

“THEY GOT IT!”



“Two simple questions showed me that the wish that God had put in my heart would define the course of my life for a long time to come,” writes Bruna Filli-Teresak of STEPress (www.stepress.hr) in Zagreb, Croatia.

The idea of reaching academic audiences with literature might seem irrelevant in the context of publishing efforts to reach people for the Gospel. Isn't it true that what really matters is the spiritual, and not the intellectual? It is not really important to reach the educated, I was told, because they are proud, “and we know how the proud stand in God's eyes.”

That was the spiritual climate in the community where I became a Christian 16 years ago. In my eagerness to learn more, I read every Christian book I could find. Some were worth reading and had a significant impact on my life. But, many other books kept bringing back my cynical self, just when I was trying to get rid of it!

The translations, the language, the spelling, the covers... Most Christian books were so bad that I, having worked in publishing professionally for many years, could not believe that anyone with so little knowledge and skill would publish books at all. I could certainly understand the motive, the zeal. I could cope with my temptation of cynicism, but I could not give these books to my non-Christian friends to read. Such books would only convince them that Christianity is a religion for people who do not know much about anything.

My heart went out to the people who I knew needed the Gospel, but for whom the inadequate quality of books might be a tremendous cultural and intellectual obstacle. So, I was thrilled when I got the chance to translate and

publish *The Universe Next Door*, by James W. Sire. Finally, I could communicate the message of Christ to those people in a way they could understand.

Few Christians around me saw any sense in publishing that book. The question I got most often was: “What does it actually have to do with the Gospel?” I was told that “Christian publishers should *humbly* publish *humble* products for *humble* people.” So few Christians thought this kind of book was any use at all to the message of our Lord that I started doubting it myself.

By the time of the book launching I was completely demoralized. Good attendance at the launching event and the many questions addressed to the presenters and to the author did nothing to lift my spirits.

After the official event, we invited the audience to the next room for snacks and coffee. Some students queued up to ask the author some questions. Expecting questions pertaining more to the philosophical aspect of the book, I was stunned to hear the first student's words.

“I know that I have to repent and convert,” he said. “Could you tell me exactly how?”

Another student, standing beside him, nodded. “I am an atheist,” she said, “but I feel bad about some things I've done. How is that possible?”

“They got it!” I thought. I suddenly realized our publishing plan was working. We gave these students the Gospel in a “package” that helped them to

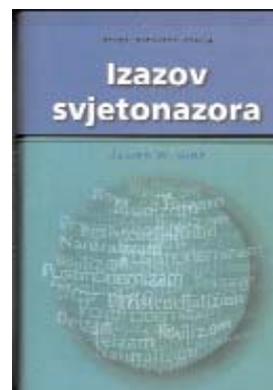
understand it.

That happened 10 years ago. In the meantime, *The Universe Next Door* has become part of the literature lists of The Jesuit College of Philosophy in Zagreb, The Catholic Faculty of Religious

Studies in Split, and of a couple of Protestant universities in Croatia, as well as to the list for secondary school religious education issued by the Council of Catholic Bishops of Croatia.

Two years ago, Sire promoted the second Croatian edition of the book by giving a lecture for students and teachers of the Jesuit College of Philosophy. Afterwards, a teacher came up to him and said, “I never considered a personal encounter with God to be a necessity, but you've made me think about it.”

We are reaching educated people with the message of Christ. Publishing for academic audiences is worth the effort, and we sincerely hope that God will continue to do His work through the books we launch into the Croatian market. ❖



At press time, James W. Sire's *The Universe Next Door*, had been translated into 15 other languages. Two more translations are underway. Above is STEPress' Croatian edition.