to be humble. In the process of this journey, there are opportunities to learn through studying the laws of life, the world’s religions, and the lessons they offer.

Evidence indicates that the rate of spiritual development is accelerating. Throughout the two hundred thousand years of our history as a species, there have been periods of gradual growth followed by rapid development in the physical and intellectual periods. Now, a new vision of our place and our purpose in the cosmos is unfolding. Possibly, we may be setting the stage for a giant leap forward in our spiritual understanding.

Many of these recent discoveries in fields such as physics, cosmology, neural science, and evolutionary biology have been so phenomenal that they have changed the way we think about ourselves and our place in the universe. Certainly, through these discoveries, many scientists have been brought to a state of wonderment and humility and serious consideration to basic philosophical and theological questions.

The two hundred laws of life that were chosen from many religions for this book can be important and helpful as well as possible to apply in your life. Each law is presented in an essay format, with applications, opinions, stories, examples, Scripture verses, and quotations offered to examine the validity of the law. Each quotation that titles an essay points to a particular law that holds true for most people worldwide under most circumstances. The material is designed to inspire as well as to encourage you, to help you consider more deeply the laws you personally live by; and to reap the rewards of their practical application.

The laws herein may be used as effective, practical, and workable tools. When you apply them consistently, you can draw forth the power to transform your life into a more deeply useful and joyful experience. Even if your life is already working well, it is possible that it can work even better as you incorporate more of the wisdom from the great religions contained in these pages. If I had found a book of two hundred basic laws of life during my educational years, I could have been far more productive then as well as in the years that have followed.

Although *Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways toward Heaven on Earth* may be read like any other inspirational book, its organization follows that of an academic study program. The laws are arranged
into the forty weeks of a typical school year. Alongside each essay, you will find wisdom quotes pertaining to the topic. At the end of each week are highlights from the material presented in the essays, guideline exercises for “Living the Various Spiritual Laws,” and space to note the personal ideas and examples you may perceive for working with the law. At the conclusion of the recommended study process, you will have read and become familiar with the meanings of the two hundred laws of life contained in this book. The book’s format can provide useful guidance and a meaningful study program for individuals, families, study groups, business and professional organizations, schools, and colleges.

**Ways You Can Use This Book**

Let’s look for a moment at some possible ways you may benefit from the laws by applying them to various activities in your life.

✦ An informal discussion group could be formed with friends, family, or a school, church, or social group. People often benefit by coming together with others to study useful topics of mutual interest. If this approach is chosen, you might select a single essay, read it aloud as a group, then spend an hour or so discussing the key ideas. This kind of participation often develops trust and allows the group members to deepen their relationship to the concepts presented and to each other by sharing personal experiences as you apply the laws to your life. In addition to exploring a variety of points of view on the verification, importance, and meaning of the laws of life, support and encouragement for individual members of the group may be provided as different ones begin to make improvements in their lives and attitudes.

✦ Another approach is to ponder some of the spiritual laws individually and privately. Set aside a block of time when you are unlikely to be disturbed. As you relax and allow your thoughts and feelings to become peaceful and settled, think about something that may be paramount at the present moment in your life. This could be a tough decision of some kind you may be making, a situation or circumstance that could be troubling you, a time for giving thanks for your blessings, or you may simply be open and receptive for guidance. Choose your focus and formulate a question. Scan the listing of essays in the table of contents until a particular one catches your attention. Then, open the book to that particular essay and listen, with inner perception and prayer, to the message that may help to bring insight into your life.

✦ Individually or in the group context, you might select and study all of the essays relative to a particular theme. For example, you may choose “humility” and concentrate intensively upon that particular subject. Or, choose “love,” “peace,” “values,” “gratitude,” “giving,” etc. Then, discuss various ways of demonstrating this law.

✦ Another idea is to keep a spiritual journal in which you record your responses to what you have read and to what is happening in your life. In fact, keeping a journal is highly recommended, because activities will be offered in the “Spotlights” and “Living the Various Spiritual Laws” sections which can serve as a bridge to take you from the teachings of the essays to their adventures in your everyday life. Writing encourages you to focus your thoughts and, more precisely, to identify your feelings. They—your thoughts and feelings—are a vitally important part of your life. The more clarity and understanding you have in these areas, the richer your experiences will be.

