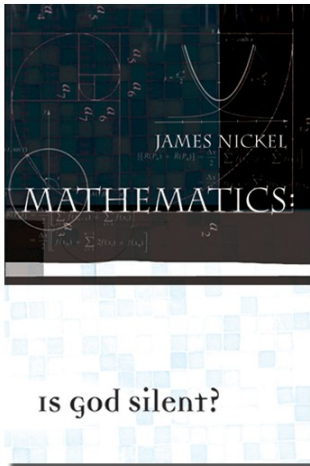


# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

People have often asked me, "How did you decide to write your book?" Or, "How long did it take you to write it?" My answer to the latter query is usually, "My entire lifetime."



For a Biblical Christian, writing a book flows out of a life lived in the calling of God for the glory of God. God prepares a writer for his work. A writer never writes anything in a "vacuum." God's providential and guiding hand can be seen in every minutia of a writer's life.

Let's entitle the following as "The History of Mathematics: Is God Silent? A personal testimony of God's calling and God's faithfulness."

## **Elementary school**

Reared on a farm in Dinuba, CA, a small San Joaquin valley town twenty miles south of Fresno, I started school in 1957. I attended Windsor Elementary school (2 grades/room) and graduated from Grandview Elementary school in 1965. I received consistently good grades in arithmetic.

Grandview Principal Marvin Rempel, on the occasion of my 8th grade graduation, signed my "autograph book" writing, "To Jim, a real scholar." It is amazing the impact that a few choice words can have on a life; these words made a very impressionable imprint on my heart at that time. My ensuing life confirmed these words to be "prophetic" words.

## **High school**

# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

I attended Immanuel Academy in Reedley, CA (1965-1969), a Mennonite Brethren High School where, in athletics, I played basketball. In my senior year, our team had a 24-6 won/lost record and placed third in the sectional finals (not bad for a school with 180 students competing against schools with enrollments, in some cases, of two to three thousand).

I had a wonderful math teacher in [Wilbert Reimer](#). On his math tests he would ask questions like, "Who is buried in Grant's tomb?" "When was the War of 1812 fought?"

Because of him, I grew to love Algebra and Geometry and, in essence, mathematics.

30 years later, at a high school reunion, a fellow student, Lynette Klassen Block, approached me saying with gratefulness, "Thanks for helping me in algebra ... you were so smart." I don't recall helping her but she sure did!

## College years

In the fall of 1969, as I approached these formative years, I wondered, "What shall be the focus of my studies?"

My Dad's wise advice, "Do what you like to do." Well, I liked mathematics.

Richard Knaak, the father of Lynette Knaak Grauman – a high school classmate, approached me "out of the blue" one Sunday morning before church with this advice, "You ought to go into mathematics." Was this another "prophetic" word?

Well, I knew math in college would be hard and that my sister, Janice, who always helped me with the real tough problems was attending Seattle Pacific

# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

University in Washington – I would be alone – but I “went for it.”

My teacher in freshman Calculus at Reedley Junior College was a former World War II B17 bombardier, Mr. Larry Walker. For the first semester, he gave me a C in this class! Also, my first semester English teacher was Mrs. Bryant. She gave me an F on my first written essay! These marks motivated me to do better! From then on, I received straight As in my math courses (except for an infrequent B). In English, Mrs. Bryant taught me the “craft of writing” (which I did enjoy), but this initial deposit would lay dormant for many years.

I transferred to Fresno State College for my final two years. Although I still got As in every math class, my professors drilled me in dry formalism semester after semester. As the course material advanced beyond differential and integral calculus, it seemed like I had entered into an n dimensional domain of transcendent abstract analysis, aimed not at the Elysian fields of delight, but at the specter of the null and the void. These spiraling integrations into the void numbed and dizzied my mind. The phrase – integration into the void – was coined by the great 20th century Christian apologist Cornelius Van Til of whom we will hear more about later. I still managed, in 1973, to receive my undergraduate degree in mathematics (graduating summa cum laude – which proves that getting good grades does not mean that you have been properly educated). On graduation day I made an internal vow, “I will never open another math book again as long as I live.” Fortunately, I rescinded that vow some 5 years later. My response to four years of university training is a sad commentary on the state of university education then and, even more so, today.

