

DEFEND YOUR FAITH

1. **Criticism:** how can you believe Jesus was born without a human father?

Response: the early Church, knowing Jesus to be divine and that all things are possible with God, was in no doubt about the incarnation and its beliefs are outlined in passages from the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John; St Paul's letter to Timothy; the Apostles' and Nicene creeds and the councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon. St John's Gospel is perhaps the most famous formulation of belief: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

2. **Criticism:** Christ was a great, holy man but was not divine.

Response: this claim has been made on and off since the early centuries of the Church but has always been repulsed. It is quite clear that, in particular after Christ's resurrection, his early followers believed Jesus to be God made man. St Peter, chosen by Christ to lead his Church, said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mt 16:16). St Paul, who knew the Apostles, wrote "...Christ, who is God over all..." (Rom 9:5) and "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9). The Apostles did not believe Jesus was taken up to heaven as a holy man, but as God Almighty.

3. **Criticism:** Jesus did not rise from the dead. Either His followers were hallucinating about seeing Him or He did not really die on the cross but was taken down secretly by supporters while still alive.

Response: all four Gospels attest to the fact that Jesus died on the cross, rose from the dead and appeared to more than one person. St Paul tells us that Christ appeared to him, Peter, the other Apostles and more than 500 people, many of whom were alive at the time of his writing. St Paul sums up our Catholic belief succinctly: "...if Christ has not risen, then our preaching is groundless, and your faith, too, is groundless." Christ's early followers dropped their Jewish religion almost overnight, they started to worship in a new fashion away from the temple on a different day and many were willing to give up their lives for what they had witnessed. Something extraordinary happened: the Resurrection.

4. **Criticism:** God might have brought Jesus back from the dead but Christ would later have had a natural death, like all humans. There was no Ascension.

Response: the Ascension of Christ is mentioned in the Gospels of Mark and Luke and in the Acts of the Apostles. St John (20:17) writes of Mary Magdalen's encounter with the risen Christ who tells her: "Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren, and say to them: I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God." In St Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Timothy, the Ascension is accepted as fact. The first Christians did not believe Jesus went to heaven in the same way we all hope to one day, rather that he ascended to be worshipped as God.

5. **Criticism:** belief in the Trinity is polytheism. No wonder Jews and Muslims find it to be objectionable.

Response: Christ's followers, believing Him to be divine, and reflecting on His words about His relationship with the Father and the working of the Holy Spirit, gradually through revelation came to understand God in a slightly different way to other monotheists. However, and this is important, Christians have always been monotheists. God is a unity of substance and a diversity of persons. Jesus commanded his disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Mt 28 19-20). Notice that Christ said "name", not "names".

If you struggle to understand the Trinity mystery, you will not be the first. St Augustine, who wrote a book about it, quipped: "If you deny the Trinity you will lose your soul. If you try to explain it, you will lose your mind."

6. **Criticism:** Mary was not ever-virgin because the New Testament mentions that Jesus had siblings.

Response: early tradition, passed down by word of mouth, and outlined by Fathers of the Church in the early centuries maintains that such was the grace given to Our Lady as the mother of God that she remained a virgin before, during and after the birth of Jesus. Even Martin Luther, a founder of Protestantism, defended this teaching! As for mention of "brothers" of Jesus in Scripture, the early Church was aware that this term was often used in that part of the world to mean cousins.

7. **Criticism:** Mary might have been Jesus's mother but why should we believe she did not have a natural death? There is no mention of an Assumption in the Bible.

Response: this is certainly a difficult criticism to counter and it must be admitted that the Roman Catechism of 1566 during the Counter-Reformation makes no mention of an Assumption. However, the teaching that "at the end of her earthly course, Mary was assumed into heavenly glory, body and soul", dogmatically defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950, followed centuries of growing belief that God would not have allowed such a "most highly favoured Lady" to have suffered normal death and decay. Also worth noting is that no relics of Mary have ever been found.

8. **Criticism:** do you Catholics really believe Mary appeared in places like Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal and Knock in Ireland?

