11C Early Scientists

(by Bill)

One of my favorite articles appeared in the old InterVarsity magazine HIS, from May 1976, called "Men of Science/Men of Faith" by August J. King. [1]

King, about ten years previously, having been prepared with some knowledge of Italian, German, French, and Latin, read firsthand the writings (never before been translated) of some of the greatest men in the development of experimental science.

He stated that his purpose was "to show that the development of modern science has not been something antagonistic to the Christian revelation, but on the contrary, modern science has flourished precisely in those universities and in those lands where the Bible has been taught. And many great men of science have been men who loved God."

Galileo Galilei (1564-1641).

Galileo was a mathematician and physicist. He had struggled with the Roman church, but he was deeply a student of the Bible. He wrote hundreds of pages on the subject of "the cosmological Jesus found in the Old and New Testament and the interpretation of those views by … church fathers.," always desiring to uphold the absolute verbal authority of Scripture. King suggests that Galileo was essentially a Protestant in the freedom of his interpretation of Scripture, which is what brought him into conflict with the Roman church authorities.

"In one of his works, which has never been translated out of the original Italian, Galileo said: 'The Holy Scriptures and nature are both produced by the Word of God. The former is the result of the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and the latter is the most obedient agent of the ordinances of God, namely nature. In the Holy Scriptures it was necessary for God to come down to the level of the common people, but nature does not adapt and change.'" [2]

As a mathematician and physicist Galileo described motion and force in the movement of a pendulum and also in the movement of the earth around the sun.

John Kepler (1571-1630)

Kepler discovered three laws of planetary motion without the benefit of modern telescopes (they were not available to him in those days.)

"It appears to have been while meditating on a verse of Scripture from the gospel of John that John Keppler got his almost mystical concepts. Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me." It struck him: It would be possible for a body to be so attractive that it could attract through mere space. The comparison was: In a physical sense the universe, the solar system, represents exactly the same thing that Christ does in the spiritual sense." [3]

Kepler, one of the greatest astronomers of history and a brilliant mathematician, was also a fervent student of Scripture and defender of its verbal authority. He figured out that Jesus was actually born in the year 4 B.C. Before his career in science and mathematics, Kepler was preparing for ordination in the Lutheran church. He additionally wrote some books on religion, but none of them have been translated into English.

Robert Boyle (1627-91)

Boyle was called "the father of experimental science." He was the first chemist to distinguish between an element and a compound. He developed Boyle's Law for gas volumes. "But Robert Boyle wrote far more on the subject of religion than he did on the subject of the sciences." "His whole purpose for dabbling in experimental science was to demonstrate the reasonableness and harmony of Scripture and natural laws and principles."

"An ardent student of Scripture, he also sent his own personal funds from England to publish the first Bible in the United States. It was a translation into the Algonquin Indian language produced by the missionary John Eliot working in the Massachusetts colony."

"Boyle also wrote a great deal on apologetics. His interest in Scripture was so intense that he actually learned Hebrew, Aramaic or Chaldean (to read the books of Daniel and Ezra), and Syriac (to read the New Testament in the language Jesus spoke."[4]

Isaac Newton (1643-1727)

Newton developed calculus, formulated the laws of motion, and defined the mathematical principles of nature. He formulated the principle of escape velocity and the law of gravitation.

"Newton's collected writings have never been published in full. But it is estimated that he wrote 1.4 million words on theological subjects and only one million words on scientific subjects. He wrote on biblical theology, the use of Scripture by the church fathers, and biblical prophecies. He said, "The writings of the prophets contain the covenant between God and his people with instructions for keeping this covenant, instances of God's judgment upon them that break it, and predictions of things to come. While the people of God keep the covenant, they continue to be his people. When they break it they cease to be his people or church." [5]

Michael Faraday (1791-1867)

Faraday discovered electrolysis and coined the words "anode and cathode." He was the first to describe electromagnetic fields of force and the experimental interrelatedness of energy and matter. Faraday's discoveries were "essential to the construction of the dynamo and the electric motor."

"He was also a lay preacher in a small Bible chapel in the city of London. Every week he preached biblical sermons – sermons which were brilliant, beautifully detailed inter-weavings of points of doctrine as found in the Scripture. Approximately 150 of his sermons, which have never been published, are still in a box in a collection in England." [6]

James Clerk Maxwell (1831-79)

Maxwell developed the theory of the electromagnetic field on a mathematical basis. He described the wave propagation of electric energy and the interactions between the electric and magnetic fields. He was also a deep student of the Bible.

"Maxwell did not write books on the Bible. He wrote letters in which we see his view of Scripture. It was his habit, every day of his life, to read at least a chapter of

Scripture with his wife. When Maxwell was away from home, he would write letters to his wife and those letters would include a learned commentary on the meaning of the passage that had been read. What a beautiful custom." [7]

References

1. King, August, "Men of Science, Men of Faith", *His magazine*, May 1976.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

SOME SCIENTISTS WHO FOLLOW CHRIST

Most of the news seems to focus on those scientist who are declared atheists: Richard Dawkins, Sean Carroll, William Provine, Jerry Coyne, and Steven Weinberg.
The following are a few well-known men and women of science who are Christians:

Stephen Barr –Physics, Univ. of Delaware
Francis Collins- National Institutes of Health -directed the human genome project
Sharon Dirckx- Brain imaging scientist (Britain)
Gerhard Ertl –Chemistry (Nobel Prize winner)
Owen Gingerich- Astronomy, Harvard
Colin Humphries- Physics, Materials Science, Cambridge
Ian Hutchinson- Physics, MIT
Robert Mann –Physics (U. Waterloo)
William Newsome- Neuroscience, Stanford
Don Page –Physics, (Canada)

Gary Patterson- Chemical Physics (Carnegie Mellon)

William Phillips –Physics (Nobel Prize winner)

John Priestly –Neuroscience (London)

Hugh Ross- Astrophysics, Reasons to Believe

Henry “Fritz” Schaefer- Chemistry, University of Georgia

James Tour – Chemistry, Rice University – developer of nanotechnology “machines”

Charles Townes (deceased) – inventor of the laser

Roger Wiens –planetary scientist, Los Alamos Labs

Jennifer Wiseman- NASA Goddard - astrophysics