✦ Make a list of questions that may come to mind as you read the essays. Asking questions can be a most rewarding avenue toward finding answers! Make a note of “first responses” that come to
mind as the questions are asked. Plan further research into the theme of your questions and note this information in your journal.

You can probably find other ways to use this wisdom of the ages. Indeed, we would welcome and encourage the submission of ideas and evidence for verification of any law that supports, illustrates, or disproves any of the two hundred laws of life in this book. Can you also help discover other spiritual laws in different countries that are not in conflict with any Scripture or prophet? The reward of this book for the author is the joy of receiving letters from readers about how the book may have helped them learn the joy of becoming helpers in the acceleration of divine creativity. Your communications may be sent to:

John Templeton Foundation (WWR)
5 Radnor Corporate Center, Suite 100
100 Matsonford Road
Radnor, PA 19087

Several years ago, I began offering support for a Laws of Life Essay Contest in my boyhood home of Franklin County, Tennessee, in the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Handly Templeton assist in operating the program. Prizes for the essays—averaging one hundred to fifteen hundred words—are awarded semi-annually, with a first prize of $2,000, a second prize of $800, and a number of runner-up prizes. The response has been gratifying. The number of entries continues to increase. It would be heartwarming to learn that your locality would like to embark on its own version of the Franklin County program. The John Templeton Foundation can provide information on the various essay contest methods that have become beneficial for teenagers in more than one hundred localities of several nations.

The limitless potentials of wisdom from world religions can be so powerful when shared. Can you perceive what an effective investment in the spiritual development of human beings this could be? Let’s make a loving commitment to share the benefits of our increasing spiritual awareness with others, because sharing our most prized possessions can be the highest form of “Love thy neighbor.” Let’s study enthusiastically the glorious highlights of the world’s spiritual teachings, and with a spirit of humility recognize that no one will ever comprehend all that God is. Let’s permit and encourage each prophet to proclaim the best of truth as it is revealed to him or her. There is no conflict unless the restrictive idea of exclusiveness enters in.

This book can be read, considered, absorbed, and practiced until it begins to clarify and enhance your personal interpretation of these laws of life and wisdom from around the world. The purpose of this book is not to make a profit, but rather to help humanity. Therefore, the U.S. publisher can make available copies of Wisdom from World Religions: Pathways toward Heaven on Earth in lots of one hundred or more at a greatly reduced price. Also, publishers in other languages are encouraged to send proposals to publish this volume. Please contact tfp@templeton.org for further information.

It is my desire that this book may encourage some of you to begin, or to continue, the exploration into a deeper understanding of the ways of God with all His creatures in the long history of this cosmos. Be loving and gentle with yourself and let your heart, mind, and spirit guide you in a fulfilling experience in your search for expanding truth.

God loves you and so do I.

—John Marks Templeton
IN APPRECIATION

The publishing of this book is accomplished with reverence and appreciation for the world religions that purify a person’s mind and heart, elevate his emotions, and offer guidance for a spiritual way of life. Much of the material contained herein has been made possible by the sincere light of the prophets, teachers, and traditions of the world’s great religions that, through the ages, have expressed sacred insights and wisdom to humanity.

I must also credit that ordering principle—the cosmic creative intelligence, the pulse of evolution within the universe—that manifests itself to us as synchronicity. In many conversations and readings, I often find the same ideas and insights expressed through different minds around the planet.

Also, without the help of many individuals, employees, colleagues in business and charities, and family members who shared their ideas and wisdom with me, this book would not have been possible. To each of you I extend my thanks.
Wisdom from World Religions
The mind is everything; what you think, you become.
—Buddha

By the mind one is bound, by the mind one is freed . . . He who asserts with strong conviction, “I am not bound, I am free,” becomes free.
—Ramakrishna

Law I

When you rule your mind, you rule your world. —Bill Provost

Are you aware that there is presently within you a tremendous energy available to be harnessed and utilized to guide you into the joys of more satisfying and successful living? Do you also realize this same energy can assist you in living a life filled with meaningful contributions to your personal world, your family, and your community? This easily accessible and usable energy is often referred to as “the power of the mind,” or “the law of mind action.” And it works for both male and female genders, in all areas of a person’s life, and in all the nations and countries of the world.

