

# What others are saying about "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

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**Glenn R. Martin (1935-2004), B.A., M.A., Ph.D., Indiana Wesleyan University:**

A biblical Christian is convinced that God applies to all of life. There is a biblical worldview – a biblical view of every area of life and every discipline of study, including mathematics. Knowing the biblical worldview and the biblical view of a discipline or profession positions a Christian for dominion leadership.

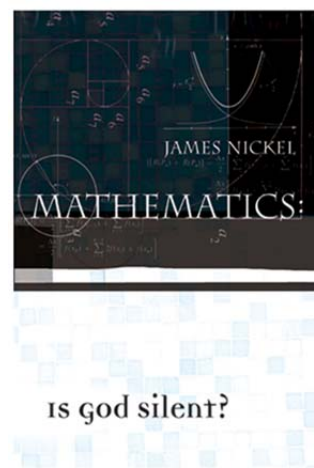
Effective Christian leadership in every area of life results from biblical Christian education and scholarship, which have three basic objectives: The first objective is to learn and teach the biblical worldview. The second objective is to know all other worldviews fully and fairly. (It is not possible to know what one believes and why without knowing what one does not believe and why.) The final objective is to reinterpret everything on the basis of the biblical worldview and biblical presuppositions.

For many years I have been reinterpreting the disciplines of history and political science from a biblical Christian perspective. In conducting biblical Christian Leadership Seminars for Christian educators and leaders I have challenged participants by example and admonition to reinterpret their disciplines, professions, or areas of endeavor. James Nickel, responding to this challenge, determined to reinterpret one of the most difficult disciplines – mathematics – from a biblical framework. His resulting work is of trailblazing significance. In making substantial strides toward reinterpreting mathematics, Nickel has uncovered truths that have been hidden for centuries.

*Mathematics: Is God Silent?* demonstrates in an interesting, convincing, and easily readable fashion that mathematics can be reinterpreted and that, as in every discipline of study, mathematical conclusions can be understood only by mastering the worldview and presuppositions which undergird them. *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* also establishes that there is a biblical view of mathematics and that the notion of “neutrality,” even in mathematics, is mythological because all mathematical conclusions are determined by the presuppositions on which they are based.

This reinterpetive study is written from a highly useful and informative historical perspective. Nickel recognizes and simplifies key movements and issues in mathematics, science, philosophy, theology, and the history of Christianity, demonstrating their interrelationship. *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* also brings to light the critical function and value of mathematics whereby man can fulfill the God-given mandate of exercising dominion over creation under the sovereign God.

*Mathematics: Is God Silent?* is an excellent model for all Christians who wish to reinterpret their disciplines, professions, or any area of life from a biblical position. In seminars I am currently conducting I recommend *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* as a reinterpetive model, and it has proven to be useful in this vital endeavor. It is my conviction that *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* will encourage a significant number of Christians to begin reinterpeting.



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The Christian community is indebted to James Nickel for the prodigious research and protracted labor that this study represents. It is my hope that his scholarly reinterpretation of mathematics will produce a multiplication of biblical Christian education and leadership. I commend James Nickel for this significant service to God and man. And I recommend this work to everyone interested in biblical Christian Reformation – that Christians may become ever more effective in bringing all of life into captivity unto God.

## **Gene B. Chase, M.A., Ph.D., C.C.P., Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science, Messiah College:**

*Mathematics: Is God Silent?* is a book that I wish I had written—a sweeping look at the history of mathematics and its Christian influences. Its 400 pages are greatly expanded over the first edition, giving more opportunity for more quotations from primary sources and more opportunity for Nickel to offer support for his position. That position is a strong Reformed tradition, even Kuyperian. Yet not narrowly so. His debt to Jesuit philosopher of science Stanley Jaki comes through frequently.

An extensive bibliography, index, Scripture index, and time-line make the book a useful reference. End-of-chapter questions and two extensive pedagogical sections make it a useful resource in the training of mathematics teachers or in teaching mathematics itself. Its inexpensive \$22 price is further discounted for classroom use to make it more affordable for a college course or ambitious high school course in history of mathematics.

Nickel avoids commonplace oversimplifications of the history of mathematics. For example, he properly credits Newton's first law of motion to Philoponus and Buridan (124). He properly distinguishes between Cartesian mechanism and Hobbesian materialism (159). He also avoids the kind of ephemeral mathematics-theology connections that Leonhard Euler, the greatest 18th C. mathematician, mocked when he said to Diderot, "Monsieur,  $(a+b^n)/n = x$ ; donc Dieu existe, réponse!"—"Sir, a plus b to the nth divided by n equal x, therefore God exists. Reply!"

