

There should be no doubt about the interests of the scientific community, considering the relevance of the topic of the Protestant Reformation, which has been scientifically marginalized or was observed in narrower theological and historiographic senses for decades. This resulted in insufficient approach coverage from the aspect of various disciplines, as well as a lack of appropriate literature.

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James W. Sire

**Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing**

IVP, Downers Grove, 2014, pp. 160.

In August of 2014 IVP Academic published a book by James W. Sire, *Apologetics Beyond Reason: Why Seeing Really Is Believing*. Sire can easily be called a veteran apologist because for more than 25 years he has been active in writing books in this field of study. In his latest book, which is, as author himself admits, a mix of autobiography and argument, he once again argues the case for Christianity. However, this time his arguments are not so much geared toward human reason but to the capacity of humans to intuitively and directly perceive the reality that surrounds them.

The book has seven chapters, in addition to a preface, acknowledgments, afterword, notes, bibliography and index. In chapter one, “The past as prologue,” Sire defines the task of Christian apologetics as a need to “lay before the watching world such a winsome embodiment of the Christian faith that for any and all who are willing to observe there will be an intellectually and emotionally credible witness to its fundamental truth” (p. 14). But he also adds that the success of any given apologetic argument is not in winning converts or strengthening the faith of believers, but whether it is faithful to Jesus. Then Sire offers a brief overview of Christian apologetics in the past 70 years. According to him, the foundation of apologetics thus far has been the ability of human reason to reach true conclusions. However, in our postmodern world the arguments of the modern Christian rationalists now seem irrelevant and lifeless. That does not mean that rational apologetics is useless, but for Sire this is not a highly effective approach to apologetics, and it does not always work. Describing his development as an apologist, Sire concludes that apologetics is a messy thing. However, in the midst of all the challenges, he suggests apologetics that is not directed only toward reason. There is no best way that apologetics can be done, since every way has its flaws, but Sire argues that we are all part of the story – the story of creation, the fall, redemption and glorification. The question is, do we see it or not? But to see it is to believe it.

In chapter two, “Wondering about God,” Sire begins by arguing that there is nothing in the universe that does not finally point to the existence of God. He is aware that this could be understood as a proclamation and not as an argument, but Sire will deal with this objection in the following chapters. He questions the notion of the autonomy of human reason, claiming that human reason is insufficient to determine truth. Instead of focusing on epistemology (how we know that we know), which is a quest that starts within ourselves, the better way to understand what is true reality is to start somewhere else.

In the chapter three, “In the beginning,” Sire argues that “an argument from God” is the starting place to seek the truth. Instead of focusing on epistemology, which leads us toward circular argument, since on the basis of human reason alone we argue that human reason is trustworthy, the starting place for Christians should be ontology. Hence, the first question should not be, “How can we know that Christianity is true?” Rather, the question that matters is, “What is really real?” Claiming that the starting point should be the reality of God, Sire offers a threefold argumentation that serves as evidence for it:

An argument from God, not to God.

An argument from everything to God.

An argument from our personal experience — direct perception of God (p.48).

Sire divides his book based on these arguments. As he will later explain (p. 124), argument 1 is the subject of chapters one and two, and arguments 2 and 3 are subjects of chapters three to six.

Chapter four, “An argument from literary theory,” discusses signals of transcendence in literature. According to Sire, literature itself, whether it is written from a Christian standpoint or not, testifies to the existence of a transcendent realm. According to him, literature embodies a view of reality or worldview which is captured in concrete terms, linguistic structure, and appropriate aesthetic structure. Speaking of reality, Sire makes a distinction between the Primary and Secondary Worlds. While the Primary World is whatever reality is and never changes (pp. 66-67), the Secondary World is an interpretation of the Primary World (p. 70), and this is precisely what we encounter in literature. Sire takes this fact as a signal which becomes an apologetic for the Christian faith, a concept which he will address in chapter five.

To argue his case in chapter five, “Bright Wings and Wobbling Lighthouses,” Sire discusses the works of Gerard Manley Hopkins, who was a Christian, and Virginia Woolf, who was not a Christian, showing how each in their own way point to God. While literature written from a Christian point of view is a direct witness to the truth of Christian faith, literature which contradicts a Christian worldview often gives testimony for Christian faith. However, literature, itself reflecting the

full creative power of God, points beyond itself to a transcendent realm (p. 92). Namely, literature itself shouts out that human beings are significant, and this cannot be explained solely by a reference to the material world. Also, the material world cannot be a foundation for morality, which is present in literature. On that basis Sire concludes that literature testifies to a transcendent realm in which are embedded the foundational values of its Secondary World (p. 98).

