



Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing
Available August 2014
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"My major thrust in this book is to come alongside you, point and say, 'Look. Look carefully. Listen closely. Do you see? Do you hear?' There are a million signposts pointing toward the specific truth of God in Christ. I've seen many of them. But God is speaking to you too. Look and see. Listen and hear."

Jim Sire's final book: practical, generative, intellectual, emotional, provocative

In his final book which he calls his "last will and testament," Jim Sire provides for readers a culmination of his career in apologetics. Fresh material that outlines his maturation as a scholar since the publication of *The Universe Next Door*, *Apologetics Beyond Reason* is no mere repackaging of previous work. Basing the book around the argument, "There is everything. Therefore there is a God. Either you see this or you don't," Sire walks the reader through his apologetic development.

What was your reasoning for writing *Apologetics Beyond Reason*?

Sire: I have devoted most of my books on apologetics to rational forms of argument. I have been reticent until the last few years to write much about my own religious experience, believing that religious experience gives only a weak rationale for Christian faith. Most of my fellow apologists seem to have the same "feeling" about the role of intuition and sudden apprehension. This book makes up for this missing element in my own apologetic corpus and perhaps it helps fill the gap in apologetics in general.

What are the important thoughts you are trying to convey to readers?

Sire: The central thesis in the book is that everything that exists is an argument for the existence of God as understood in biblical faith. "Look and see. Listen and hear" is a biblical theme, not just in reference to the Bible. It applies to the Word as embodied in the world God has created and in the amazing complexity and beauty of every human being. In our response to the world and the Word of God we often experience special moments of insight, triggered by what Peter Berger calls signals of transcendence. Os Guinness calls them holes torn in life. When we have these experiences, sometimes they are best understood as a sudden recognition of the presence of God. Even the less spectacular but special experiences are best understood as the presence of God in the world around us. Without God . . . well . . . without God there is nothing. Ultimately everything – good and evil, the beautiful and the beastly, the weak and the strong, the pure and the impure – argues for the existence of God, not only by logic (though by that too) but by sudden apprehension. We "see" and "hear," and speechless we breathe . . . Aaah!

One distinctive is my emphasis on the eclectic and messy nature of apologetics. There is no best way to do or to think about apologetics.

A second distinctive is my attention to literature. I use it in three different ways to show that: (1) by a story, the autonomy of human reason does not provide a foundation for either

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apologetics or intellectual endeavor in general; (2) some literature focusing on distinct signals of transcendence provides an important apologetic on its own; and (3) even literature embodying a non-Christian worldview can be seen as a signal of transcendence.

What do you hope the scholarly community can take away from *Apologetics Beyond Reason*?

Sire: (1) A heavy focus on direct perception—sudden intuition that lasts to become convincing.

(2) A reminder of a view of literature that made a great contribution to literary study some fifty years ago but has too often been lost in a blast from the nihilistic world of postmodernism. In the university and even in high school, the study of literature, including the Bible, has rejected close attention to the straightforward meaning of the text and replaced this with a hermeneutics of suspicion—the deconstruction of rational discourse and creative storytelling, and the attention to the psychological and sociological categories of Marxism, feminism and gender.

In the 1960s and early 70s, I developed my own “theory of literature,” not a whit, I think, invented by me, but constructed from the best of literary theory and critical practice of New Criticism, historical criticism and worldview analysis. I try to show how this way of “seeing” literature is also a way of recognizing the truth of the Christian faith and, at times, the presence of God.

(3) A clever critique of the autonomy of human reason based (ironically) on a deconstructive reading of a story by Stanislaw Lem.



James W. Sire, author of:
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“Over the last twenty-five years, no one has written so widely and helpfully about the challenge facing Christian students as James Sire. Page upon page, year after year, he has set before a generation the meaning of the Christian faith – intellectually rich and profoundly true – but always in tension with the ideas and issues of our time.”

– *Steven Garber*, author of *Visions of Vocation, on Habits of the Mind*.

The Lifelong Apologist

James W. Sire (PhD, University of Missouri), formerly a senior editor at InterVarsity Press, is an active speaker and writer.

Born on a ranch on the rim of the Nebraska Sandhills, Sire has been an officer in the Army, a college professor of English literature, philosophy and theology, the chief editor of InterVarsity Press (a Christian publisher of books for thoughtful readers), a lecturer at over two hundred universities in the United States, Canada, Eastern and Western Europe and Asia, and the author of twenty books on literature, philosophy and the Christian faith.

Sire holds a BA in chemistry and English from the University of Nebraska, an MA in English from Washington State College (now University) and a PhD in English from the University of Missouri.

His book *The Universe Next Door*, published in 1976 and now in its fifth edition, has sold over 350,000 copies and has been translated into nineteen foreign languages. His other InterVarsity Press books and Bible studies include *Scripture Twisting*, *Discipleship of the Mind*, *Chris Chrisman Goes to College*, *Why Should Anyone Believe Anything at All?*, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling*, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*, *Learning to Pray Through the Psalms*, *Why Good Arguments Often Fail* and *A Little Primer on Humble Apologetics*.

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