Response: the Church does not require any Catholic to believe in apparitions not mentioned in Scripture but it has approved a list of alleged apparitions worthy of devotions such as Mass and pilgrimage. The list includes Lourdes, Fatima and Knock.

9. **Criticism:** when you say the Rosary, you are worshipping Mary instead of God.

Response: we are definitely not praying to Mary. We are asking her to pray to God "for us sinners". The Rosary is a prayer dating back to the late Middle Ages which helped ordinary people focus on 20 events (mysteries) that happened in the lives of Jesus and Mary and which helped teach lessons in faith and virtue. Martin Luther commended the Rosary as a worthy meditation on grace given by God to Mary.

10. **Criticism:** you Catholics insult your fellow Christians by claiming only your faith can be traced back directly to St Peter, the Apostle granted the keys of the kingdom.

Response: no insult is intended but Apostolic Succession is found only in the Catholic Church and no other Christian Church has a valid claim to it. Henry VIII, a Catholic, appealed to Rome for a divorce before rebelling and making himself head of a new English Church in the 16th century. Anglican bishops from that time, and bishops of other breakaway Churches internationally, are not viewed by Catholics as direct successors to St Peter because they have not been approved by Rome.

11. **Criticism:** the celibacy rule is not fair on priests. Anglican clerics are allowed to marry and have children. Why not Catholic priests?

Response: the Roman Catechism (1566) tells us that virginity is highly exalted and strongly recommended in Scripture. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) says the bond with Christ should take precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. Celibacy is not a dogma of faith but a law introduced in the Western Church in the 11th century to increase the dignity of the priesthood. Priests are imitating Christ's total self-giving to the Father. The Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church allow married men to become priests, however.

12. **Criticism:** the Church is misogynistic by not allowing women priests.

Response: the Church has declared it lacks the authority to ordain women. Christ, God made man, chose only men to be his Apostles and to hand down the faith to future generations through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Women are involved in many other important roles within the Church and some of the most senior officials in the Vatican are women.

13. **Criticism:** Catholics pay to have a Mass said: Isn't that unbecoming?

Response: grace from the Eucharist comes to all of us, whether or not we pay a stipend to have Mass said for a special intention. A stipend of a few pounds goes to the priest (who receives a small annual salary) and only one stipend per day is allowed, unlike in medieval times when communities of priests would race through Masses to earn money! Remember, a priest will be delighted to say Mass for you for free!

14. **Criticism:** the Catholic Church has vast wealth and treasures at a time when so many of its members are extremely poor.

Response: critics overlook the fact that most of the treasures were given by believers over the centuries. The Church is a guardian of these gifts. Christians have since the early centuries continued the Old Testament practice of making beautiful objects and building ornate sacred spaces for the liturgy. Christianity teaches us that wealth by itself is not evil; it is the worship of money and wealth that is wrong.

15. **Criticism:** do you really believe you are eating your God during Holy Communion? Are you cannibals?

Response: Jesus is divine. When he said “This is my body” and “This is my blood” we accept his words as truth even though the sacrament is difficult to understand on a human level. He did not say “This is a symbol of my body” or “This is a symbol of my blood”. Cannibals eat flesh of the dead, whereas we are eating the Bread of Life.

16. **Criticism:** Catholics believe they are the one true way to enter the kingdom of God. What about people of other faiths who lead good lives?

Response: Catholics in fact believe the plan of salvation includes all people, regardless of their religious affiliation. Those who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ may—by following the dictates of their conscience and embracing what is true and good—attain eternal salvation. This is not to say that everyone is guaranteed to be saved (even Christians), but it means that God works tirelessly to bring all people—Christian or not—to salvation in Christ.

17. **Criticism:** Catholics are unpatriotic because their first allegiance is to Rome.

Response: Catholics look to Rome for final guidance on their faith. This does not mean they are unable to love their country or cannot be trusted to support the monarchy or government. Prayers are often said for the monarch in Catholic Churches even though he or she is not head of the Catholic Church.