Some of the elements of the power of the mind may be familiar to you: desire, vision, imagination, intent, belief, positive or negative thinking, to name a few. Everyone uses these elements of mind frequently throughout the day. But many people may not realize the important contribution these aspects of the mind make toward defining the character and personality of an individual. So, understanding the quote, “When you rule your mind, you rule your world,” can provide powerful insight into some of the ways you function as an individual. Let’s take a look at how it works.

In his book, The Revealing Word, Charles Fillmore describes our mind in the following manner: “The mind is the seat of perception of the things we see, hear, and feel. It is through the mind that we see the beauties of the earth and sky, of music, of art, in fact, of everything. That silent shuttle of thought working in and out through cell and nerve weaves into one harmonious whole the myriad moods of mind, and we call it life.”

Within the mind of every individual abides the starting point of a person’s thoughts, spoken words, actions, and even one’s feelings. What you think about the Creator of all, yourself, your family, your neighbors, your acquaintances, your work associates, or others makes a great deal of difference in your daily life. In fact, every aspect of your life can be affected by the way you think! As Joseph Addison once said, “One of the most difficult things for a powerful mind is to be its own master!”

Throughout the period of one day, a person may fluctuate between confidence and uncertainty, decision and indecision, peaceful calmness and frustration, or being happy or sad. Your life may appear to be governed by people, events, and circumstances. But is this observation correct? It is important to be aware of the situations and circumstances around you. It is also important and helpful to possess certain qualities in life: sincerity of purpose, dedication to ideals, commitment to integrity, and a continual thirst for knowledge.

Your true anchorage is not in things temporary, but in things eternal; not in things of the outer world, but in the sacred inner awareness and truth.
The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude of mind.
—William James

In the fields of observation chance favors only the prepared mind.
—Louis Pasteur

I am afoot with my vision.
—Walt Whitman

All that is comes from the mind; it is based on the mind, it is fashioned by the mind.
—The Dhammapada

productive. Thinking is also the movement of ideas within your mind, or your intellect in action. From these ideas, mental images or pictures are formed in your mind, based on your acquired understanding. These images may then be brought forth as desires and actions.

The thinking process is a creative force that is constantly at work in humanity. A mental atmosphere is produced by the kind of thoughts you think, and this energy draws unto itself thoughts and ideas that are like its own nature. Energy from your thoughts flows forth through time and space to touch others, like a ripple in a pond, affecting all it touches.

As you become more aware of the truth that “thoughts are things” and that thoughts are equally as important as actions, you may take a giant step forward toward becoming the master of your thoughts. In other words, you become aware of your thinking process and begin to focus on thoughts that are positive and productive. The way you think paves the way for how you respond to daily situations and thereby profoundly influences your world.

When you understand the universal law of cause and effect—what you give forth, so you get back—you receive and develop positive, workable, affirmative truths that are useful and beneficial in your daily life. The law of cause and effect, often referred to as “the balance wheel of the universe,” is closely aligned with the law of mind action. In a sense, we live in two worlds: the world of cause (the within) and the world of effect (the without).

**Law 2**

*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*—Proverbs 29:18

AN ANCIENT PROVERB tells us: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” This is one way of saying that it is important to have a dream, a goal, a particular focus, or a vision of what is desired in order to live life fully and fruitfully. When we have no goal, or when our vision of the goal is obscured, we may lose our sense of purpose and direction. Even when we’ve prepared ourselves well and have an aptitude for a given activity, poorly directed efforts can rob us of the vital energy necessary for achievement. Establishing goals, along with establishing guidelines on how
Concerning perfect blessedness which consists in a vision of God.
—St. Thomas Aquinas

Man should strive to become a superior man.
—Confucius

He sees indeed who sees in all alike the living, lordly soul, supreme, imperishable amid the perishing.
—Hinduism

to achieve them, can keep us focused and energized and often make our lives more interesting, useful, and successful.

