

Men of Science, Men of God

Great Scientists of the Past Who Believed the Bible

Henry M. Morris

Publisher's Note:

It has been brought to our attention that not all of the scientists featured in this book are young-earth creationists. Dr. Henry Morris is known as the “Father of Modern Creationism” and Master Books remains the world’s largest publisher of creation-based resources for all ages. Dr. Morris explains how his research was conducted in the Introduction, that the scope and depth of the biographies are limited, and on pages 9–10 gives the criteria for why scientists were chosen for inclusion. He notes “while the writer would disagree with the interpretations of the Bible advocated by a number of people included in the book, their purpose here is to merely be guided by their professed belief in its inspiration and authority.” His purpose clearly was to show many examples of accomplished scientists who also believed in God, dispelling the assumption and myth that to be a scientist you cannot believe in God. *Men of Science, Men of God* has been in its current form since the death of Dr. Morris in 2006. For more information on scientists, past and present, who are classified as young-earth creationists, sources like the Institute for Creation Research (ICR), Answers in Genesis (AiG), and the Creation Research Society (CRS) will be helpful in your research.

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Introduction

Ever since the industrial revolution and the great accomplishments in technology that developed from it, the nations of the world have paid homage to their scientists. Science has become almost a magic word. When the eminent scientist — “Dr. Sagacious” — speaks on any subject, his word must be accepted as authoritative. If “science” has proved something, then that is that; there is no more room for discussion.

As a matter of fact, scientists do undergo a quite difficult discipline of study and apprenticeship, and they are expected by their colleagues to adhere to rather rigorous standards in their work before they are considered to be true professionals. These criteria hold for both the so-called pure scientists (physicists, biologists, geologists, etc.) and the applied scientists (engineers, medical doctors, etc.).

Because of the strong emphasis in the sciences on empiricism, logic, and mathematical rigor, it is not surprising that scientists are expected to be empirical, logical, and quantitative in their personal attitudes and philosophies. They believe only what they can see demonstrated; they insist that a phenomenon is not really understood unless it can be formulated mathematically and measured experimentally.

At least that is the image scientists have of themselves! Cool-headed, dispassionate, logical, meticulous, analytical —

such adjectives describe scientists, so scientists believe, and so do most other people believe about scientists. There is no place in a scientific mind for such intangibles as faith — especially religious faith in a supernatural Creator and a divinely inspired book, so they say. Creation, God, miracle — terms such as these refer to things that cannot be seen or described scientifically and so are unscientific. A man of science cannot also be a man of faith — except, of course, faith in the scientific axiom that one should believe only what one can see or demonstrate.

That is the *image* cultivated by scientists about themselves. The real scientist, however, is commonly a fallible, emotional, credulous, and often bigoted and opinionated individual — just like other men and women! Spiritually speaking, he is sinful and proud, just like anybody else. The writer of this book is one such scientist, and he has regularly worked and talked with thousands of other scientists during a career spanning over forty years now. He can testify from abundant personal experience that this is really the way it is. Without in any way belittling the great accomplishments and contributions of scientists and the scientific method, we should never forget that scientists are only ordinary people who have certain types of abilities and have had the opportunity of certain types of training, but who also have the same weaknesses and needs as anyone else.

There is thus absolutely no reason why a scientist should not also be a man of religious faith, like anybody else. There is nothing in science that can ever *prove* that God does not exist and therefore, no way that science can disprove the possibility of miracles or of true creation. Science cannot either prove or disprove such things, and so a scientist can decide for himself whether he will believe them. The observed facts and data of

science can support him in this choice or otherwise, but they can never compel it. It is completely wrong for people to assume — as they often do — that a true scientist cannot simultaneously be a true man of God, believing in God as Creator and Savior and believing the Bible as God's revelation.

As a matter of fact, many scientists of the past and present have been and are Bible-believing Christians — sinners saved by grace, just like many farmers and clerks and homemakers, people in all walks of life. Nevertheless, the opinion has been widely fostered that science has no place for God or faith in the Bible. Particularly damaging has been the pervasive propaganda claiming that science has disproved creation, so that even the origin of all things must be explained in a purely naturalistic, mechanistic context. No scientist can be a creationist, it is said; all true scientists must believe in evolution, it is alleged.

It is because of this false but widely prevalent opinion that there has been a growing need to study the religious beliefs of the greatest scientists — those giants of the past who pioneered in the development of science and are the ones who are most responsible for its nature and accomplishments. Were these men skeptics and agnostics? Are their achievements attributable to a mechanistic, atheistic attitude toward the world and its phenomena? Or were they men who believed in God and His sovereignty over nature as its Creator?

In view of the interesting and important nature of such questions, it is surprising to find that very little attention has been paid to them. The only reason why the writer prepared *this* book is because he could find no other similar book already written. Biographies and biographical anthologies abound, but apparently no book has yet been written collecting the biographical testimonies of the great scientists of the past

who could be included among the founding fathers of modern science and who were also men who believed the Bible and the basic doctrines of Christianity.

Accordingly, this present book represents only an exploratory survey of this important field of biographical study. Brief biographies are given of 101 of these great men of the past, summarizing both their scientific contributions and their Christian testimonies, insofar as the latter could be determined. Unfortunately, this latter information has not been easy to find, since the standard biographies say little about such things. One must depend mostly on incidental references, comments by their contemporaries, and their own letters and diaries when available.