18. **Criticism:** miracles attributed to Christ or to others in modern times are fake news. Only science can be trusted to tell us the truth.

Response: surely if God established the laws of nature, He can also suspend or make exceptions to them. Catholics believe that these rare and exceptional events are meant as signs whose purpose always relates to the salvation of souls. The central miracle in God’s plan of salvation is Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Miracles of healing remind us of God’s love and symbolise the more profound and important healing — from sin — that God offers to all. Jesus is God and everything is possible for Him.

19. **Criticism:** Luther was right. Christ only established the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. Confirmation, confession, the last rites, holy orders and marriage are not sacraments.

Response: Jesus is linked to the other five sacraments. Confession: Jesus told Peter “whatever you loose on earth will be loosed on earth and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven”. Marriage: while marriage has a long standing tradition, Jesus attended a wedding at Cana and manifested his glory in a miracle. Holy Orders: Christ appointed Peter as head of his priesthood. Confirmation: the apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Anointing of the Sick: the epistle of St James tells us that the sick were anointed in the name of the Lord.

20. **Criticism:** if Christ has redeemed humanity, I am saved and do not need to go to Mass.

Response: yes, we were justified by Christ’s death on the cross but our faith tells us we have a role to play in our relationship with God: we must try to become holy and worthy of heaven. The early Christians did not sit on their hands and say “We are saved, so there is nothing left for us to do.” The Church is Christ’s mystical body on earth and the Mass takes pride of place in our religion. Attending Mass, the continuation in time of the sacrifice of Christ, is at the core of our faith and is vital to our pursuit of sanctification.

21. **Criticism:** why bother going to confession? Just ask God in your prayers to forgive you.

Response: as usual with many responses to anti-Catholicism the answer lies with Jesus Christ. He gave the Apostles and their successors down the ages a special power when He said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven.” (Jn 20: 21-23). The Church asks us to go to confession at least once a year. The sacrament is a gift from God and we should strive to make use of it.

22. **Criticism:** Catholics are obsessed with guilt and need to chill a bit more!

Response: there is no evidence that Catholics feel any guiltier about their sins than Protestants or atheists. We are all human and we all sin but God has given us the gift of confession to erase our sins. It is certainly true that a small number of Catholics suffer from serious feelings of guilt, which are called scrupulosity, but most of us look at sin another way: sinning is wrong

but we know God loves us and wants to forgive. Put your trust in God and don't become fixated on sin.

23. **Criticism:** how can you believe in guardian angels in this day and age?

Response: belief in angels can be found in antiquity among pagans, neo-Platonists, Babylonians and Assyrians. Acceptance of their existence is an article of faith in Islam and they appear in the Old Testament. In the New Testament Gabriel informs Our Lady of the incarnation, while angels spoke to the first visitors to Jesus's empty tomb. Jesus spoke on several occasions about angels including once when he said children had angels. St Paul mentions them in his letters. And, of course, Satan was a fallen angel. As regards wings, they only appeared in art from the third century!

24. **Criticism:** surely we will either go to heaven or hell on judgement day. There is no purgatory and our prayers will not help the dead.

Response: belief in a form of purgatory can be traced back to Maccabees in the Old Testament where Jewish rebels prayed for their fallen colleagues, believing prayer would help them on the day of judgement. The Fathers of the Church later pondered Jesus's words: "...anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this world or the next" and deduced that there WAS a chance of forgiveness in the next world. That led them to believe there is a place where our sins can be purged before we enter heaven and that prayers of the living can help the dead.

25. **Criticism:** why do Catholics ask Mary and the saints to intercede for our intentions? They are dead and cannot hear us.

Response: Catholics are a family, a mystical body headed by Christ, and its members are alive and dead. Christ urged us to pray for one another. Death does not break up the Catholic family and even in death we can help each other with our prayers. This belief in intercession has grown out of oral and written tradition, especially via the writings of St John, St Paul and the Church Fathers. However, we should focus on those nearest to God, such as Our Lady and the saints, when we ask for prayers and we must remember that only God is worthy of prayer.