Referring to the works of Goya, in chapter six, “Night thoughts and Day Dreams,” Sire uses an argument from Goya, that is how signals of transcendence from the arts can provide the impetus for a search. The arts point to the existence of something nonmaterial which goes beyond and cannot be explained by a purely material outlook. Accordingly, Sire argues that the very existence of our sense of evil and injustice is best explained by the existence of a God who grounds our sense of the good in his transcendent reality (p. 120).

The final chapter, “Meeting the Unexpected,” is reserved for “the argument from Jesus.” With this argument Sire makes an inclusion in which he returns to his first point at the beginning of the book, having discussed this topic in the first two chapters. An argument from God is an argument which says that God has presented Himself to us both in words and in the Word which became flesh. Because God has given Himself to us, we can personally experience Him. In this way Sire combines argument 1 with argument 3, which opens the door for his invitation to the reader to come and see, and experience Jesus. Discussing how Jesus is the solution for many human enigmas, and the role and the place of the Bible in that process of an encounter with God, Sire finishes this chapter with an invitation to come and see this Jesus who makes sense of all of reality (p. 141).

In the Afterword Sire repeats his call for apologetics which will include both reason and experience, and restates his argument that both literature and poetry reflect signals of transcendence attempting and leading us to discover reality. However, we should not be stuck on the signals, but turn our eyes on Jesus, because “seeing really is believing. Let us say to the watching world: ‘Come and see!’”

Sire’s book is a book which tries to discuss the issue of worldview. He is doing that by engaging not only the human mind, but human experience and intuition—in other words, the whole person. As we have said, he argues for an apologetics which would not be only rational, but also relational. In a time when the ability of human reason to grasp the truth and reality is under suspicion, Sire argues for an apologetics that would turn the wheel from the primacy of epistemology back to ontology. Accordingly, literature and the arts have their proper place in the scope of Christian apologetics. Sire’s writing style is academically sound, yet casual. He combines the characteristics of someone who knows how to write in accordance with academic rules, yet he is doing it “in his own style.” In an attempt to discuss complex and serious matters of apologetics, a mix of autobiography

and argument gives this book a bit of a “lighter” tone.

This book is first and foremost relevant for all those who are familiar with apologetics. It is not written as an introduction to apologetics, so I presume that mostly it would be read by those who are willing to expand their knowledge of Christian apologetics. Furthermore, in the book we can find an author’s discussion about the “philosophy of literature and arts” which adds to the value of this book. For students, this book will probably be listed as secondary literature in their syllabi, but nevertheless a valuable source for their study.

Ervin Budiselić

Tom Houston

### **My Story with Governance**

Oxford, UK, Regnum Books International, 2014, 106 p.

The book, “My Story with Governance,” by the author Tom Houston, analyzes biblically the concept of governance in a very simple and reader-friendly way. The basic thesis of the book is to explore the importance of governance while subjecting it to thorough and systematic Biblical reflection. In what could be described as a homiletical style of writing, the author intertwines the central premise with his personal life experience, Biblical encounters, and governance situations; and effectively drives the argument to closure with the analyses of Jesus’ church from the perspective of Paul and Peter, in comparison to the governance failures in the nation of Israel. Governance is not a term we can encounter frequently in everyday colloquial church speech, despite the fact that the New Testament discourse often mentions governors. The author of this book is convinced that a closer insight into this topic in the light of God’s Word can be a useful tool in Christian leadership.

The author of this book, Tom Houston, served as a pastor in several churches in Europe and Africa, and also in leadership positions of a few larger, widely known Christian organizations. His broad and practical experience in the field of Christian leadership, in both church and parachurch environments, adds everyday perspective to the Biblical message on governance, and represents a wide range of applicable experiences. The publisher of this book is Regnum Books International, a publishing house under the wing of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, which has undoubtedly recognized the importance of addressing efficient and Biblically based concepts of governance, as well as the possible implications they could have in understanding and reflecting on Christian leadership.

In the first chapter of the book, the author gives a short overview of his ex-