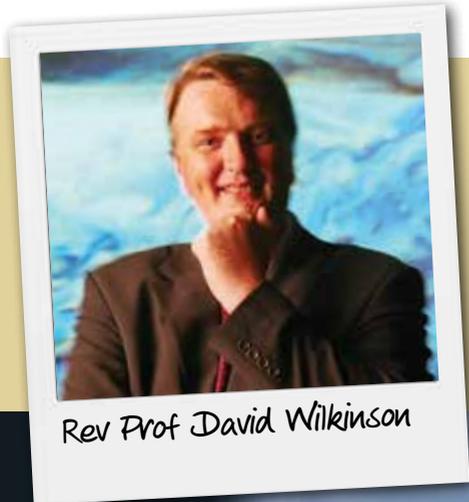


mean that there is a purpose behind our existence?

These kind of questions may not prove God but may help in the search for God. In conversation with scientists who are

Christians, and with Christian artists, poets and musicians who imaginatively engage with the excitement of science, they can lead to a climate conducive to the birth and nurture of faith – and in that, an openness to encounter the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.



Rev Prof David Wilkinson

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Some Christians believe there are some things in the natural world that should not be explored because they are 'God's Work'

Further information

www.cis.org.uk – Christians in Science

Suggested reading

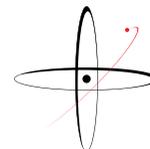
Berry, R.J. The Lion Handbook of Science and Christianity, LionHudson, 2012.



science and apologetics

how can we defend our faith in the light of modern science?

ADDRESSING QUESTIONS OF SCIENCE AND FAITH



THINKING ABOUT...

science and apologetics

Rev Prof David Wilkinson

Where does the pattern of the world come from and how is it maintained?

What is apologetics?

For a lot of people, apologetics means being apologetic about the Christian faith as if it is something to be embarrassed about. In fact, it comes from the Greek word 'apologia' which is used three times by the apostle Paul as he makes his defence of the good news of Jesus (Acts 22:1, 24:10, 26:1-2). Paul defends himself against charges made about him, but does so by giving a reasoned account of the Christian faith and showing its relevance to the people he is speaking to.

Defending the truth?

Yet this sense of 'defence' has often dominated Christian apologetics, responding to attacks either in terms of inaccurate assertions about the faith or intellectual challenges to it. This is needed today in the light of the work of Richard Dawkins and his fellow new atheists and the sleight of hand which couples science with atheism. Often their thinking is muddled, their theology weak and their philosophy dominated by the conflict model of science and religion, and a reductionism which believes that science can explain everything. In response Christians will

CAN YOU PROVE GOD THROUGH SCIENCE?

want to detail the fruitful relationship of science and faith throughout history, and point out that to obtain scientific explanations does not mean that 'life, the universe and everything' is 'nothing but' those scientific descriptions.

However, this approach has dangers. Christian faith can be reduced to a dry, intellectual type argument, which becomes adversarial in its engagement with those who are not Christians. It can exalt reason, yet reason alone cannot give answers to every question and reason alone does not represent Christian faith.

Trying to prove God?

Further, it can lead from a critique of those who try to disprove God to the attempt to use science to prove God. This in itself has two major weaknesses. The first is a 'god of the gaps'. If science has a gap in it the temptation is to insert God as the explanation. The trouble is that as the gaps became smaller in science so God is pushed out into irrelevancy. But the God of the Bible does not shelter in safe gaps - rather he is Lord of all of the scientific processes of the Universe. This 'god of the gaps' all happens because of the

CAN YOU DISPROVE GOD THROUGH SCIENCE?

mistake of confusing different types of explanation. Science and theology can give different but compatible explanations of the same thing. Some atheists believe that once you have a scientific explanation then that is all you need. Some Christians believe that there are some things in the natural world that science should not explore because they are 'God's work'. Both are wrong. The Bible understands that the whole universe is the result of God's working and science simply tells us how God does it. Second, the God of Christian faith is not a mathematical theory to be proved, but a personal Creator who has revealed himself in the space-time history of the Universe, supremely by becoming a human being in Jesus Christ. As the theologian Karl Barth wrote, 'I believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son our Lord, in order to perceive and to understand that God the Almighty, the Father, is Creator of heaven and earth. If I did not believe the former, I could not perceive and understand the latter.'

Building Bridges

In the light of this, it seems better to see science in apologetics as building bridges or points of contact. Alister McGrath helpfully writes, 'The chief goal of Christian apologetics is to create an intellectual and imaginative climate conducive to the birth and nurture of faith'.

Such points of contact may simply need to be recognised as already being there. For example, within modern cosmology there are a number of questions which may not be proofs of God but for some may be pointers to a deeper story of the universe, and an invitation to talk some more. These include:

- Why the Universe? This is not to resurrect the first cause argument; it is to recognise that the purpose and meaning of the Universe lie beyond science.
- Where do the scientific laws themselves come from? If the Universe emerges as a quantum fluctuation, we need to ask where quantum theory itself comes from? Where does the pattern of the world come from and how is it maintained? This is not a 'god of the gaps' argument as science itself assumes these laws in order to work.
- Why is the Universe intelligible? Does it suggest that there exists a Creator God who is the basis of the order in the Universe, and the ability of our minds to understand it.
- What is our significance in the Universe? Does the fact that the universe is extraordinarily 'just right' in its laws and circumstances for intelligent life

DOES SCIENCE HELP IN THE SEARCH FOR GOD?