

## Review of Handbook of Christian Apologetics

### *HANDBOOK OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS*

*Peter Kreeft & Ronald Tacelli Monarch, East Sussex, 1994.*

I bought this book and it is the best summary available of Christian apologetics.

It is better that Jesus be a liar than that there is an eternal Hell for sinners to go and than that we have his dreadful ones of his rules to keep. The reasonable person will not want Christianity inflicted on them or to feel pressured by the apologetics of the believers. The decent person will not want Christianity to be true!

The book is a demonstration of how poor Christian apologetics is. Above all it shows how Christian thinkers and clergy intentionally mislead their flocks. There are websites that aim to prove that the leaders of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are acting insincerely and if they are why should the orthodox Christian leaders be any different? The book ignores decisive refutations of Christianity. And the authors must know about them.

The book simply refuses to deal with or mention any point of view it cannot handle. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence as in hard evidence at least. The Christians oppose that piece of commonsense. But surely the Church can't oppose the fact that if extraordinary claims are made, it is no good to look at some of the angles but not all? To pick out a few objections to the resurrection of Jesus and try to refute them as the Christians do is just plain manipulative. It is deceitful because if somebody was found guilty of murder when the jury refused to look at all the possibilities we would consider that jury unjust and deceitful. The doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus certainly calls on us to be selective with evidence. God according to the New Testament commands us to believe in it.

The weakest argument against the resurrection, that Jesus swooned on the cross and was buried alive and got out of the tomb is selected for criticism by the authors. Those who use this theory assume the New Testament is inaccurate. The Christians assume the New Testament is accurate and they try to refute the argument based on that guess. We don't even need a swoon. Jesus playing dead to get off the cross sooner - the gospels say his time on the cross was unusually short - what is more in vogue now.

If there are errors in the Bible it is nonsense to point to Jesus meeting with his disciples very soon after the resurrection as proving he didn't survive the cross and was not buried alive for he would not have got well enough that fast. The evidence for the resurrection is weakened considerably for there might have been an error.

The missing body of Jesus is central to Christian apologetics. The tomb was open when the women came. What about the idea that the stone at the tomb of Jesus rolled back accidentally or due to earth tremors and the women stole the body? The New Testament information gives no eyewitness testimony that the stone didn't just fall away.

The claim of the book in chapter 9 that the Bible – and theirs is the Catholic Bible which is more contradictory than the Protestant - is without error is simply a lie.

The vast majority of scholars see errors in the Bible and the Handbook authors would agree for being Catholics they accept the books of Jonah, Tobit, Additions to Daniel and Judith as scripture. These books contain many errors – which is why Protestants don't recognise them as part of the Bible. The Handbook authors might say these books didn't err for they were only religious novels but the books give no such hint. In fact the handbook sees the stories of Adam and Eve and Jonah as so absurd that it says they are probably literary fictions (page 212). So if a book errs or is ridiculous it's a novel! What a cop-out!

The book boasts that Jesus' sanity and his wisdom show he was God for he claimed to be God. Jesus' love your neighbour as yourself is nonsense. What is so bad about always helping our neighbour though we do not love them or value them as ourselves or our family? We don't need the commandment to belittle what we do and add on pressure and maybe discourage us. The book of course refuses to deal with the problem that the command is impossible to keep.

The commandment implies that there is less love of neighbour in praying to get a bicycle than there is in praying for somebody else to get it. The Bible says we always fall short and even the Catholic saints went to their deaths bemoaning their failures. If these things were highlighted more the appeal of religion would diminish.

The handbook says that God is infinite and a spirit. He is his own power, he is wisdom and he is mercy – literally but he is still a personal God. Infinite means that there is no power but God. But then we are told God made all things out of nothing – not even his power. He just used his power to make all things and this creation is not God but separate from him and just depends on him to stay in existence. As the Greeks noted centuries ago, this is absurd. It contradicts the infinity of God. It is no answer to say that it happened therefore though our minds tell us it's impossible it is possible. If it makes no sense how can we say we know what happened? If it could happen then anything could be impossible. Maybe your dog went back in time and made all things.

To say God made all things by his power is really to say he just ordered things to exist and they came into being. Nothing comes from nothing. God's power can't make things from nothing for there is nothing to work on. The power can't work on what cannot be changed or what is not there. The only hope is to say all things appeared at God's command but that implies that God didn't cause anything to exist. To command something but to do nothing to make it happen is implying that some other power is doing the making. If you use your power to pour a jug that there is no water in your power won't be working for there is no water in the jug. The doctrine of creation defends only one idea: magic. It really denies God.

If there is a force making things out of nothing then it follows that the same force may be skewing scientific experiments. It may for example be tricking the microscopes. Science cannot consider anything as proven if something could be tampering. Creation is against science.