## **The Job Hunt**

I tested the “vocational waters” during the summer months after college graduation. I thought about going into actuarial science (which required going to

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

graduate school) and computer programming. I even took a postal clerk exam! I sent out many a resume applying as a computer programmer. Every resume was "returned to sender" with the appropriate form-letter rejection. Then, one summer Sunday morning, my Dad and I, instead of going to Sunday School, went to the local news stand in Reedley and we bought the Sunday issue of the Los Angeles Times. In it, I saw an advertisement for a position in Pt. Mugu, CA, as a mathematical analyst. No training or experience was necessary (just a degree in Physics or Mathematics was required). So, I applied and on August 8, 1973, I drove my 1973 Chevy Nova through the security gates of the United States Naval Air Base in Pt. Mugu, CA, for my first day of post-college work. My job title was Junior Mathematical Analyst. My company: Computer Sciences Corporation. My pay: \$3.17/hour.

### **The Ventura Years**

The years from 1973 to 1976 were wonderful years. I lived in a studio apartment (rent: \$140/month) in Ventura, CA, and went to a lively, charismatic church called Peoples Church. There I met and made many new friends, one being Paul Hawkins (a high school math teacher), of whom we will hear more about later.

At work, I had to refresh my understanding of polar coordinates, Greenwich Mean Time, and the octal (base 8) number system – in order to read computer "dumps." I wrote programs on paper coding sheets. Keypunch operators transferred these sheets to "punched cards." A card reader processed these cards into the Navy's old workhorse computer, the IBM 7094. These programs monitored the test flight trajectories of the F14-A "Tomcat" and its multiple-warhead missile test firings. I worked on the "graveyard" shift (12 midnight to 8:00 AM) and I will always remember our 4:00 AM "break-time" volleyball games played within earshot of the Pacific surf. I was soon promoted to the position of Mathematical Analyst (and the day shift) and wrote assembly language programs

# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

that monitored the progress of the Navy's tests of the Tomahawk Cruise Missile (this missile was used in the early 1990s with remarkable success in the Persian Gulf War).

## Change in Direction

In December of 1975, President Ford cut the Defense budget (due to America's withdrawal from the Vietnam War) and I was eventually laid off. I sensed that God wanted me to make a major change in direction and I ended up attending Bethany Fellowship Missionary Training Center in Minneapolis, MN. I arrived on campus in September of 1976 with the mission field "on my mind" and mathematics "out of mind."

The school had a unique program where the students worked in industries on campus in order to offset their tuition and room and board. I was first assigned to an "assembly line" where we made vacation "pop up" trailers. I made a casual remark during a meal that I had experience in computers and, before I knew it, I was transferred to the Data Processing Department and I spend one year helping redesign the Order Entry and Accounting System for Bethany House Publishers, a division of Bethany Fellowship. I worked on one of the original DEC PDP-3150 mini-computers. It had a whopping 64KB of memory, for you computer enthusiasts.

## Off to Hawaii

As part of Bethany's missionary training program, every student was required to spend their third year off campus working with churches or ministries in America or overseas. I had kept in touch with Paul Hawkins, my friend from Ventura, who was now in a leadership position with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) at their international base in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. In fact, he was Principal of YWAM's

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

International Christian Schools and head math teacher. Paul requested that I come to Hawaii for the school year of 1978-1979 and teach mathematics. He was going to do a lot of travelling that year and he needed a replacement math teacher. Bethany approved of the idea and I set foot on Hawaiian soil on August 31, 1978.

Paul had an apostolic vision for Christian Education but he could give little practical guidance (he was a pioneer visionary, not a cultivator of that vision). My spirit was "strangely warmed" by this vision and the connection of mathematics to it. Mathematics was back "on my mind." Paul did advise me to get a book entitled *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective*. A fledgling publishing house called Ross House Books published this book in 1976. It was beyond my faintest conception at that time that this publishing house would eventually publish my math book twelve years later. Paul warned me to ignore the "Calvinism" in this book (YWAM was strongly Arminian in theology and a devotee of the theology of Charles Grandison Finney). Well, I did not ignore the Calvinism (much to Paul's chagrin, I'm sure) for it was this book's exploration of the full-orbed nature of the Christian Faith that gave me the foundational intellectual basis for writing the math book.

