



Image: Johannes Kepler (1571 – 1630)

THE JOHANNES KEPLER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Johannes Kepler was a strongly committed Christian who made profound and far-reaching scientific discoveries about 400 years ago. He is well-known to those with an interest in mathematics, physics and astronomy but his amazing life and work is inspirational to all of us, particularly to those who worship the Creator as they seek to understand both His word and His creation.

The Johannes Kepler Scholarship Fund is the name we have chosen to give to our Australian Government registered “Universal Education and Training Ltd (UNET) Student Scholarship Fund”. Money given to this fund will be used to help us provide courses for students who may not otherwise have

had opportunity to study with us. For example, see our <https://www.freebiblecollege.com.au/> programs. By providing funds for programs such as this, donors are also supporting us with the development of our <https://www.christianuniversityforaustralia.org.au/> initiative. Funds given to support students in current programs help support us in our journey towards being able to offer courses in all fields of endeavor including (but not limited to): law, medicine, engineering, creative arts, education, journalism to name a few.

Johannes came from a very modest family in a small German town called Weil der Stadt, near Stuttgart. In an age when the established church was the dominant force in education, scholarships were offered to poorer families so that their sons might enter the church, teach in the schools or work in the public service. Johannes was one of the beneficiaries of a ducal scholarship and this made it possible for him to attend the Lutheran *Stift*, or seminary, at the University of Tübingen, where he began his university studies in 1589. His desire was to become a theologian, however he believed that Divine Providence took him in another direction, namely the study of the stars. He was encouraged in this pursuit by his professor of mathematics and mentor, Michael Maestlin (1550-1630), one of the first scientists to adopt and teach the Copernican model of the solar system with the sun at the centre.

Johannes became obsessed with the work of the earlier astronomer Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) who had put forward the revolutionary idea that the earth was not the centre of the solar system but the planets revolved around the sun in circular orbits. Kepler read his works and intuitively saw that the universe, with the precise motion of the heavenly bodies, had the mark of divine planning. He came to fervently regard nature, including the heavens, as a book written by God for man to read and he saw man as God’s special creation able to understand something of His nature. His favourite verse of scripture was John (1:14): “And the Word became flesh and lived among us.” He knew that this refers to Jesus but to him this also meant that the nature of God can be seen in the physical creation. He studied the beautiful geometrical forms of the planetary motions, finding a relationship with musical harmonies and so forming a connection between mathematics and the arts. He discovered that the planets move in elliptical orbits with the sun at one of the foci. This idea came to him in a moment of revelation while teaching a mathematics class in Austria.

A beautiful example of his dedication to finding God’s answers in nature is found in a commission given to him to find the best way of storing cannon balls on board moving ships. He found the answer in the pyramid shapes in which the seeds of a pomegranate are packed. God’s design gave him the solution. Even today in fruit markets oranges and other round fruits are stacked in this way so that they will not dislodge. Through the invention of scanning tunnelling microscopes we now know that metal atoms are also packed together in this way giving the metals their strength.

He experienced some persecution for his radical proposal that the earth was not the centre of the solar system. These included accusations that he had poisoned the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) with whom he worked but had disagreements. It was eventually realised that his impeccable mathematical calculations and accurate predictions of planetary motion and star charts, while revolutionary for his time, did solve many of the astronomical enigmas of the day. This prepared the way for later scientists such as Isaac Newton (1642-1726) and Albert Einstein (1879-1955) to discover far more about light, gravitation and the very structure of the atom and the universe. All these ideas were leading to the incredible knowledge and technology that we have today.

Johannes Kepler received a scholarship to attend University. God led him to become a pioneer in the deeper study of His marvellous creation. Kepler's willingness to abandon his highly cherished theory (planetary orbits within polyhedra) in the face of precise observational evidence, indicates that he had a very modern attitude to scientific research. He was an educator who recognised that human knowledge comes from God and acknowledged that: "I was merely thinking God's thoughts after Him. Since we astronomers are priests of the highest God in regard to the book of nature, it benefits us to be thoughtful, not of the glory of our minds, but rather, above all else, of the glory of God".

Therefore it is with the deepest respect that we name our Scholarship Foundation after this great man.

The name for this Scholarship Fund was first proposed by Bernhard and Louise Keppler from New Zealand. Bernhard, originally from Germany, has a past family connection to this famous pioneer of science – he shared the same grandfather as Johannes Kepler.

These modern day "Kepplers", Bernhard and Louise, wanted students benefitting from the fund to be led by God in directions that will in turn benefit mankind, just as was the case with Johannes hundreds of years ago.

Their dream was also that the ChristianUniversityForAustralia.org.au initiative will ultimately enable students from around the world, including their home country of New Zealand, to study in a world-class Christian tertiary education environment. Their heart is that scientific research and academic inquiry will be seen to support the foundational Christian belief that the God of the Bible is the creator of the Universe and that the world around us is not simply a product of an evolutionary process. They strongly believe that evolution has often been used to undermine Christian faith and to attack the accuracy and relevance of the teaching of Christian Scriptures, especially in relation to origins.

Bernhard has been involved in the building industry for most of his life, and more recently in their retiring years, Bernhard and Louise have become kiwifruit farmers on the north Island of New Zealand. We are grateful for the generosity they displayed with their initial gift to the fund. We invite you to consider following in their footsteps by adding your contribution to this fund.