26. **Criticism:** original sin means new-born babies are regarded as sinners. That cannot be true.

Response: the fall of mankind was caused by the first sin committed by human beings. This story is told in Genesis, using the figures of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve's sin, the Church teaches, has affected all humans who require redemption to be at one again (hence at-one-ment) with God who never abandoned us but reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ. Baptism removes original sin but not the tendency to sin during our lives. We need God's grace through the sacraments to help us fight this tendency, also known as concupiscence.

27. **Criticism:** Catholics worship icons and statues. That is idolatry which breaks one of the 10 commandments.

Response: we do not worship icons. We use them as visual aids to help us focus on the originals of what they are representing. If we had to get rid of all visual help, we would have no crucifixes in church or stations of the cross on the walls. If you see us bowing before a cross or statue of a saint or Our Lady, we are not bowing to the man-made structure but to the God or holy people they represent.

28. **Criticism:** there is no such thing as the devil. Our genes determine whether we act badly or not.

Response: there are mentions of the fallen Angel, Lucifer (Satan), in the Old and New Testaments. The spiritual world of angels suffered a fall just as mankind did later with Adam and Eve and fallen angels are called demons. They are headed by the Evil One. Jesus warned His disciples about the danger of pride with reference to the fall of Lucifer. Through Jesus's death and resurrection, Satan has been overcome. The Church, through Christ, has power over evil.

29. **Criticism:** if God loves us so much why does He allow suffering and evil. Is He a cruel God?

Response: this question has been asked ever since monotheism developed among the Jewish people and is often a main reason given for people who attack Christianity. Strangely, our relationship with God is often strengthened when times are hard and there does appear to be a paradox here. Suffering plays a part in our existence as humans and our religion links it to original sin and the fall of mankind. In a mysterious way God allowed Himself to suffer terribly on the cross to prove his love for us. We struggle to understand why God allows evil and suffering but in the end we simply have to trust and put

our faith in Him, knowing that His love is greater than any woes we may suffer.

30. **Criticism:** Christianity has been the cause of many terrible wars and strifes and should be avoided.

Response: according to the Encyclopaedia of Wars, of 1,763 known/recorded historical conflicts, 121, or 6.87%, had religion as their primary cause. However, it is true the Church over the centuries has backed violent efforts to protect or expand Christianity eg the Crusades against militant Islam. While Jesus preached love for one's enemy, He did not specifically rule out self-defence and a just war. Our modern catechism tells us that the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. Christians go to war for many reasons but that does not mean Christianity is a violent religion.

31. **Criticism:** what has the Roman Catholic Church ever done for the wider world outside its community of believers?

Response: the Church is believed to be the single largest charitable entity on the planet; hospitals were developed under Catholicism from the 4th century; the Big Bang theory was invented by a Catholic priest, Fr Georges Lemaître; the Augustinian monk Gregor Mendel founded the science of genetics; the study of philosophy and theology has been greatly advanced by Catholic academics over the centuries; Catholics were responsible for the development of the university system and Church-linked schools educate millions of pupils worldwide; modern Western music is a direct result of 1,200 years of Catholic development; women are not allowed to be priests but the Church has always been willing to honour great women of faith.

32. **Criticism:** the theory of evolution has killed any need to believe in God.

Response: according to the Catholic Encyclopaedia, "That God should have made use of natural, evolutionary, original causes in the production of man's body, is *per se* not improbable, and was propounded by St Augustine. The actual proofs of the descent of man's body from animals is, however, inadequate, especially in respect to paleontology. And the human soul could not have been derived through natural evolution from that of the brute, since it is of a spiritual nature; for which reason we must refer its origin to a creative act on the part of God."

33. **Criticism:** the Catholic Church does not like gay people.

Response: not true. We are all made and loved by God but our tradition has always been that God made male and female to complement each other as part of his plan. The Church's attitude can be concisely summed up by a Catholic Truth Society booklet: "The Church hopes that homosexual persons can form sincere, faithful and loving friendships, but if these become genital they cause deadly harm to our faith, our dignity as made in God's image and our development as persons."