In *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* I read and re-read the essay entitled "A Biblical View of Mathematics," written by Professor Vern S. Poythress. I found out years later, via personal correspondence with Dr. Poythress (now Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, PA), that he had taught mathematics at Fresno State College, my alma mater! In fact, his last year of teaching there was in 1971. I came to the school in 1972. I missed him by one year! This article by Poythress and all of the other articles were initially "out of my league." In other words, the depth of Biblical scholarship was "above my head." It took me several years of reading and hard thinking before I could finally upgrade myself to that level of analysis.

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

God touched my heart in a unique way on the Kona Coast of Hawaii ... with its extraordinary and ravishing sunsets, with its odoriferous and multi-colored flowers, with its surf crashing 300 yards away from my room.

I spent that year teaching mathematics to junior high and high school students. I admit that my "rookie" year of teaching was less than perfect. I seemed to be "groping" for resolution and answers to the burning question: How does one teach mathematics from a truly Biblical Christian perspective? Here are a few examples of how I tried to "integrate" mathematics with the Christian faith. First, I connected the study of statistics with World Missions (e.g., percentage of believers in different countries) using the data provided by the United States Center for World Missions in Pasadena, CA. Second, I illustrated Biblical truths with mathematical expressions. For an example, I illustrated the Biblical truth, "With God, nothing is impossible" as "two negatives equate to a ringing positive." In the arithmetic of negative numbers  $-(-7) = +7!$  Two negatives equal a positive.

Deep down, I knew that I was only scratching the surface with these attempts at "integration." Poythress had opened the lock to the answer with his essay (and Van Til had the key) ... I had to continue my reading and reflective study.

Other key contacts made in Hawaii:

1. I met Lila, also a schoolteacher at the International Christian Schools, who was to become my wife.
2. Peter Frogley, an Australian educator, replaced Paul Hawkins as Principal of the International Christian Schools when Paul left for his frequent trips. Both Peter and I "connected" from the "get go."
3. Dr. Glenn R. Martin, professor of Social Sciences at Marion College (now known as Indiana Wesleyan University) taught a summer seminar entitled "How Should

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

We Then Teach?" In this seminar, Dr. Martin thoroughly documented the Biblical World View and presented an historical approach to the history of the philosophy of ideas. As he spoke, he challenged me to reinterpret mathematics from a distinctively Biblical Christian perspective.

4. Margaret McIntyre, another Australian educator, while in prayer, believed that God spoke to her concerning me saying, "Jim is My called man for mathematics."

5. I began to read R. J. Rushdoony's monthly Chalcedon Report (at the behest of Peter Frogley). Rushdoony had founded Ross House Books and was an articulate spokesman of the Van Til perspective. I was immediately impressed with Dr. Rushdoony's encyclopedic knowledge, deep-rooted and comprehensive Calvinistic and God-centered theology, and insightful wisdom soaked in Biblical truths.

6. Peter Frogley also gave me a printed copy of a "word of exhortation" concerning Christian School Curriculum from Barry Emmett, Principal of Kidron Christian School in Palmer, Alaska. It was a profound "word" in many ways. Here are some excerpts, as they relate to science and mathematics:

"... the basis, the foundation of any educational endeavor [is] that rock, the Lord Jesus Christ ... each discipline is to be a revelation of Christ, each from its own perspective, from its own frame of reference point to Jesus ... Even as every name of Christ reveals a portion of truth ... science reveal[s] Jesus as creator and sustainer of life, history as God working through men to achieve His divine purpose, mathematics as a language describing God's work ... Science is a study of the handiwork of God, that men may marvel ... For even as men of science have better tools and equipment to observe and record nature, even so have [God's] scientists all these advantages, plus the wisdom and knowledge of [God's] Holy Spirit ... There is complexity and simplicity. This is the purpose of mathematics: to record complexity in simple form, to bring order – to establish relationships. Mathematics in brevity can interpret [where] English, even with many words, must flounder. The great laws of the physical universe can be conveyed simply: Force = mass times acceleration, Energy = mass times the

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

speed of light squared. Mathematics reveals God in a precise way no other discipline can. ... The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. Enlarge your vision until Jesus permeates and fills every pore. Let the glory and majesty of the Lord come out from your academic materials..."