The handbook says we must love the sinner and hate the sin but interestingly says we cannot do it (page 127). But then it gets weird and says Jesus takes the sin to himself and separates it from the sinner enabling us to do so (page 128). This is nonsense. A sin is not a thing. Strictly speaking it is not something that a person does. It's more to do with what the person has become than an act. The act just expresses what the person has become. Love the sinner and hate the sin means love the person but hate the sinner. This shows how contradictory it is. It is hatred disguised as love - which is the most dangerous and sneakiest form of hatred.

The insinuation is that every religion but Christianity which has this Jesus taking our sins idea is not only false but harmful and hates evil people.

No truly good person holds that it is the crime that matters not what the crime says about the person. Indeed it would be evil to condemn an action and risk upsetting the acting person if it is only the action that matters. Those who believe in love the sinner and hate the sin are worse than those who admit that to hate the sin is to hate the sinner. They do justice great harm and make a laughing stock of morality. While they claim to love the sinner they show intolerance to the person who judges the sinner and who demands justice! What hypocrites they are!

Hating the sin means you have to fear the sin and be angry with it. But to claim that you fear the sin but not the sinner and are angry with the sin not the sinner is so ridiculous that one should question your sanity. It shows the power of religious manipulation and conditioning. When the conditioning is that strong and that dangerous, religion should be opposed as full of harmful potential. All it is good for is repressing hatred but that is going to make the person explode one day. Many holy people show their true colours in time of war.

If we cannot love the sinner and hate the sin there can be no God for there is no force that cares about right and wrong. You can love and hate a person at the same time and some people want to kill their lovers out of hatred though they also love them. Suppose we hate our enemies. We love these enemies in the sense that it is because we value them that they are able to upset us. Hate was condemned by Christ but he sneaked it back in again with his love sinner and hate sin hypocrisy.

A God who treats sin as if the sinner had nothing to do with it is refusing to admit the dignity of the sinner as a responsible agent. That is what we are trying to do if we try to love the sinner and hate the sin.

And a God who hates sin as if it were a thing and as if there was nothing personal about it might as well torment himself over a block of ice. His hate shows self-hatred for it ruins his happiness. Self-hatred makes you a threat to other people. And we are asked to be like him for he is so perfect!

Punishing sin but not persons is really not punishing at all. It's not retribution. It's anti-justice. If you separate the sin from the person and make the person suffer for the sin that is intended to be revenge not justice. Those who hate the sinner could be better people than you.

The impossibility of loving the sinner while hating their sin proves that the God of Christianity cannot exist. The utter failure of love the sinner and hate the sin shows that belief in God is harmful and peppered with malice.

More honest Christians reject its hypocrisy. They teach, "Sometimes it is said that God hates sin (impersonal) but loves the

sinner (personal), but this attempt to mitigate the wrath of God is not really faithful to the biblical witness. Wrongdoing in the Bible is never disassociated from the wrongdoers, who are fully responsible for their actions. Retribution cannot be shifted to an impersonal level without it ceasing to be what it is. We cannot imagine a judge excusing a murderer who says he is sorry and offers to clean up the mess, as if the crime were all that mattered. However sincere his repentance might be, the murderer would still be held responsible for his sin, just as we are held responsible for our sins before God" (page 222, *The Doctrine of God*, Gerald Bray, IVP, Illinois, 1993).

Traditional Christianity is not good news. It lies that it puts truth above all, and Jesus called himself the Truth. Yet it is marked by more concern for dogma than truth. And more concern for dogma than people. For example, do you really believe that if the Catholic Church saw that its contraception ban was bad for people that it would change it? Bigotry and arrogance are underneath it all. Catholic religion classes are hugely more interested in teaching stories about Jesus and how the priest makes bread and wine into his body than in developing the child as a good person. The Catholic Mass shows hardly any concern for educating the people in good behaviour - its rites and magic and irrelevant bible readings.

Christianity is not faith in Jesus at all. It is faith in what prophets and Churches say about him. Or those who do the interpreting to be more precise! The book says we all have original sin and original sin implies we are spiritually insane which is why we can choose Hell forever and not happiness with God (page 303). So we are expected to believe that this spiritual insanity is cured in baptism but what if it isn't? Then it follows that the Church is probably leading us astray. Also even if it is cured, the Church says the insanity is still there in some form and we can still go to Hell forever. If we are made insane by original sin, then how do we know that baptism really cures us? Perhaps our thinking it works is down to our insanity as well?

You need absolute proof before you can accuse anybody of being insane enough or bad enough to go to Hell. Otherwise you are just insulting that person. Jesus commanded we love our neighbour as ourselves and then made sure we would not be able to keep it with his doctrine of Hell, to name one, getting in the way. It is hardly love to believe that it is better for all the political systems of the world to disappear than for the Church to disappear for it is God's true Church. That is fanaticism.