Occasionally, there may be little difference between where a person presently is in life and where he would like to be. Often, the moment we add an additional purpose to what we presently have, an opportunity is presented to move toward our goal. As little as a 10 percent increase in energy or commitment can make a difference. However, the real accomplishment lies in the fact that a person becomes inspired to do better and refuses to accept complacency. Unless we create specific goals that match our purposes in life, and unless we keep a clear vision of these goals, we may eventually falter and fail.

Sometimes, particular aspects of life may seem to be routine, and a certain amount of routine can help to keep the momentum going. However, inspiration often comes to those who work toward a definite goal. There is always room for improvement. Can you visualize how you can put your inspiration to work through the power of your thoughts? Your intellect is both a product and a producer of creativity. This strength is already within you and can be stimulated by a desire to achieve beneficial goals.

One of the quickest and most thorough ways to increase your vision and to unfold spiritually is to be of as much help as possible to others. “An idle life is a wasted life.” How can this statement be true for you?

A story is told of a Christian monk who earnestly prayed that a vision of Jesus Christ might be revealed to him. After praying for many hours, the monk heard a voice telling him the vision would occur the next morning at daybreak. Before the first rays of dawn appeared the following morning, the monk was on his knees at the altar.

A fierce storm was brewing, but the monk paid it no heed. He watched and prayed and waited for the vision. As the storm broke in great fury, a soft knock came at the door. Interrupted in his devotions, the monk turned away from the altar to open the door. He knew some poor wayfarer was seeking shelter from the raging storm. As he turned toward the door, he caught a glimpse of the vision for which he had prayed.

Torn between his desire to stay and experience the vision—one that he felt would last but for a moment—and his desire to help a brother in distress, the monk quickly decided that duty must come first. Upon opening the door, he gazed into the bright blue eyes of a small child who had apparently lost her way. She was tired, shivering from the cold, and hungry.

The monk gently reached out his hand and led the child into the warm room. He placed a bowl of milk and some fresh bread before her and did everything he could think of to make her comfortable. Warm, fed, and comfortable, the child fell asleep in a chair.

Then, with a heavy heart, he turned back toward his altar, fearing that the vision had vanished. To his joy and surprise, it was there—clear and bright and shining with radiant glory! As the monk gazed rapturously upon the precious vision for a long time, he heard a voice gently speak: “If thou had not attended to my little one, I could not have stayed.”

It has been said that life is but a day. Can we reverse this statement and affirm with a greater awareness that every day is a life? When you awaken each morning, will you resolve that your day be filled with faithful purpose, a high vision, loving service, and gentle growth? It can happen! Then, as the day progresses, throw a glance backward and observe how well you have kept the morning’s resolution.
Write down on paper your goal in life. With that down in black and white, we can get somewhere. Few can define their goal, much less write. You cannot find happiness until your goal is clear and in view. —Ross Byron

The present moment is the action moment. You may have heard the following statement many times: “Do not put off until tomorrow what you can accomplish today.” Let your interest and focus be in the now moment, the action moment. Where there is interest, there can be activity, vision, and transformation. How beautifully the Apostle Paul said this when he declared: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Will you accept the challenge and the change—and transform yourself? The earnest person is one who is completely dedicated to his or her chosen purposes. There is simplicity in what we seek to do when we dedicate ourselves to the doing. At this moment, accept only the vision that uplifts, but do not reject what you may not understand. In a definite change of attitude, embrace all things that are part of you. Then, release—release all and everything.

Become still and know. Know that order, divine order, can be the high vision expressing itself through an expanded conscious awareness of you, your world, and your purpose and place in it.

Law 3

Why were you created? —John Marks Templeton

Doesn’t it seem logical that if we really know something, we can walk forward with a higher level of confidence, greater assurance, and increased capacity to achieve our goals in life? Have we not all, at some point in our lives, been caught up in wonder and perhaps, searching for a resolution to a particular situation, asked the questions, “Why am I here? … What is life really all about? … Why was I created as this particular individual?”

You may have heard the expression that mankind came into the world to bring forth his God-likeness, to express his own true nature, to unfold his glorious divine blueprint, or as divinity’s ideal creation of the productive person. Certainly this can be “food for thought.” And Scripture tells us: “I say, You are gods; children of the Most High, all of you” (Psalms 82:6).

