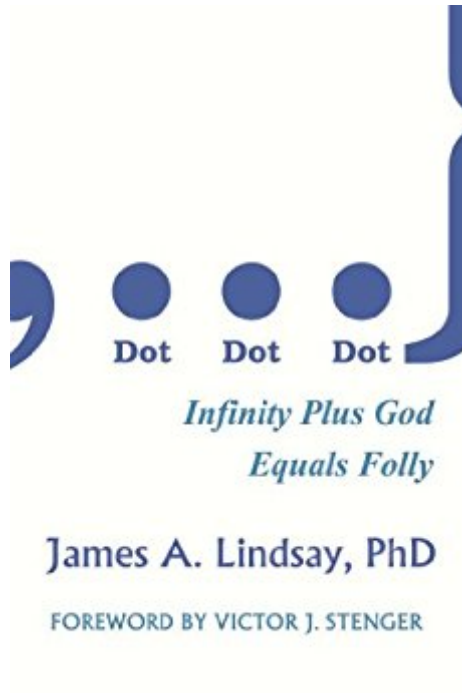


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Dot, Dot, Dot: Infinity Plus God Equals Folly



Synopsis

Infinity and God have been close bedfellows over the recent millennia of human thought. But this is James A. Lindsay's point. These two ideas are thought, mere concepts. Lindsay shows in a concise and readable manner that infinity is an abstraction, and shows that, in all likelihood, so is God, particularly if he has infinite properties. This book is about math. It is about God. It is about stressing the importance of not confusing these two ideas with reality. Never the twain shall meet. A short and engaging read on the meeting of two huge ideas, infinity and God, that leaves us seeing both as abstract ideas that may have nothing to do with reality. Honest and accessible, Dot, Dot, Dot is a great little book to stretch your thinking. - Peter Boghossian, author of A Manual for Creating Atheists "Timely, important and very readable, this book pulls the rug from under theists' feet." - Jonathan MS Pearce, The Little Book of Unholy Questions "Read this to avoid making any more cardinal sins and learn how much math is an amazing human endeavor." - Aaron Adair, PhD, The Star of Bethlehem: A Skeptical View

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Customer Reviews

This is a book that I would recommend to those theologians who can understand it because they

can sharpen their thinking on some aspects of theology. It is also a nice introductory text about some aspects of mathematics. After reading this book I must say that it did nothing to shatter my faith and Christians should not be afraid to read it. The book sets out to prove mathematically that: [1] God does not exist or at the very least [2] there is almost certainty of the non-existence of God. I note that nowhere (unless I missed it) does the author give us a clear definition of what is meant by God. The author's main approach seems to be to prove that any type of god he looks at does not exist. As an amusing aside I mention that one physicist/mathematician proved mathematically that bumble bees cannot fly. The assumption was that the wings of bumble bees support flight by laminar motion. Since most of us have seen bumble bees fly we know that something was wrong about the proof! The assumption of laminar flow was the problem and as far as I recall bumble bees fly by using vortex shedding. So both the assumptions and the mathematics used have to be correct in order to avoid nonsense. I would point out that there is no universal consensus amongst mathematicians about whether mathematics is a human invention or an independent reality. (For more discussion see *Meaning in Mathematics*, edited by J Polkinghorne, Oxford University Press, 2011.) The author tells us that he has a viewpoint lying between the "intuitionists" and "formalism" that is informed by "fictionalism". Thus it appears that he views mathematics as being essentially a "human invention" and rejects Platonism (i.e.

Infinity is a really, really weird concept. It takes any intuitions we have and makes us say apparently silly things. But there are rigorous ways of dealing with infinity, but there are also limitations, even for the most brilliant mathematicians. One of the points is that you never really reach infinity. No matter where you start on a number line or how long you count forward, you never even get closer to infinity. This means that it is not possible to use something finite to create an infinite set. That is, you cannot construct infinity from finite sets and operations. Hence we get lazy when writing a set that is supposed to go on forever with ∞ (hence the title of the book). And yet we can talk about infinite sets. In fact, we can talk about different sized infinities. If that didn't make sense to you, then you are getting the point about how weird infinity is. In this book, mathematician James Lindsay shows many important points about how infinity is used and understood by mathematicians and how the terminology is poorly used in other contexts, especially when applied to God. In many ways the book is focused on problems with the infinite god concept, but what I found as one of the more interesting threads running through the book is the problem with mathematical Platonism. What Lindsay shows very well is how much math is a human project. We chose the various axioms and definitions, and those different choices can lead to all sorts of amazing conclusions. But showing

how much math is a human invention, it shows that there isn't really a "true form" of the set of all rational numbers and the like. We chose the rules. Historically, there have been arguments about whether negative numbers are really numbers, or if i is a number or not. Or even if zero is a number!

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