



# Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother

By James A. Connor

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**Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother** By James A. Connor

**Set against the backdrop of the witchcraft trial of his mother, this fascinating biography of Johannes Kepler, "the Protestant Galileo" and 16th century mathematician and astronomer who discovered the three basic laws of planetary motion, reveals the surprisingly spiritual nature of the quest of early modern science.**

In the style of Dava Sobel's *Galileo's Daughter*, Connor's book vividly brings to life the tidal forces of Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and social upheaval in the early days of the modern world. The wall between Science and Religion has not always been so high. While in the 21st century, we have become used to mechanical solar systems and Godless universes, in the early days of the scientific revolution, many scientists explored the natural world for spiritual reasons. This was especially true for Johannes Kepler, who discovered the three basic laws of planetary motion. He was in many ways the Protestant Galileo, persecuted for his support of the Copernican system. Along the way, a neighbour lady accused his mother of witchcraft, and Kepler abandoned his post as the Imperial mathematician for a time to defend her. James Connor, an author whose star is on the rise, tells the story of Kepler's life as a pilgrimage, a spiritual journey into the modern world through war and disease and terrible injustice, a journey reflected in the evolution of Kepler's geometrical model of the cosmos into a musical model, harmony into greater harmony. The leitmotif of the witch trial stitches the biography together and adds a third dimension to Kepler's life by setting his personal life deep within his own times. The acts of this trial, including Kepler's letters and the accounts of the witnesses, have been published in their original German dialects but have never before been translated into English. As Dava Sobel did as part of her work on *Galileo's Daughter*, Connor has translated the witch trial documents into English for the first time.

David Koch, the Deputy Principal Investigator for NASA's Kepler Mission,

provides a foreword revealing Kepler's many contributions to the world of science. Kepler is a man whose name every student of science knows, an icon of the modern age, but few know anything the man himself.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) was a towering figure in early modern science, a contemporary of Tycho Brahe and Galileo who discovered the fundamental laws governing the motion of the planets. Connor goes further, offering a remarkably human portrait of Kepler, grounded in the day-to-day life of a mathematician and astronomer simply trying to make a living and navigate the turbulent politics of Counter-Reformation Europe while staying true to his own ideals. This is not the Kepler one might know from textbooks—Connor's Kepler is a man driven by his deep Lutheran faith, yet ultimately excommunicated for his desire to reach out to Catholics and Calvinists; a man who seems less concerned with greatness than truth and a little bit of peace and happiness. As Connor writes in his preface, the book is as much a piece of literary nonfiction about the "kitchen details" of life in the early 17th century as it is a biography of a great astronomer. As the engaging narrative ranges from life amid religious unrest in Prague to the "trumped-up" witchcraft charges against Kepler's mother, one finds oneself lost in a world haunted by shadows and fears, yet which holds the promise of a new era of reason and enlightenment. This portrait poses a striking contrast to that in *Heavenly Intrigue*, which dubiously purports that Kepler was a virtual psychopath who killed Brahe to obtain his secret data. Maps.

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From [Booklist](#)

On his deathbed, one of history's greatest astronomers voiced no satisfaction over his achievements in advancing planetary physics but a great deal of frustration over his lifelong powerlessness to resolve religious conflict. A former Jesuit, Connor here probes the dark religious events that enshrouded the brilliant scientific career of Johannes Kepler. The forces of Reformation and Counter-Reformation repeatedly convulsed the European world in which Kepler pursued his pioneering research, but Connor chiefly scrutinizes the religious turmoil peculiar to Kepler's life. Readers see, for instance, how Kepler fought to maintain friendships with both Catholics and Protestants, how he struggled to harmonize his own sophisticated faith with his wife's simple piety, how he suffered when his intellectual openness cost him his cherished communion as a Lutheran, and, finally, how he jeopardized his reputation to defend an eccentric mother accused of witchcraft. Rich with new translations of Kepler's journals, poetry, and correspondence, this compelling narrative will leave readers wondering how a man so enmeshed in religious travail ever managed to penetrate the mystery of planetary orbits, to blaze a path toward calculus, and to formulate the founding principles of optics. But nothing will astound readers more than the way the religiously vexed Kepler persisted in interpreting his discoveries as evidence of the divine harmony in the universe! Connor indeed argues that precisely because he framed his science in the language of worship, Kepler has received less than his due from rationally minded scholars. This luminous biography will help remedy that injustice.

*Bryce Christensen*

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Review

"A fascinating book, analyzing a pivotal time in western intellectual history." (John Shelby Spong, author of *A New Christianity for a New World*)

"A detailed and fascinating account of the life and times of one of the great founding figures of modern science." (John Polkinghorne, author of *Belief in God in an Age of Science*)

“James Connor narrates the compelling human drama behind significant scientific discoveries of the seventeenth century.” (Eve LaPlante, author of *American Jezebel: The Uncommon Life of Anne Hutchinson, the Woman Who Defied the Puritans*)

“Connor has illuminated the life - and thus also the work - of one of history’s greatest star-gazers.” (David Edmonds and John Eidinow, authors of *Wittgenstein's Poker* and *Bobby Fischer Goes to War*)

“Connor’s skillful narrative brings to life an extraordinary man who wanted to know the mind of God.” (Kenneth Silverman, Pulitzer-Prize winner and author of *Lightning Man*)

“Kepler has received less than his due from rationally-minded scholars. This luminous biography will help remedy that injustice.” (Booklist - Starred Review)

“His biographer depicts him brilliantly . . . healthy, purposeful, and illuminating.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“...a remarkably human portrait of Kepler. . . . [an] engaging narrative.” (Publishers Weekly)

“A compelling story of scientific discovery. . . crisply written, meticulously researched and highly recommended.” (Tucson Citizen)

“Fun to read...” (Los Angeles Times)

“No other Keplerian biography fleshes out so fully the background against which the astronomer worked.” (Christian Century)

“Connor delves into Kepler’s life in such a way that the scientist becomes a person of flesh and bone.” (National Catholic Reporter)

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Nathan Ware:**

This book untitled *Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother* to be one of several books this best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit upon it. You will easily to buy that book in the book retail store or you can order it by using online. The publisher of this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, because you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason to your account to past this guide from your list.

#### **Terri Rouse:**

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always try to and must have the time or they will get large amount of stress from both day to day life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the

book you have read is Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother.

**Reinaldo Downs:**

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book specially book entitled Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother your thoughts will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely will end up your mind friends. Imaging each word written in a e-book then become one web form conclusion and explanation which maybe you never get before. The Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother giving you another experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful information for your better life in this era. So now let us teach you the relaxing pattern is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

**Kristy Douglas:**

Do you like reading a guide? Confuse to looking for your favorite book? Or your book ended up being rare? Why so many query for the book? But just about any people feel that they enjoy to get reading. Some people likes studying, not only science book but also novel and Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother or others sources were given expertise for you. After you know how the great a book, you feel would like to read more and more. Science publication was created for teacher or maybe students especially. Those ebooks are helping them to bring their knowledge. In other case, beside science e-book, any other book likes Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order Amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of His Mother to make your spare time a lot more colorful. Many types of book like here.

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