When we live as earth-plane beings, with only our human faculties to draw upon, we present to the world and to each other a human self-hood: human qualities and human awareness. This human self can be limited, finite, and consisting mostly of what we have learned through education, personal experiences, environment, and other exterior influences. Hidden behind this personal self, however, abides the reality of our being. We are more than the physical and mental person. We have a spiritual identity and the physical is included within the spiritual.

Could our relation to the Creator be like that of the sunbeam to the sun? Nothing can separate the sun from one of its rays. Made of the sun’s substance, partaking of its nature, each sunbeam has a particular mission, a certain spot of the earth to caress and warm and light. Like the sunbeam, we, too, have our own special spot to fill. We have our own special work to do. Thus, we are a part of the divine plan and necessary to the perfect whole.

Think about this idea. Can you imagine anything more meaningful or more powerful than realizing our true heritage, and then stepping forward to attain it? What does it mean to be a “child of God”? And to what are we heirs? One response
It is ignorance that causes us to identify ourselves with the body, the ego, the senses, or anything that is not the Atman. He is a wise man who overcomes this ignorance by devotion to the Atman.

—Shankara, Viveka-Chudamani (The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom)

My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself.

—St. Catherine of Genoa

could be that to be an heir of God means we, as his children, share abundantly in the infinite purpose of our Creator.

Humanity’s fascination with a spiritual dimension, a hidden sphere of power, an underlying ordering principle that lies unseen behind everyday events as well as behind gigantic happenings, has grown and taken on new importance.

Science is constantly unveiling more of the fundamental structure of matter. Yet, each new discovery and explanation lures us on to ever deeper and expanding research. The penetration of each mystery opens more profound situations that challenge our intellectual capacity. As we follow the path of investigation, like an explorer climbing a rugged mountain, new vistas of knowledge unfold. As each mountain peak is crested, another peak, loftier still, appears on the horizon.

The more we know about the universe and our place in it, the more we realize how little we know. So in our ongoing search, we often look to the spiritual teachings of the world religions to provide assistance in helping us understand more of who and what we are here.

Our souls long for God—by whatever name we call the Creator of all there is. We long to know God in magnificent expressions of love, life, power, peace, beauty, compassion, companionship, and more. However, in many instances, we may interpret this longing for God as a desire for things, and things in themselves can never bring satisfaction. Satisfaction comes when we gain a clear, vivid consciousness of the indwelling presence of the Creator.

We are told in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” Can it be that the soul is longing for something that is hidden within itself? Are we already imbued with the divine power to achieve the goals we desire? Is our life an adventure to realize our divinity? Could this be the reason we were created? Does the urge to live creatively come from the urge of the divine imagination that pushes itself out through us into self-expression? Is it possible that the true reality of each of us is the spirit that is the great light of our being? Are we in embodiment to work out our destiny?

We live, knowingly or unknowingly, under the laws of life. These laws or spiritual principles reflect the energy of the Creator moving through each person, prompting us to bring forth the highest from within. Thus, as God works, we work.

As we stay poised and balanced, doing our best every day, we can make wonderful progress toward noble goals. If we utilize the understanding that under all circumstances it is meaningful to be compassionate, kind, honest, loving, and generous with those we meet on life’s journey, then life becomes a joyful experience. If we continue doing our best work and thinking our best thoughts every day, we gradually wear away concern over problems. We learn how to meet new situations, and this awareness can help us take correct and beneficial action.

We can scatter the clouds that obscure the light so our way forward becomes clear. Channels open for greater fruitfulness. The divine idea for our life is fantastic and is so much greater that we can imagine. Divinity’s plan for us is so great that we glimpse it only occasionally, but those glimpses are the light that leads us through the seeming darkness.

When the great poet Tagore was working

Our Birth is but a sleep; and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness, and not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

—William Wordsworth

When the great poet Tagore was working...
among the poor in India, he experienced what he thought was an overpowering vision of God. He was so deeply moved by this vision that he made immediate plans to leave the city and retire in the mountains of the high Himalayas. He felt that he needed a period of solitude in which to reflect on the vision and to try to understand it more deeply. But as he walked out of the gates of the teeming city to go up into the uninhabited mountains, he looked at his people, and the vision left him. Tagore remained in the city—*with* his people.