34. **Criticism:** the Church discriminates against women by its opposition to abortion.

Response: what is more important: the concept of choice or the sanctity of human life? The Church believes it is the latter. Sanctity of life starts at conception when a human being is created. Catholics believe God made us in His image and we are all sacred beings, even when just a small collection of cells. Bizarrely, some people will criticise a pregnant woman for taking drugs or alcohol because they may harm her child, yet they will not criticise her for aborting that child! Our Church maintains that all innocent life should be protected.

35. **Criticism:** why do Catholics frown on the state sanctioning assisted dying for those in great pain who have only a few months left to live?

Response: as our parish letter told Felixstowe's MP: "Those who propose assisted suicide are, implicitly, denying that life has an inherent value beyond its abilities and capacities. Deliberately bringing about death in the name of "dignity" denies the innate dignity of every human life which, in turn, has damaging consequences for how society views those with severe disabilities, those who are dying and those in great discomfort.

"One of our parish's great fears about this bill is that sick people will experience a fear of burdening loved ones with their suffering, which is particularly concerning for those who are elderly and infirm. Rather than legalising assisted suicide, we call for greater government investment in specialist palliative care. We reiterate the Catholic Church's commitment to protecting and valuing life at all stages, no matter how physically or psychologically limited, and our opposition to assisted suicide as an attack on the inherent dignity of human life."

36. **Criticism:** contraception should be a private issue between couples. The Church has no business interfering.

Response: the primary purpose of marriage is to have children and the Church teaches that all life processes should be in God's hands. However, it is recognised that many couples do not want large families and they are asked to use natural family planning. The Church is always understanding with people who struggle morally and intellectually with this teaching and recognises the difficulties involved.

37. **Criticism:** Catholics seem to rely a lot on tradition whereas Protestants look mainly to scripture. You cannot both be right!

Response: while scripture is of great importance to us, we should bear in mind that writings are limited to their time and cannot capture everything about the Christian communities involved or how their oral traditions were passing beliefs to the next generations. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit new truths have been revealed to the Church throughout the centuries eg doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ. Beliefs that emerge over time almost always have a link back to how our ancestors were trying to understand scripture. All scripture is interpreted in the light of a tradition facing challenges of the age. Our faith is a living community that is continually evolving and not limited to the written word.

38. **Criticism:** how can the Pope be infallible? We are all human and make mistakes.

Response: according to a Catholic Truth Society booklet, "the Pope is protected by the Holy Spirit from error when teaching as the Church's supreme pastor" on doctrines of faith and morals because of his apostolic authority passed down from St Peter. Otherwise, the Pope is fallible like the rest of us and capable of sin and error.

39. **Criticism:** why can't divorced Catholics remarry in the Church? It's unfair on someone who wants to practise their faith.

Response: the Catholic Church believes divorce to be wrong because it breaks the sacred bond between husband and wife. Jesus said: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Mt 19:6). That’s why a divorced Catholic would not normally be allowed to remarry in a Catholic church unless granted an annulment of the first marriage. Catholics who are divorced and remarried are not able to receive the sacraments but may attend Mass and join in other activities of the Church.

40. **Criticism:** veneration of saints’ relics is weird and sounds like something from the Middle Ages.

Response: the New Advent Catholic Encyclopaedia tells us that the veneration of relics is to some extent a primitive instinct, and it is associated with many other religious systems, including Buddhism. The Council of Trent ruled that "the holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ - which bodies were the living members of Christ and 'the temple of the Holy Ghost' and which are by Him to be raised to eternal life and to be glorified are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these [bodies] many benefits are bestowed by God on men."

41. **Criticism:** sacramentals are a bit odd and should have no role in modern worship.

Response: Christ instituted sacraments but did not determine form down to the smallest detail, leaving the Church to decide what rites were suitable. These rites are indicated by sacramentals which manifest the respect due to the sacrament. They include the mingling of water with Eucharistic wine; the triple baptismal effusion; feast days, liturgical vestments; genuflection, prostrations; chanting and blessing oneself with holy water.