Nickel intersperses inspiring examples of the beauty of mathematics.

Every Christian teacher of mathematics should read this book.

## **Rev. Rousas John Rushdoony (1916-2001), B.A., B.D., M.A., Ph.D., Founder, Chalcedon Foundation:**

Few books of recent years are of equal importance to James Nickel's pioneering work *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* It provides the theological foundation for mathematics and more. No theologian or pastor can avoid Nickel's thesis without serious intellectual loss and crippling. Creationism can only avoid Nickel's study at its own serious loss. Anyone reading this book will have his thinking challenged or altered.

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## **Vern S. Poythress, B.S., Ph. D., M.Div., Th.M., M.Litt., D.Th., Professor of New Testament Interpretation, Westminster Theological Seminary:**

Mr. Nickel's manuscript is an excellent one, and I recommend it highly for publication. There is no other book-length work of its kind on the market, and it fills a real need for people who are interested in a Christian approach to knowledge, and above all in a reform of education for the benefit of Christian schools. Moreover, Mr. Nickel has succeeded in writing clearly and simply, so that the book is intelligible to high school students, but profound enough to stimulate university professors as well.

## **Doug Phillips, Esq, President, Vision Forum:**

As a child, I was a miserable failure at math. In high school, I barely squeaked by. During my college years, I became one of the few graduates to get a degree without taking a math course. Math never seemed meaningful to me. Yet, less than ten years after my graduation, I helped to develop the math component of a home school curriculum. What happened? As a 21-year-old, I was given *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* This outstanding Christian book revolutionized my thinking and gave me an appreciation for "rithmetic." Finally, I saw the relevance of this foundational discipline to my Christian walk. More importantly, I learned a distinctively biblical approach to the study and application of math. Every home school needs this book. This is not a curriculum, but a book designed to transform your math curriculum into a delightful, meaningful experience for the student. It is written at a level that even Mom and Dad can understand! Clear, thought provoking, indispensable.

## **Mark Sonmor, Alpha Omega Institute:**

We are always excited when we can recommend good resources to our readers. However, to simply say that *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* is a good book is like saying Michael Jordan is a good basketball player. Even though the statement is true, it falls woefully short of conveying its full meaning. For someone like me, who floundered dimly through high school algebra constantly asking, "When am I ever going to need this?", author James D. Nickel has opened a door to a world of numbers and relationships that finally have significance and meaning. Since they reflect the mind and nature of God, we as believers, can have a fuller understanding of the character of our Creator.

For example, whether we look at the spiral of a galaxy, a hurricane, or the cochlea of the human ear, we see recurring mathematical themes. The hexagonal design of a honeycomb "just happens" to be the most mathematically since it uses the minimal amount of surface area. Nickel lists many more exciting examples that should cause anyone to acknowledge and praise our Creator.

Sadly, that is not always the case. Many praise mere man and echo the words of John W. Sullivan who said, "We are the lawgivers of the universe; it is even possible that we can experience nothing but what we have created and that the greatest of our mathematical creations is the material universe itself."

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Man has always had the challenge of placing faith in his own reason or in God. It is evident throughout the first half of this book, how well man has responded. By relating key movements in science, philosophy, theology, and the history of Christianity, Nickel shows the dilemma that arises when modern man rejects absolute truth. "In essence," he says, "unbelieving scientists can do science only because they operate secretly on Christian premises while denying that faith." After all, why does math work at all? Why is it consistent? How does finite man deal with the concept of infinity?

Furthermore, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* is an excellent model for all Christians who wish to reinterpret their disciplines, professions, or any area of life from a Biblical position. With the disciplines of science dominated by secular thought, it is instructive to see that even a topic like this, can be taught from a distinctly Biblical perspective.

So, is this book reserved for scientists, theologians, or those who love math? Absolutely not. Whether you are a university professor, a home educator or someone who simply hates math, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* is especially for you. This book is for all Christians who want to bring all of life into a Godly frame of mind — even mathematics!