Often the opportunity to be of service is right where the vision occurs! Insights can come quickly and easily when we commit ourselves to the action of the spirit, when we have committed ourselves to the awakening of our soul faculties. The spiritual life has its foundation in the realization that “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). With this awareness, we can take strong strides in understanding ourselves and why we were created.

**Law 4**

*Infinite in all directions.* —Freeman Dyson

Humanity has often allowed itself to think in terms of limitations, boundaries, and restrictions. Fences surround our properties, traffic signals and speed limits slow us down, lines on a map and differing cultures separate states and countries, and religious beliefs can cause separations and misunderstandings between individuals. However, obstacles or limitations are relative and can be surmounted as humanity progresses.

For example, the edge of the world was pushed back and finally eliminated by courageous explorers who dared to venture into the “unknown.” Astronomers pushed back the earlier belief in a dome-shaped firmament covering the world and gave us knowledge of galaxies millions of light-years away. Present-day physicians assure us that a life span over one hundred years is conceivable. In fact, one-hundredth birthday celebrations are doubling every ten years! Athletic records are being surpassed so rapidly that one wonders if there are any limits left!

It may be difficult for us to imagine the small quantity of knowledge and the limited concept of the cosmos that was prevalent when the Scriptures of the major religions were written. This thought raises a question: Do our wonderful Scriptures need to be supplemented by further information about the universe and humanity?

Teilhard de Chardin called for a new theology that would incorporate the modern scientific discoveries of the “immensity of space, which imbues our accustomed way of looking at things with a strain of Universalism,” and the progressive “duration of time which . . . introduces . . . the idea of a possible unlimited Progress [futurism].” Because of these two concepts, universalism and futurism, de Chardin believed we now possess a higher and more organic understanding of the cosmos, which could serve as a basis for new spiritual information.

*Life is consciousness!* When our consciousness is
focused on lack or limitation, then these conditions tend to manifest in our life. The great prophets and teachers of the ages taught us to search for an unseen power and activity far greater than the self.

Many people may think someone, some condition, some circumstance, some event, or some joy controls their prosperity. We can agree that our supply comes to us through people and conditions acting as channels for good. But can we look deep within and know, beyond a doubt, that we were created without limitations—regardless of outer appearances? When we understand God as the source, we do not panic if the channel for our supply changes. Instead, we can search for opportunities, ask for guidance and direction, and be receptive to new avenues for our good.

This speaks of the truth of another law of life: “There is no limit in the universe.” In fact, we may say there is a law of no limitation! Instead of focusing on shortcomings, limitations, or thoughts of lack, would it seem wise to focus on thoughts of abundance?

Observe the many “people-made” objects—buildings, bridges, automobiles, ships, computers, high-tech equipment, lasers, etc. Now, look beyond those creations. Can you visualize the vastness of the resources from which these things are created—and comprehend that the greatest of these human resources is the intelligent mind? Our minds are filled with ideas and thoughts that show us how to build or create the things our imaginations can conceive. If our attitude is open for new understanding, fresh stimulation, and acceleration of discovery, we currently have no idea of what discoveries can be accomplished!

Most people live, whether physically, intellectually, or morally, in a very restricted circle of their potential being. They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness, and of their soul’s resources in general, much like a man who, out of his whole bodily organism, should get into a habit of using and moving only his little finger. Great emergencies and crises show us how much greater our vital resources are than we had supposed.

—William James

We live in a world of change, and nowhere is that more profound than in the sciences. Indeed, a textbook unrevised for several years is practically useless in some fields, and a laboratory with ten-year-old equipment is like a museum. But most scientists are quick to point out that some things in science are far more secure—the periodic table, the laws of thermodynamics, relativity, the genetic code, biological evolution—and that we are steadily building a foundation of unchanging face from which a more complete picture of physical reality is emerging. . . . It has become apparent that we can no longer talk about scientific concepts and even mechanisms as though they were literal descriptions of objective reality.

—John Marks Templeton