



## Robert Boyle

**R**obert Boyle was born in 1627 in Ireland, the seventh son of Richard Boyle 1st Earl of Cork<sup>1</sup>. He spoke Irish fluently, and acted as translator for his English father, Richard. His childhood studies included Latin, Greek and French<sup>2</sup>. He attended Eton College beginning in his eighth year, following the death of his mother, Catherine Fenton<sup>3</sup>. In 1641, he and his tutor traveled to Italy, staying in Florence. He was able to study "paradoxes of the great star-gazer" of Galileo who was still living, though an aged man<sup>4</sup>.

At his return to England in 1644, his interest in things scientific was deep and growing. He devoted much time to scientific research and was a part of what was known as "the Invisible College." Interestingly, this group later (1663) became the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge<sup>5</sup>.

After moving back to Ireland in 1652, he grew restless at the lack of successes from his experiments, and moved back to England in 1654 to attend Oxford and continue pursuing his passion – science<sup>6</sup>. Alongside his friend, Robert Hooke, who designed his vacuum pump, he conducted experiments on various specimens, to observe their behavior in such a space. (source: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/boyle/biog.html#Bibliog>)



He dove head-long into the study of mechanics, hydrodynamics, and chemistry<sup>7,7</sup>. As the Stanford University online encyclopedia puts it: "*his interest seems to have been fueled more by his constant desire to acquire knowledge of God and the world than by any desire for riches*"<sup>8</sup>.

Best known for "Boyle's Law" - in short this law is summarized as follows:

For a fixed amount of an ideal gas kept at a fixed temperature,  $P$  [pressure] and  $V$  [volume] are inversely proportional (while one doubles, the other halves) which describes the inversely proportional relationship between the absolute pressure and volume of a gas, if the temperature is kept constant within a closed system. The mathematical equation for Boyle's Law is:  $pV = k$ <sup>9</sup>

He was a prolific author, and influenced the scientific world through his writings, such as his 1661 book *The Sceptical Chemist* which was seen as a fundamental book on the topic<sup>10</sup>. His writings ranged from scientific to theological and Christian inspirational writing<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stanford.edu/group/auden/cgi-bin/auden/individual.php?pid=14233&ged=auden-bicknell.ged>

<sup>2</sup> <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?jsessionid=C11AB41066FD1932B160C30285BEA9EA.journals?fromPage=online&aid=3337208>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <http://faculty.cua.edu/may/Boyle.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://galileo.rice.edu/Catalog/NewFiles/boyle.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.woodrow.org/teachers/ci/1992/Boyle.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://books.google.ie/books?id=fjDXtalPeesC&pg=PT24&lpg=PT24&dq=%22robert+boyle%22+continent&source=web&ots=0GoWnMtkTE&sig=w5L\\_P2i0E6hYobZE7vm9LffWYN4&hl=en#v=onepage&q=minority%20%22robert%20boyle%22%20continent&f=false](http://books.google.ie/books?id=fjDXtalPeesC&pg=PT24&lpg=PT24&dq=%22robert+boyle%22+continent&source=web&ots=0GoWnMtkTE&sig=w5L_P2i0E6hYobZE7vm9LffWYN4&hl=en#v=onepage&q=minority%20%22robert%20boyle%22%20continent&f=false)

<sup>8</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/boyle/>

<sup>9</sup> Levine, Ira. N. (1978) - <http://www.iun.edu/~cpanhd/C101webnotes/gases/boyleslaw.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?TextID=boyle\\_chymist](http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?TextID=boyle_chymist)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/boyle/Works.html>

His interest in theology was well-known, and although some of his ideas were wrong-headed (e.g. he believed that all races originated from Adam and Eve, but that they were white and could have borne children of various "colors," thus that his how the colored peoples came to be)<sup>12</sup>. The first and last parts of that belief is correct, as we find out from Genesis 1-3, and also Acts 17:26 which states: "*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.*" In recent years however, it has been put forward by prominent Creationists, that Adam and Eve were more than likely, middle-brown, their skin pigmentation resulting in the wide range of skin tones seen in our world today<sup>13</sup>.

Boyle believed in "*James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh, who famously propounded what seems to us, though not to his contemporaries, to be a very late date (4004 b.c.) for creation. Boyle saw "no just reason to embrace their opinion, that would so turn the two first chapters of Genesis, into an allegory, as to overthrow the literal and historical sense of them" and, noting the implausibility of the claims of "some extravagant ambitious People, such as those fabulous Chaldeans, whose fond account reach'd up to 40000 or 50000 years," held that "Theology teaches us, that the World is very far from being so old by 30 or 40 thousand years as they ... have presum'd: and does, from the Scripture, give us such an account of the age of the World, that it has set us certain Limits, within which so long a Duration may be bounded, without mistaking in our Reckoning. Whereas Philosophy leaves us to the vastness of Indeterminate Duration, without any certain Limits at all*"<sup>14</sup>.

During his tenure as director of the East India Company, Boyle oversaw the translation of Holy Scripture into his native tongue – Irish<sup>15</sup>. There had been only one previous translation of the Bible into Irish, this being completed in 1602. As is well known, during this period of history, the Roman Catholic church had a "Latin-only policy", which kept the common man from understanding or even being able to read the Holy Scriptures, as he did not understand or read Latin.

Robert was never of strong constitution, and had experienced various periods of physical weakness and illness. In 1691, he became weaker, and on the last day of that year, he passed from this life into the next. His place of burial was in the church-yard of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London. (source: <http://www.woodrow.org/teachers/ci/1992/Boyle.html>)

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<sup>12</sup> <http://books.google.com/books?id=6GjDAOW-zWgC&q=Robert+Boyle#v=snippet&q=Robert%20Boyle&f=false>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.answersingenesis.org/get-answers/features/adam-eve-skin-tones-one-race?utm\\_source=homepage&utm\\_medium=banner&utm\\_campaign=all-skin-tones](http://www.answersingenesis.org/get-answers/features/adam-eve-skin-tones-one-race?utm_source=homepage&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=all-skin-tones)

<sup>14</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/boyle/#2>

<sup>15</sup> <http://archive.org/stream/ahistoryoldengl00reedgoog#page/n16/mode/2up/search/Robert+Boyle+ - Boyle's Irish testament>