## **Peter Frogley, B.A., Dip Ed. (Art), Director, Light Educational Ministries, Australia:**

James Nickel took a huge step of faith to leave the USA in 1982 to travel with a new wife and young son to a village of 300 people in the north of South Australia to teach at a fledgling Christian school of a dozen students. It was there in Booleroo Centre that the Lord led James to find a richness in mathematics that few dream of and even fewer understand. After several years of pondering God's intent in mathematics James began to record his findings, ultimately developing and refining them into a book that demonstrates beyond doubt that God is not silent when it comes to mathematics.

## **Peter Cain, L.L.B (Hon), B. Math (Hon), Dip. Ed.**

Having taken my seat in the witness box I had little idea about what was to come next. I had been called to appear in the Family Court of the Australian Capital Territory to answer some "questions" about the curriculum of the Christian school of which I was the Principal and main secondary teacher. There had been an unfortunate family separation and the non-Christian father did not want his child in the school chosen by the mother, a Christian. More unfortunately, the father's lawyer was about to begin what was to be a forty-five minute "grilling" in an attempt to highlight any deficiencies in our school.

As the father's advocate moved me from one area of the school's curriculum and administration to another, the magistrate interrupted. He had been scanning our documents during this examination, but now stopped it and asked me, "What does faith have to do with mathematics?" I believe that I gave a more than satisfactory answer and I largely credit this book and its author for the ability to do so. Having had the privilege of working alongside James Nickel for about three years and absorbing

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his scholarly and spiritually insightful approach to the study of mathematics, I knew that I was prepared “to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope [that in mathematics, God is not silent] that you have” (I Peter 3:15).

This book is groundbreaking in that it presents a clearly understandable Christian worldview explanation of the meaning and purpose of mathematics, as well as giving guidelines for the practical outworking of its theological and historical conclusions. If there was one book I was asked to recommend as a Biblical explanation of mathematics, then it would be this one. The style is easy, the layout clear and there is extension for the keener students with review and discussion questions, along with expansive footnotes and a full reading list.

Paul wrote in Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

James Nickel has shown how one can see both God at work and God in His nature, as evidenced in the mathematical patterns and structures of the universe. As well, God has given the mind of His creature man an ability to organise his thoughts mathematically to better understand the world, and to provide insights into its workings. I trust this new edition finds its way into the curricula of every Christian schooling institution and home. For teachers, it provides a rationale and blueprint for their program; for the student, the beginning of an understanding of why, in mathematics, God is not silent.

## **Hearts and Minds:**

*Mathematics: Is God Silent?* J. Nickel (Ross House Books): A very easy read, this handsome book surveys many of the great mathematicians and illustrates how their Christian assumptions about God and God's creation led to their systematic work in the field of numbers. If God speaks to all of life - as the Bible insists! - then God surely has something to say to math.

## **Dallas Willard, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California:**

A very helpful resource for beginning the task of integration of academic areas and the knowledge content of Christian teaching is James Nickel, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?*

## **Phillip Lestmann, Ph.D., Professor of Mathematics, Bryan College:**

Dr. Lestmann has created a colorful presentation (slide show) of the book *Mathematics: Is God Silent?* that he uses in his classroom teaching.

## **Douglas Osborn, President of Biblical Integration Resources:**

Any Christian that is a student or teacher of mathematics ought to read this excellent volume.

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Teachers of science and religion will also find it quite fascinating. Citing well-documented historical sources and using cogent argumentation, it overwhelmingly convinces the reader that mathematics ought to be studied and taught from a distinctly Biblical perspective.

His 410-page volume is well organized and thorough. It is divided into chapters and sections that can easily be read as stand-alone excerpts. The bulk of his book focuses on the historical development of mathematics containing brief biographies of famous mathematicians arranged chronologically. Citing numerous historical sources, he notes each mathematician's background, motivation for study and discovery, note-worthy contributions to the field, and excerpts from their own writings. In this manner, Nickel clearly emphasizes the Christian influence and motivation for discovery that compelled many of these mathematicians to discover and examine the underlying mathematical laws governing God's creation.

In the second half of his book, Nickel offers an analysis of the objectives of a biblical Christian approach to mathematics. He begins by articulating and summarizing the worldview underpinnings of a biblical Christian worldview and then expounds on a myriad of mathematical concepts displayed in the wonders of God's creation. He concludes this section by addressing pedagogical issues Christian teachers ought to incorporate into their mathematics lessons. Nickels includes an extensive annotated bibliography of resources Christian mathematics teachers will find invaluable. Thank-you, Mr. Nickels, for your ground-breaking resource informing us of the distinctly Biblical approach to the study and teaching of mathematics.