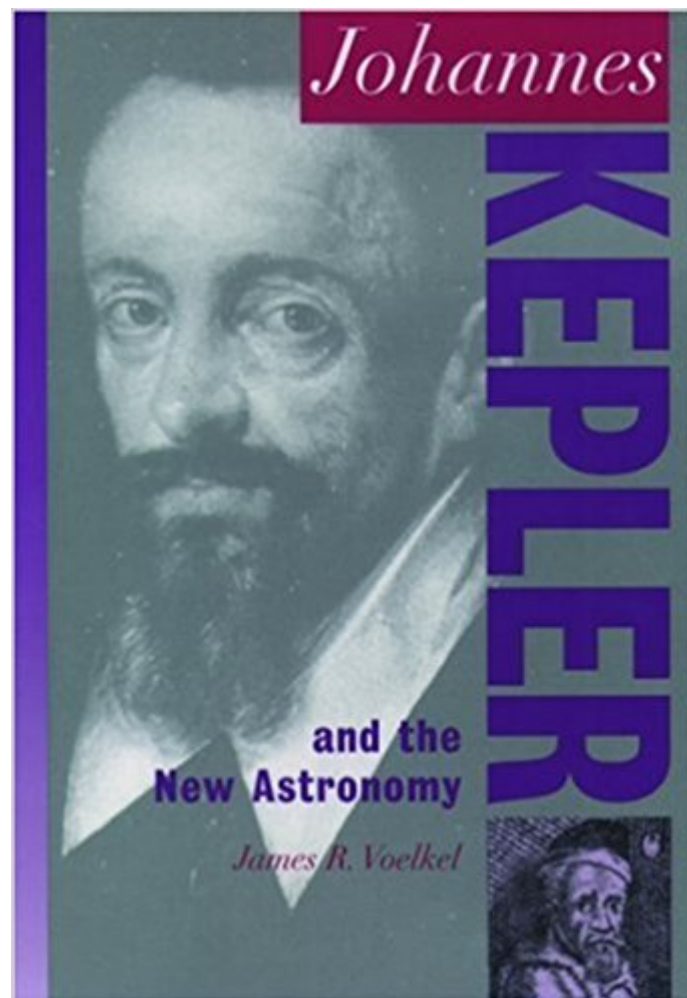




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Johannes Kepler: And The New Astronomy (Oxford Portraits In Science)



Synopsis

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) is remembered, along with Copernicus and Galileo, as one of the greatest Renaissance astronomers. A gifted analytical thinker, he made major contributions to physics, astronomy, and mathematics. Kepler was trained as a theologian, yet did not hesitate to challenge church doctrine and prevailing scientific beliefs by supporting the theory of a Sun-centered solar system. As Imperial Mathematician to the Holy Roman Emperor, he analyzed the precise observations of the heavens that his predecessor, the great astronomer Tycho Brahe, had recorded. The book follows the ingenious scientist along the difficult pathway from raw data to his monumental discovery--the three Laws of Planetary Motion. Kepler also made fundamental contributions to optical theory, including a correct description of the function of the eye and a new and improved telescope design. His unique Rudolfine Tables, universal calculations of planetary motion, were unprecedented in their accuracy. James Voelkel vividly describes these scientific achievements, providing enough background in astronomy and geometry so even beginners can follow Kepler's thinking and enjoy this book. Equally captivating is his account of Kepler's tumultuous life, plagued by misery, disease, war, and fervent religious persecution. Oxford Portraits in Science is an ongoing series of scientific biographies for young adults. Written by top scholars and writers, each biography examines the personality of its subject as well as the thought process leading to his or her discoveries. These illustrated biographies combine accessible technical information with compelling personal stories to portray the scientists whose work has shaped our understanding of the natural world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up-This readable biography puts Kepler's life, discoveries, and writings in the context of the religious persecutions of the early 17th century and shows how his religious bias led him to make great scientific discoveries. Personal anecdotes about such topics as his relationship with fellow astronomer Tycho Brahe, his mother's trial for witchcraft, and his lifetime of work on the Rudolfine Tables fill the narrative. The writing is strongest when dealing with his discoveries, as the descriptions of his personal life sometimes seem tedious and repetitive. Excellent boxed sections explain the astronomer's three laws of planetary motion with clear diagrams that illustrate their principles and derivation. A compelling passage summarizes the *Somnium* (The Dream), a fictional work in which he created moon creatures to explain the motion of the earth in a heliocentric system. This book is enhanced with fascinating and informative reproductions, including facsimiles of Kepler's writings. Overall, an enjoyable introduction to a complex scientific life. Jeffrey A. French, Euclid Public Library, OH Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This intriguing biography from the Oxford Portraits in Science series discusses the life and work of Johannes Kepler (1571¹-1630). Trained in theology, Kepler accepted a position as a mathematics teacher. He then went to the assistance of noted astronomer Tycho Brahe and became the imperial mathematician for Rudolf II of the Holy Roman Empire. Kepler lived in tumultuous times and suffered the religious persecution of his family and the trial of his mother for witchcraft, along with disease, war, and the deaths of loved ones. Nevertheless, he managed to discover the three laws of planetary motion, to calculate the movements and positions of the planets with great accuracy, and to do important work in optics as well. Voelkel weaves the many strands of Kepler's story into an intricate but satisfying narrative. To be illustrated with reproductions of period portraits, prints, and documents. A fine addition to both science and biography collections. Carolyn Phelan

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