William Derham Encyclopedia Article

William Derham

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1657-1735

English naturalist and theologian best known for his *Physico-Theology* (1713), which abounds in arguments from design to God, and *Astro-theology* (1715), which argues that Newtonian cosmology is ample evidence of God's existence. Derham also determined the speed of sound by timing the interval between the flash and roar of a cannon fired 12 miles (19.3 km) away (1705). His value of 1142 ft/sec (348.08 m/sec) is in good agreement with the presently accepted value of 1130 ft/sec (344.4 m/sec).