### Back to Bethany

I returned to Minneapolis for my final year of study at Bethany (after a summer tour of Southeast Asia visiting the Philippines and Indonesia). During this year I corresponded with (1) Lila (actually, this correspondence turned out to be courtship letters) and (2) with Peter Frogley who was back in Australia working in Christian Education. I sensed God's directions to (1) marry Lila and (2) go to Australia (not necessarily in that order).

During this year, I also began to devote myself more to writing (I wrote my senior thesis on the "New Covenant" while in Hawaii). New York Pastor [Malcolm Smith](#), whom I met by correspondence in 1977, mentored me in my writing through several of his Bible Correspondence Courses (all requiring essay responses). Pastor Smith, originally from England where he was mentored by the great British exegete Martyn Lloyd-Jones, even published one of my essays in his monthly report, "The Living Word." I entitled this essay, my first published writing, "The Love of God" and it was based upon one of my experiences in the Philippines.

I graduated from Bethany in May of 1980 and was required by the school's rules to remain on campus until August. During the summer of 1980, I sensed God telling me with regards to mathematics, "Look at what I have done in history." So, I purchased two books to get me going with that aspect of my study: (1) *An Introduction to the History of Mathematics* by Howard Eves and (2) *Mathematics in Western Culture* by Morris Kline. The writings of Kline would turn out to be a

# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

catalyst in my subsequent studies in mathematics.

I also began to "watch for math books" in bookshops (particularly used bookshops) and in libraries. Bookshops and libraries are two of my favorite places to visit. I love to leisurely browse bookshelves. And, I just love the "smell" of books, old and new. I could, if I had the time, recount a multitude of stories about how God guided me to specific books at specific times as my budding research into mathematics began to flower.

## **Marriage and Australia, in that order**

Lila and I set our marriage date as November 1, 1980 (in Shreveport, LA, Lila's hometown). I fully intended upon moving to Australia soon afterwards. But this was not to be ... the release of our visas was delayed for about one year. Lila and I spent that year in Ventura, CA, where I worked for a funeral home (of all things to do the first year of one's marriage!). In that year, I must have been involved with over 300 funerals (enough for several lifetimes as far as I am concerned).

Knowing that I was eventually going to teach mathematics in Australia, I tried to prepare as I continued my studies and research.

In December of 1981, our visa application was finally approved. Lila and I (plus baby Daniel, born on July 27, 1981) traveled from Ventura to Dinuba to visit my parents and to pack our gear.

Sometime in 1981 Paul Hawkins had written to me and told about the January 26, 1981 issue of Newsweek magazine. In that issue, Morris Kline had written an important essay entitled "Mathematics: From Precision to Doubt in 100 Years" based upon his most recent book "Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty" (published in 1980).

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

During our stay in Dinuba, as we were packing and shipping our gear, I hit the used bookshops and libraries. I checked out two books from the Dinuba Public Library. The Time-Life publication by David Bergamini entitled *Mathematics* and Morris Kline's *Mathematics and the Physical World*. I took copious notes of both books. Both books put mathematics squarely into its historical and scientific context (a context that I would eventually use as a basis for my math book). Kline also quoted some amazing statements made by Johannes Kepler – psalms of praise to God as a result of his planetary observations. I had never seen or heard anything like it! Here is one quote from Kepler's 1619 publication *The Harmonies of the World*:

"The wisdom of the Lord is infinite; so also are His glory and His power. Ye heavens, sing His praises! Sun, moon, and planets glorify Him in your ineffable language! Celestial harmonies, all ye who comprehend His marvelous works, praise Him. And thou, my soul, praise thy Creator! It is by Him and in Him that all exists. That which we know best is comprised in Him, as well as in our vain science. To him be praise, honor, and glory throughout eternity."

