

Isaac Newton, the hero of Western science, a prophet?

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Newton's "sleeping argument"

December 10, 1692

Sir,

When I wrote my treatise about our Systeme I had an eye upon such Principles as might work with considering men for the beleife of a Deity & nothing can rejoyce me more then to find it usefull for that purpose.

[Then Newton replies four questions about the motions of sun, moon and planets and concludes his letter by writing] . . . they seem to make up that harmony in the systeme which (as I explained above) was **the effect of choice rather than of chance.**

There is yet another argument for a Deity which I take to be a very strong one, but till the principles on which tis grounded be better received I think it more advisable to let it sleep.

I am Your most humble Servant to command Is. Newton.

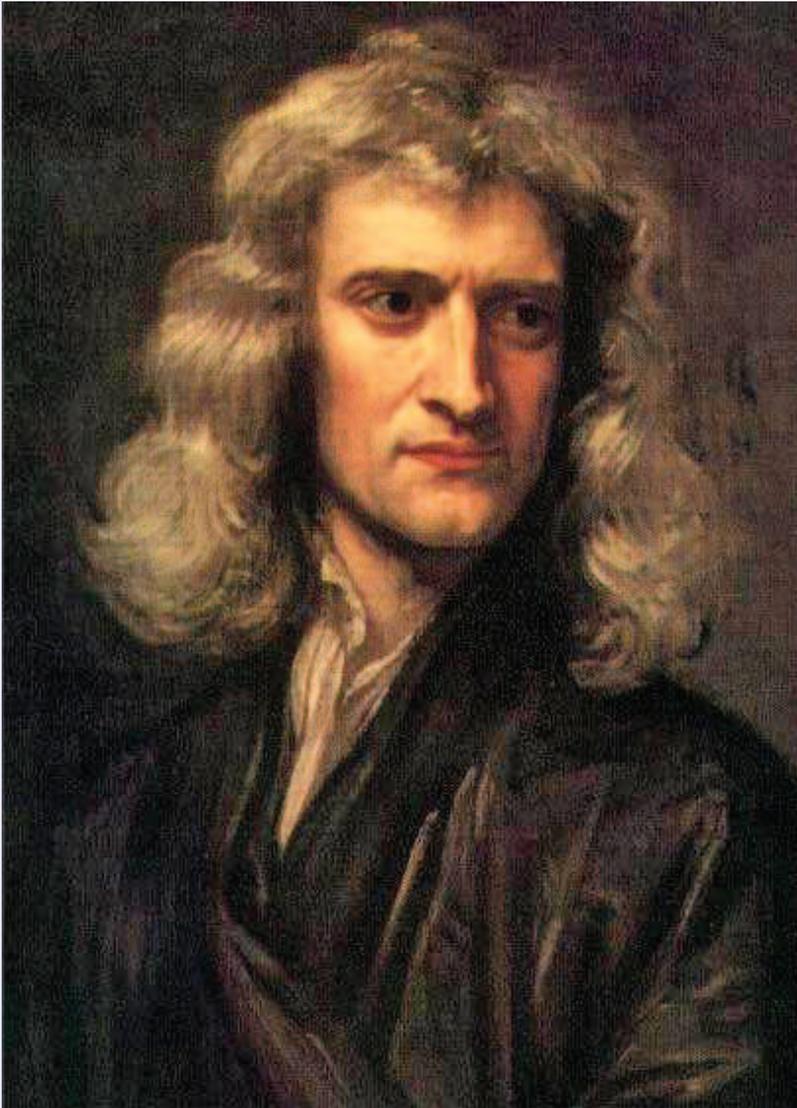
Newton: a devoted christian scientist

I have a fundamental believe in the Bible as the Word of God, written by those who were inspired. I study the bible daily.

All my discoveries have been made in an answer to prayer.

Origin: <https://crev.info/scientists/isaac-newton/>

Milestones in Isaac Newton's life (1643 - 1727) and beyond



1660: Student at Cambridge University

1669: Lucasian professor Mathematics in Cambridge

1672: Fellow of the Royal Society

1687: Principia Mathematica

1696: Leaving Cambridge for London

1703 - 1727 : chairman Royal Society

1704: Opticks

1733: Observations on Daniel and The Apocalypse

1754: An Historical Account of Two Notable Corruptions of Scripture

1936: Manuscripts auctioned at Sotheby's

1998: Start Newton Project: 'Non-scientific' papers

2003: Documentary BBC

2007: NP: all printed and unpublished writings

2017: Rob Iliffe. Priest of Nature. Oxford Univ. Pr.

Attempts to get Newtons manuscripts published (Richard Popkin [7])

Up to the beginning of 1982, I was only slightly interested in Isaac Newtons views on philosophy or religion. I had included him in a paper I wrote in late 1981 ... I gave the paper in Israel in the beginning of 1982 at a conference organized by the Van Leer Foundation. It was mentioned to me that there were a large number of Newton manuscripts in the National Library in Israel. ... I went to take a look and was amazed to see the enormous amount of Newton material that was in the manuscript collection of A. S. Yahuda. I was told that none of the material had been published. This led me to confer with the director of the Van Leer foundation ... about whether we ought to do something to get the Newton manuscripts published. He was enthusiastic and ... took me to meet with other important figures in Israeli cultural matters, who were enthusiastic but felt that more financial support was needed than they could give. ... I soon learned the story that the material that Newton had passed on to his niece and she passed on to her descendants, ending with the Earl of Portsmouth in the twentieth century, had been auctioned off at Sothebys in 1936. The earl had tried to give the material to the British Museum and Newtons college at Cambridge, and they both refused to take it. The bulk of the auction material was purchased by John Maynard Keynes and Professor A. S. Yahuda. Keynes took mainly the alchemic manuscripts and Yahuda, the theological ones. Others were purchased by people and institutions all over the planet. [7, 15]

The Newton Project (Rob Iliffe [4])

At its worst, historians of Newtons work in the exact sciences **actively obstructed efforts to attract funding for a scholarly edition of the alchemical and theological writings.** Without any claim to a comprehensive edition or coverage of Newtons broad range of interests, the piecemeal publication of his writings contrasted unfavourably with the support given at a national level (and often for nationalist purposes) for editions of the complete works of other scientific heroes such as Leibniz, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Huygens. [4, 25]

Newton on the meaning of prophecy

The folly of Interpreters has been, to foretel times and things by this Prophecy [in the books Revelation and Daniel], as if God designed to make them Prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the Prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the Prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and his own Providence, not the Interpreters, be then manifested thereby to the world. For the event of things predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence. [6, 244-245]

Conclusion: Prophecies are not given to enable us to make predictions, but in order to provide convincing arguments that the world is governed by providence (with hindsight!).

Newton on the Return of the Jews

In an early eighteenth-century treatise on Revelation, Newton suggests a starting point for the 1290 and 1335 years, writing that they seem to begin either with 609 AD “or perhaps a little later.” In this scenario, the call to return and rebuild Jerusalem would go out in 1895 or 1896 AD, and the 1335 years conclude in 1944. While he believes that these dates commence with the taking away of the “daily sacrifice”, it is evident that in this case he is referring to the rise of the papacy. His Observations give slightly later starting dates and suggest that the end will come between 2000 and 2050 AD. [8, 107-108]

*These multiple prophetic chronologies suggest that Newton may have never settled on a definite date for the end of the Jewish captivity. This would, of course, be in keeping with his general reluctance to set dates. Nor was he always concerned about every detail, commenting in one place: “*The manner I know not. Let time be the interpreter.*” [8, 108]*

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