42. **Criticism:** Catholicism has always been anti-Semitic.

Response: Christianity grew out of Judaism and the first apostles were Jews. Our religions are closely intertwined, but diverged greatly after Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century. Unfortunately, the Church backed persecution of the Jews in Europe, particularly in the Middle Ages, and the Jews were regarded as God killers because of what happened to Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s rejected this “deicide” label and condemned all forms of anti-

Semitism, stressing the shared heritage of Christianity and Judaism. Since then, interfaith dialogue has been maintained in an effort to have cordial relations.

43. **Criticism:** Catholicism has a very negative view of Islam.

Response: conflict and terror carried out in the name of Islam can blind us to the fact that there is a lot that binds both faiths: Islam is monotheistic; Islam says Jesus is a prophet, perfect and sinless, immaculately conceived; Islam teaches that Mary is free of sin (she is mentioned more times in the Koran than in the New Testament); Islam believes in angels, bodily resurrection, heaven and hell, fasting and charitable works. However, there is no denying differences on the Trinity and divinity of Christ and that there has been violent conflict between the religions over the centuries.

44. **Criticism:** indulgences have been a permission to sin and a money-making exercise.

Response: indulgences are often misunderstood by critics of our faith. They are the remission of part or all of the punishment remaining due to sin even after sins have been forgiven in Confession. They can be gained by undertaking prescribed prayers or pious acts. Indulgences cannot prevent us going to hell on Judgement Day, as only God can do that. There was abuse of indulgences for cash that helped spark the Reformation and as a result the Council of Trent abolished the giving of indulgences for alms.

45. **Criticism:** crucifixes in churches showing a dreadful way to die are stomach-churning and should not be used because we worship the risen Christ, not Christ on the cross.

Response: the cross symbolises God's unfathomable love for mankind and has taken on a deep spiritual meaning. Christians should worship Jesus in all the stages of his incarnation, as he is the divine Son of God at all times. St Paul wrote (1 Cor. 2:2): "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) teaches that Christ's "most holy passion on the wood of the cross merited justification for us".

46. **Criticism:** many people like reading their horoscopes or having their palms read. It is just a bit of fun, isn't it?

Response: only God can reveal the future via prophets or saints and we should place all our hopes in Him alone. The Catholic Catechism is quite clear: "All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or Demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honour, respect and loving fear that we owe to God alone."

47. **Criticism:** have you Catholics invented an image of the Holy Spirit as a dove? Surely, God would want to be seen as something powerful, such as an eagle.

Response: all four gospels mention the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending on to Jesus during his baptism. Christian iconography has traditionally used a dove to suggest the Spirit. In some churches you can see a metal receptacle in the shape of a dove (columbarium) holding the Eucharist suspended over the altar.

48. **Criticism:** one hears Catholics blaspheming and using God's name in oaths. Therefore, your religion must be quite relaxed about such behaviour.

Response: blasphemy is opposed to the second commandment and consists of words of hatred or speaking ill of God, Christ's Church, the saints and sacred things. Oaths misusing God's name, even if not intentionally blasphemous, show a lack of respect for God. God's name is holy and must be uttered with veneration.

49. **Criticism:** the Vatican often criticises the excesses of capitalism, so the Church must be socialist.

Response: the Catholic Catechism is quite clear about this: "The Church has rejected the totalitarian and atheistic ideologies associated in modern times

with 'communism' or 'socialism'. She has likewise refused to accept, in the practice of 'capitalism', individualism and the absolute primacy of the law of the marketplace over human labour." Reasonable and just regulation of the marketplace is commended.

50. **Criticism:** why can't Catholics become Freemasons if it helps to further their careers. It cannot do any harm, surely?

Response: Catholics are forbidden from joining the Masons. Freemasonry claims not to be a religion, yet has temples, altars, prayers, a moral code, worship, vestments and believes in the afterlife. Christ plays no part in Masonry which has no role for God's grace. A freemason can make what he wants of his God; the Christian belief in the incarnation, therefore, is a direct challenge to Freemasonry.