It was through the careful study of Kline's book, *Mathematics and the Physical World*, that my eyes were opened (so, "this" is what all "that" meant in college!). I entered the mathematical Elysium; a region furnished with rich fields, groves, shades, streams – a domain of delight consisting of the pleasurable beholding of God's great and marvelous works as per Psalm 111:2, "The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them." I ended up using this verse as a dedicatory verse of my math book.

### **The Land "Down Under"**

We landed in Australia on March 14, 1982. Before I left the United States, I had

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

asked my mother to find me a copy of Kline's *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty*. Faithful mother as she was, she did even better than that. She mailed me the book I requested and two additional sources. She found a Dover Publications reprint of Kline's *Mathematics and the Physical World* and James R. Newman's four-volume *The World of Mathematics* (published in 1956). She must have seen me reading Kline's book during my stay with her and she must have heard me mentioning seeing Newman's volumes in a used bookshop. Well, she went to that bookshop and got the four-volume set for me. It contains a wealth of historical information and rare mathematical reprints (In 2000, Dover Publications reprinted this quintessential work).

I read Kline's *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty* with wonderment. For the first time, I saw clearly documented the fruits of humanistic philosophy in the realm of mathematics. I needed to read Poythress again! At one point in my reading of Kline, I cornered Peter Frogley, showed him Kline's book, and exclaimed, "God has an answer for this!"

In my teaching I began to make use of the textbooks written by a veteran public school mathematics teacher Harold Jacobs. Many years later, this time through e-mail, I contacted him and found out that he was a Christian (and a member of John MacArthur's church in Southern California). The texts by Jacobs were fun to teach from. Many times he cast the context of his instruction in historical and scientific molds. Jacobs, too, had drawn deep from the well of Morris Kline's works (Jacobs told me later that he and Kline had once worked together on an educational project in New York).

I also began to read a newsletter published by Gary North and entitled *The Biblical Educator* (David Chilton was the editor) and I read many of Rushdoony's works (especially his *Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum*, *The One and the Many*, *By What Standard?* and *The Mythology of Science*). I began to see more

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

clearly that Cornelius Van Til's presuppositional and Biblical approach to knowledge was the key to unlocking the door to a proper understanding of mathematics (as Poythress had also noted).

In The Biblical Educator newsletter, I came across an excellent series of essays written by veteran Christian mathematics teacher Larry Zimmerman. His analysis was very helpful and instructive. I borrowed the title of these essays as the eventual title of my math book, *Mathematics: Is God Silent?*

In 1983, I began to write some preliminary notes based upon my research to date. These notes formed the foundation from which I eventually wrote the "Mathematics: Is God Silent?" manuscript. Doors began to open for me to share my views with the wider public. I was associated with Peter Frogley while in Australia and he was the director of Light Educational Ministries (a ministry he founded in 1979). In 1983, LEM began to branch out more by holding educational seminars.

I can vividly remember the first time that I spoke to a group of teachers about my findings in mathematics. The date was July 26, 1984. The place: Adelaide, SA. The school: Sunrise Christian School. The Principal: Bev Norsworthy. For three hours (from 9:00 AM to 12 noon) I fleshed out my findings. What I said definitely resonated with them.

More opportunities (in the form of education seminars) opened. I usually taught on issues in science, mathematics, history, and missions at these conferences. Another memorable conference was the "Able to Teach" conference held in Adelaide, SA from January 21-25, 1985. I can remember hearing a teacher remark (he did not know that I was within earshot) after one of my lectures on the history of mathematics, "That Nickel chap can sure light fires!" (Lighting fires was a "complementary" statement; in other words, this teacher's heart was "set

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

aflame" by what I had said).

Also in early 1985, LEM purchased its first personal computer. It was an Olivetti 2.77 megahertz machine, no hard drive, two 5½ inch floppy drives, monochrome monitor, and a whopping 64 KB of memory. The price tag: \$5,000 AUD!

On this machine, with the help of a word processor called Multimate, I began to write the prototype of the mathematics manuscript. My title: *Foundations in Mathematics*. LEM photocopied it and it found its way into the hands of many Australian educators. One teacher, Jeff Hall of Northern Beaches Christian School, remarked, "This is a must for every Mathematics Department in every Christian School. It is written in a very readable style and gives a Christian historical perspective to Mathematics. The book has been updated this year and has a second section that deals with the Christian teaching of Mathematics with curriculum objectives and a bibliography of Christian resources."

