

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Peter Kreeft & Ronald Tacelli, Monarch, East Sussex, 1994.

Peter Kreeft is professor of philosophy at Boston College and writes regularly to defend Roman Catholicism in Catholic journals. He was interviewed by Lee Strobel and in doing so made a contribution to Strobel's *The Case for Faith*.

Ronald Tacelli SJ, is a Jesuit Roman Catholic priest and is associate professor of philosophy at Boston College.

This book was written by two Roman Catholics but was written in such a way that it could be used to defend the beliefs that Catholics and Protestant and Orthodox hold in common. It was written as a handbook the Churches could use to close up anybody who protested against the deceptions of Christianity. The significance of the book is both in its wide distribution and popularity and also in its being the best introduction into the subject of Christian apologetics ever attempted. However the book is easily refuted and is full of tricks and is scandalous for rehashing arguments for the religion that have been buried years ago. In this, it reflects the desperation of those who attempt to make the faith believable today. There is little integrity in people who use arguments that they know have been invalidated and refuted. There should be no such thing as Catholic philosophy and theology. They only exist because of the ignorance and submissiveness of many Catholics who are being taken advantage of.

The book uses reason to back up faith. Now nobody can be blamed then if they come up with a different faith to the Catholicism of the authors for its all about what you think. But the book says that they can be blamed! So the reasonableness the book boasts of for Christianity is just a smokescreen.

The claim of the book that every argument that has come up against Christianity has been refuted (page 171) is boastful, insulting and patronising. The book adds that people disbelieve because they have reasons for rejecting him that have nothing to do with the arguments.

Page 202 lists 5 reasons for unbelief. The reasons given are basically saying that unbelievers are just bad people. No suggestion is given that a person can reject Christianity because they are good people and the faith is not their cup of tea. The contrary is what is suggested. Christianity is an intolerant faith. If we are allowed to doubt that a doctrine really came from God and we are, it follows that this faith seeks power over minds in a way it is not entitled to.

We all see gay people and others who ignore the Catholic God's demands about how they live their lives. They claim to be real Catholics even as in real believers. They are not for if you call a body of revelation wrong when it gets sexual teaching wrong and such teachings are fundamental you are admitting not to trust it. Whatever you do accept is accepted because it is a preference and not because you trust the source. If unbelievers in God want to believe and find God comforting they will find a way. Despite the insinuation of the Handbook, the unbelievers disbelieve out of integrity. Many are harassed for their unbelief.

The book's most outrageous statement is on love the sinner and hate the sin. It admits it is impossible. If so, that says a lot about the Church. And if we can't love sinners and hate sins and we say God can that sounds like a lie. Can he do the impossible after all?

When you read books like *The Puzzle of Ethics* by Vardy and Grosch, you see that Christianity's obsession with dogma is just criminal for it would be a full-time job trying to work out what really is moral and the time would be better spent on that than silly dogmatic books. Answers to those things is far far more important. It is better to persuade a person that abortion is wrong if it is indeed wrong and there are hundreds of arguments that it is not wrong than to persuade a person that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Despite the abnormal cleverness and the excellent qualifications of the authors what has been done in this book is disgraceful and can only be described as trying to take advantage of its many readers who want them to do the thinking for them.