The writer hopes that Christian biographers and historians, particularly historians of science, will be stimulated by this introductory survey to make a far more thorough study of the subject than this writer has been able to do. A really adequate investigation would require the scholarly study of multitudes of original documents in the great libraries of Europe, as well as America.

Pressures of time and a multitude of other responsibilities have necessarily limited both the scope and depth of *this* book. Nevertheless, it may perhaps at least partially meet a real need at this time, when Christians of all denominations (and those in other religions who still believe in the God of the Bible) want assurance that true science is compatible with biblical revelation. The knowledge that many of the greatest founders of modern science were believing Christians will at least refute the common notion that one cannot be both a man of science and a man of God.

Introduction

Furthermore, there has been no attempt to include in this collection those scientists who were not Christians (orthodox Jews, for example) but who did believe in the one God of creation and in the authority of the Old Testament. Perhaps a chapter on these men can be added in a future edition.

Since this book is intended as a popular-level introduction, with an evangelistic thrust and motivation, rather than as a scholarly monograph, no attempt has been made to include documentation. The sources used are admittedly of varied and uneven quality. In addition to the standard encyclopedias and biographical dictionaries, the writer has consulted mostly his own fairly extensive library and 40-year file collections of journal articles, both scientific and religious. Much more than this needs to be done, of course, and it is hoped that graduate students and other Christian scholars with the necessary time and resources will undertake this kind of research in the near future.

In the meantime, this little book is offered as an introduction and as an encouragement to Christians and honest seekers after truth and life. If readers know of any scientist who should have been included but who was overlooked (or if they can show that someone was included who should not have been), they are urged to send that information for future revisions and extensions of the book. The criteria for inclusion are only the following: (1) the scientist was a person of real achievement and significance in the development of science; (2) he or she was a professing Christian (any denomination) who believed in the divine authority of the Bible; (3) he or she believed that the universe, life, and man were directly and specially created by the transcendent God of the Bible. Such listings will, of course, incorporate people whose beliefs may be unorthodox

in certain ways and can include both Catholics and Protestants, as well as members of small sects. Both recent creationists and progressive creationists are included, as well as some theistic evolutionists (that is, if they believed in the special creation of the universe, the first life forms, and the first human beings). The writer would disagree with the *interpretations* of the Bible advocated by a number of people included in this book, but the purpose here is merely to be guided by their professed belief in its inspiration and authority. Also, no attempt is made to evaluate their personal conduct as professing Christians. Most were undoubtedly born-again Christians, but only God knows the true condition of each human heart.

A few men are included (e.g., Agassiz in America, Owen in England, Virchow in Germany) who were not orthodox Christians at all but who were great scientists and were leaders in the scientific fight against evolution. They were hardly men of God in the spiritual sense but were nevertheless key men in the fight for God's foundational truth of special creation at a critical period in the history of science.

Although all these limitations of the book must be kept in mind, it is believed and hoped that it will prove enlightening and encouraging to many readers. *True* science is never at enmity with God, and a true man of science can and should also be a true man of God.

Chapter 1

The Biblical Origins of Modern Science

One of the most serious fallacies of modern thought is the widespread notion that biblical Christianity is in conflict with true science and therefore, that genuine scientists cannot believe the Bible. The scientific method is built on empirical testing of hypotheses, and since creation and other biblical doctrines cannot be tested in the laboratory, they are considered to be nonscientific—to be taken strictly on faith. Furthermore, it is commonly believed that the Bible contains many scientific errors. At the very most, it is contended, a scientist may be able to accept the spiritual teachings of the Bible if he wishes but never its scientific and historical teachings.

Such a charge is tragically wrong, however, and has done untold damage. Thousands of scientists of the past and present have been and are Bible-believing Christians. As a matter of fact, the most discerning historians and philosophers of science have recognized that the very existence of modern science had its origins in a culture at least nominally committed to a biblical basis and at a time in history marked by a great return to biblical faith.

As a matter of fact, authorization for the development of science and technology was specifically commissioned in God's primeval mandate to Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26–29), and many early scientists, especially in England and America, viewed it in just this way. The study of the world and its processes is really, as Kepler and other great scientists have maintained, “thinking God's thoughts after Him,” and should be approached reverently and humbly.

In this book, therefore, are gathered together a number of brief biographical testimonies of important scientists who professed to be Bible-believing Christians. Many of these names are names familiar to every science student, but students may not know that these men also were Christians. (This fact is commonly ignored or slighted in present-day scientific literature.) This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it should at least put to rest the common misconception that no first-class scientist can be a Bible-believing Christian.

Some of these scientists lived before the rise of modern Darwinism, but they were certainly well aware of evolutionary philosophy (which has been around since antiquity) and of scientific skepticism in general. (Deism, humanism, atheism, pantheism, and other anti-biblical philosophies were very real threats to Christian theism long before the modern era.) Nevertheless, they were all convinced of the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Christian worldview.

Like people in other professions (even preachers), scientists have held a variety of specific religious beliefs. The inclusion of a particular scientist in this collection does not indicate that we would or would not endorse his personal behavior or particular doctrinal or denominational beliefs. Our only criterion

The Biblical Origins of Modern Science

has been that, in addition to being a highly qualified scientist, he believed in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and believed in the one true God of the Bible as the Creator of all things. The scientists listed here will also be seen to represent many different fields of science. In other words, there have been leading scientists in every field of science who have studied both the Bible and their own scientific disciplines in depth, and who are firmly convinced the two are fully compatible.