I also discovered in late 1984/early 1985 that Dr. Rushdoony was academic dean of a university in California (Valley Christian University – it is no longer in existence having been shut down by the state of California sometime in 1989). I made some contacts and decided to become a student at this school seeking an MA degree in education.

### **Meeting Rushdoony and Thoughts of Publication**

From February 2, 1985 to August 18, 1985, we returned to the United States for a visit with family and supporting churches. I started the MA program then. From June 17-21 of 1985, I attended some university seminars in Fresno, CA and met Dr. Rushdoony for the first time. I told him what I was doing in mathematics and he was very interested. He also recommended that I study the work of Nicole Oresme for some medieval insights into the origins of modern science.

# Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

Upon our return to Australia and as I was working on my Master's Degree (and, by implication, my Master's Thesis), I thought about the eventuality of publishing this thesis (which was going to be the fruits of my mathematics research). I began thinking about finding and making some tentative contacts with possible publishers.

I was awarded the MA degree in education on June 20, 1986. What I most highly treasure about receiving this degree is the signature of Dr. Rushdoony on the diploma.

In 1986, I began to read Stanley L. Jaki's works. Jaki is a Benedictine Priest, nuclear physicist, and science historian. His two works, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* and *Science and Creation: From Eternal Cycles to an Oscillating Universe* were particularly helpful. His footnotes lead me to many new mathematics resources. His erudite analysis of the rise modern science in the context of Biblical theology was eye opening, to say the least. I was able, much later (in 2000), to contact Dr. Jaki and talk to him by phone thanking him for his input into my thinking.

## **Permanent return to America**

On November 5, 1987, we returned to America for a visit. While staying with Lila's parents in Shreveport, we decided to stay permanently. Lila's dad had leukemia (he died in 1994) and she wanted to stay and be with him. This was a very tough decision to make and I made it on January 21, 1988.

We had previously scheduled a trip to California to visit my parents so we went ahead and did that. While in Dinuba, I called Dr. Rushdoony and asked him if I could visit him. He said, "Of course." So, at 6:00 AM on February 9, 1988, Lila

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

and I drove to Rushdoony's home in Vallecito, CA (near Yosemite National Park) arriving at 10:00 AM. He and his wife Dorothy were gracious and accommodating hosts. We talked about many things and I took copious notes of everything he said. Near the end of our visit (sometime after lunch), he asked me about the status of my work in mathematics (he had read my Master's Thesis). I told him of my plans to publish and he recommended that I proceed with haste. "It must be published," he said. He gave me some publishing contacts and told me to "keep him informed."

So, as the year 1988 progressed I was in search for two openings: (1) a job and (2) a publisher. From February to June of 1988 I received a "blank" on both counts. It was a rough time for me. In the middle of June, God began to turn the circumstances on both fronts:

1. On June 13, I interviewed with a natural gas company and was hired on June 28.
2. Three days later, on July 1, 1988, I received a letter from Dr. Rushdoony informing me that Ross House Books would publish my manuscript.

I found out many years later that Dr. Rushdoony, as a young writer, was assisted in his initial publishing efforts by several benefactors who, seeing the essential and critical nature of his work, decided that he too "must be published." As an older man, Dr. Rushdoony returned the favor to me, a young writer like he used to be. My gratitude to him for his faith in my work can never be repaid. I can only "pass it on" to the next generation (like he did) as God directs.

### **Publication!**

The manuscript was eventually published in September of 1990, a 126-page hardback. In the decade of the 1990s, I continued my research as time allowed.

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

My work and my young family of three (God added two girls, Joy and Margaret, to the Nickel clan; both born in Australia) took up most of my time. I also kept adding to my book collection. I now have a library of some 2,000 books although that is a far-cry from the number Dr. Rushdoony collected over a lifetime (about 40,000 it is reported – and I believe it; I've seen his library, he had to build another house to hold all his books!).

In late 1999/early 2000, I sensed in my spirit the necessity to return to the manuscript and revise it. This "sense" I have come to recognize, after many years, as the directive of the Holy Spirit.

