

---

## Bailey's Book Addresses Apologetics in a New Era

Sarah Moss  
*Dordt University*, [sarah.moss@dordt.edu](mailto:sarah.moss@dordt.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Moss, Sarah () "Bailey's Book Addresses Apologetics in a New Era," *The Voice*: Vol. 66 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.  
Available at: <https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/voice/vol66/iss2/6>

This News is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Voice by an authorized editor of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact [ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu](mailto:ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu).

# BAILEY'S BOOK ADDRESSES APOLOGETICS IN A NEW ERA

How should one proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in a secular age? To try to answer this question, Dr. Justin Bailey, professor of theology, has written *Reimagining Apologetics: The Beauty of Faith in a Secular Age*.

Bailey says the book grew out of his own questions and quest to understand and serve emerging adults. Years ago, he served as a pastor in the Chicago suburbs working mainly with students who were in their late teens and early twenties.

"I found that there was a disturbing sense of disconnection and meaninglessness that they were experiencing with their faith. One student told me, 'When we're listening to you preach, it's as if you're weaving a spell: I believe, and the world makes sense to me. But as soon as I walk out of the church, the spell is broken—I don't know if I believe anymore, and I don't know who I am.'"

That conversation affected Bailey so much that he chose to go back to school, ultimately earning a Ph.D. and focusing his studies on the intersection of Christian theology, culture, and ministry.

"I became increasingly convinced that, as James K.A. Smith says, we treat people as brains on sticks—that if we can just get the right ideas into their heads, that everything else will be taken care of," says Bailey. *Reimagining Apologetics* is my attempt to ask the question, 'What would it look like for us to share our faith if the imagination is decisive in believing or not believing?'"

Christians often talk about how their faith is true, which is certainly the case, says Bailey. But Christianity is also beautiful and good.

"Perhaps in our desire to emphasize the truth of our Christian faith, we've neglected to demonstrate its beauty and

the way our faith opens up possibilities, how it is capacious and liberating, and how it is good. Our faith is beautiful because it is good, and it is good because it is true," says Bailey.

The imagination helps to illustrate how Christianity is beautiful, good, and true. And who knows the imagination better than artists, writers, and poets? In *Reimagining Apologetics*, Bailey looks at two examples of writers who have engaged in apologetics through

Perhaps in our desire to emphasize the truth of our Christian faith, we've neglected to demonstrate its beauty and the way our faith opens up possibilities, how it is capacious and liberating, and how it is good.

— Dr. Justin Bailey, theology professor

the imagination: George MacDonald, a Scottish author and poet, and Marilynne Robinson, an American novelist.

"C.S. Lewis said that reading George MacDonald baptized his imagination long before he ever came to Christ. I thought that was a really interesting way of thinking about it—that MacDonald put Lewis in a hospitable posture toward the Christian faith when he finally encountered it and was ready to entertain the possibility that Christianity might be true."

Robinson wrote the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Gilead* about an 80-year-old pastor living in Iowa who describes the way he sees the world through the

JAMIN VERVELDE '99



Dr. Justin Bailey is also an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church.

eyes of faith. Bailey recalls reading a *New York Times* review of *Gilead*, where the writer mentioned how, even though he was an atheist, reading *Gilead* helped him to see the world through the eyes of faith.

"That was exactly what I was looking for. So, I used Robinson as a more contemporary model for speaking about faith in a way that is not just trying to convince somebody of Christianity's truth but is trying to carve out a space of hospitality, where you can see through the eyes of faith and not just hear all the reasons why you should believe."

Bailey believes people are looking for a new way to approach apologetics that is less combative and looks beyond winning arguments.

"The method I'm recommending is one that proceeds in the assurance that God is at work in the world and in the lives of the people that we share the gospel with. And because Christianity is true and beautiful, it will be compelling—that when we present it as it is, there will be a natural hunger and attraction to it."

SARAH MOSS ('10)



**BUY NOW**

To purchase *Reimagining Apologetics*, visit [bookstore.dordt.edu](http://bookstore.dordt.edu).