The book contradicts the Bible where Jesus says that the evil people will go to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. So God prepared the fire. Obviously the devil and the angels wouldn't do it. The book then deceitfully claims that God does not make Hell but that beings that turn against him do that (page 302).

Page 31 says that Martin Luther and St Paul and the Catholic Church believe in salvation by faith alone if you take faith to mean a believing response to God in which you give him your love not mere belief. For Luther this response gave once for all salvation even if you fell many times into sin in the future you were still saved. Catholicism agrees but differs in that it believes in mortal sin which breaks the connection with God. Sins like heresy, idolatry and wilful sexual desire outside marriage are held to be mortal sins. The main point is ignored - Luther said you can be saved despite being an unrepentant sinner and Catholicism says different.

Page 65 (surprisingly) says there is no proof for the truthfulness of the Christian religion from miracles. The evidence for God and his indicator of what the true religion is comes from the factors surrounding the miracle, its context. So it is not the miracle itself. It's the context. So if a statue of Abraham Lincoln starts bleeding supernaturally it is evidence for nothing. If a statue of Mary starts bleeding supernaturally it is a miracle showing that Mary should be honoured as the mother of God. Is this not rather arbitrary and unfair and irrational? It is like saying that if the sun eclipses in the twentieth century it is a sign from God and if it eclipses in the twenty-first it is not a sign from anybody. If miracles are so useless, reporting them or teaching they have happened is superstition not godliness. Anybody that doesn't want to provide justification for deceitfulness would say nothing. The authors of the book would cruelly support the pope for preferring a rapist to rape without a condom and the other terrible doctrines of their Roman Catholic Church with INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE that God speaks through him or his Jesus. If miracles don't provide that evidence then nothing does.

Page 109 says a man walking through a wall is a miracle not a contradiction. It is trying to refute those who think that if the dead stay dead then saying Jesus rose contradicts that. It says a man both walking through the wall and not doing it in the same sense at the same time would be a contradiction. The reason we have to be intolerant of contradictions is that they distort the way we approach reality. If a person both did and didn't commit a crime we wouldn't know what to do. A man can't walk through a wall. If it is claimed that he has, then God temporarily destroys the part of the wall that he passes through so he really passes through a temporary hole in the wall and not through the wall. A wall has to be solid to be a wall. If God changes that it is no longer a wall and you cannot say a man passed through it. But what if a real contradiction has happened? What if the man really did go through the wall? Christians are really rationalising contradictions or possible contradictions. That is no better than saying miracles are contradictions. We would never work out that non-existent fire cannot burn if we were subjected to frequent contradictions whether they are real contradictions or miracles.

Miracles seem to be pure entertainment and conjuring tricks and it is undignified to attribute them to God!

Against the idea that a miracle is so unlikely that no evidence might be good enough to verify one the book argues that we don't know what is likely (page 112). What else could it say? Miracle believers say that those who say miracles are all based on error or are deceptions and never really happened are making unfair assumptions. But these believers think it is okay for them to make assumptions - namely that miracles do happen! It is not about knowing but about what probability says.

The believers are just being hypocritical. If we start to believe we don't know what is likely, we will have to start believing John who killed his mother when he says that a demon in his guise did it. The best assumption is to disbelieve in miracles. That is not being biased but wise. Miracles would imply that we should have evil beliefs and be hypocrites. The resurrection of Jesus would prove that he was not a person to be respected as an exemplar and teacher if it really happened. It would show he was a showman. Let's worship David Copperfield then!

A miracle will not happen just to serve a good purpose such as healing or comforting a person. God can do that without a miracle. If he chooses a miracle with which to help then he is clearly making the miracle double as evidence or proof of his presence and power. Even Christians are expected to disparage and ignore claims of useless random miracles. They bring ridicule on the faith for a start.

Suppose a miracle that serves a purpose is unlikely. Surely one that does not is far more unlikely. And one that is unconcerned about being evidence or proof is off the scale unlikely. Believers do not want to believe in purposeless miracles or in ones that do not care about evidencing the love of God. They assume that such miracles are unlikely.

Jesus and the pope and the Christian Church command people to believe in the miracle of the Jesus resurrection. If you take a miracle to be a violation of nature then it didn't happen. God would not set up natural laws and then fight them as if he were incompetent. If a miracle is not a violation of nature then the problem is, how do you know that the resurrection was not a violation? You are only guessing. If I can guess that it was a violation and therefore didn't happen and you can guess that it was not and may have happened or did happen then any faith commanding and making it a duty to believe in the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus is simply being bigoted and opposing the truth that nobody has the right to tell anybody what to guess.

And The Handbook of Christian Apologetics is simply a pile of cosmetics intended to make it look like Christianity is worth believing in. That's all it is.