Two months later I received a call from Ross House Books informing me that they were running out of the 1990 edition stock. They wanted to reprint. I asked, "Could this reprint be a complete revision?" They said, "Yes." This call confirmed to me that my inner "sense" was indeed directed by the Holy Spirit.

So, for the rest of 2000 I revised, corrected, and updated the manuscript. I also redesigned every graphic and line drawing in addition to adding many more. The Ross House Book editor, Andrea Schwartz, also gave me permission to completely redesign the book layout. Many thanks go to my mother-in-law, Mrs. Martin D. Allain, for allowing me to take three week-long trips to her camp house in Toledo Bend, Texas, where I could research and write in isolation from the many distractions of the modern world. Many thanks to Margaret, my youngest daughter, who came with me on these "retreats." She was my faithful companion, cook, and graphics designer advisor. And, last in the list but foremost in my mind, thanks to my wife Lila, who has had to lovingly "put up" with my personal and research idiosyncrasies over the past 20 years.

By early December of 2000, the manuscript was ready. But, Dr. Rushdoony's health was failing. I sent in a request to his son, Mark, "Could his father write a

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

few words of recommendation for the book?" This he did and the book was printed in February of 2001 (now a whopping 434 pages!). Dr. Rushdoony died in April of 2001. His son told me that he saw the book but he was too weak to read it. I'm sure that he would have enjoyed it.

### **My charge to you**

I tell this story to encourage the listener/reader to press on in your unique calling under God. As you do, God will be faithful to you as He was (and is) to me. Our lives are webs of His weaving; each strand is ordained of Him ... whether it be, as in my case:

... a signed comment by an elementary school principal, or  
... a great high school mathematics teacher, or  
... a father's wise counsel, or  
... advice "out of the blue" by a friend's father one Sunday morning before church, or  
... a tough College English teacher, or  
... receiving a "C" from a former B17 bombardier turned calculus instructor, or  
... the teaching of abstract "integrations into the void" by college math professors, or  
... key books "crossing my path" or  
... writers, past and present, living and dead, who have inspired me and guided me with their words, or  
... friends used by God at crucial crossroads (a school principal looking for a math teacher, a New York Pastor mentoring someone via letter that he never has personally met, or a wise, seasoned scholar giving to a young, inexperienced writer his time, interest, and support).

... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

work within us both to will and to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). I have learned that "working out your salvation" does require work, needless to say. But this work is ultimately energized by God; it is not of my doing. So, as I list things that I have done or learned in the working out of God's calling in my life, remember the source of grace from whence comes the ability to do or to learn:

1. Cultivate friends wherever God has placed you.
2. Do "what it takes" to fulfill His calling; in my case, fulfilling God's calling took uncountable hours of private study, study that no one saw except God and my family.
3. Be willing to take risks.
4. Be willing to make tough decisions.
5. Be content with the lot (portion) God has gifted you with (i.e., intellect, abilities, talents, etc.).
6. Recognize God's ordering of all events in your life (as in my case, whether it be job layoffs, delays in release of Visa documents, illnesses, or rejection of job applications and publishing ventures).
7. Make those efforts to make a phone call or to go see someone.
8. Be persistent, diligent, and, as the great political statesman Sir Winston Churchill once advised, "Never give up."
9. Remember that "life is a series of adjustments" (some wise counsel given to me by my great Uncle Jonah Nickel on his deathbed). So, be willing to adjust to God's ordination of events in the grace that He always will provide.
10. Saturate yourself in the objective Word of God and also learn to be sensitive to the "inner nudging" of the Holy Spirit's personal directives in your life.
11. Be sure to locate and thank people that have made positive inputs in your life.
12. And finally, enjoy the scenery on life's pathway ... take time to relish in a sunset, a flower's fragrance ... the wonders of God's creation.

## Why James Nickel wrote "Mathematics: Is God Silent?"

As you work out God's calling in your life, a transfer will begin to take place. God's pleasure will become your pleasure. You will come to "delight to do His will."

For me, Psalm 111:2 has become my "life verse" in God's calling:

"The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them."

[Order "Mathematics: Is God Silent"](#)