



**Does challenging superstition or faith protect people?
Is it mistaken to support organised religion in membership or donations?**

**If people do good because they are human, not because God prompts them,
is it right to risk giving God any credit when they alone own their good?**



Is John the only inspired writer in the New Testament? Are his writings alone the one true Bible?

Quote from Catholic.com:

No book of the Bible claims itself to be divinely inspired. Divine inspiration means that God himself authored the exact words of the text (using the human writer's mind, personality, and background), and no book states anything like, "The words of this book were chosen by God" or "This book is divinely inspired."

<http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/if-the-deuterocanonical-books-dont-claim-divine-inspiration-how-can-they-be-included->

This is not quite true. Exodus does not claim as a whole to have been written by God through men but it does claim to contain the actual words of God. Many revelations in it are prefixed with, The Lord says this.

The New Testament Gospels never claim to be divinely inspired. They attempt to record divinely inspired material but they do not claim that this recording is guided by God or infallible. But the gospel of John is an exception. It calls Jesus the Word of God - that is the Revelation of God - and unlike the other gospels claims infallibility and full divine verbal inspiration for Jesus' statements (see John 12:49). It claims to record his words and to be the word of God. The gospel equates faith or believing with knowledge which is very strong and it claims to be facilitating that knowledge. See John 6:17:7,8. John 2:22 commands that we believe the words and statements of Jesus - meaning the gospel record of them.

The first Gospel, Mark, teaches that the apostles as good as lost their faith. Mark's Gospel spends a lot of time making the twelve apostles look bad. See Mark 4:13/6:51-52/7:17-18/8:14-33/9/10:34-41/14:37-42 and the gospel even ends sharply with the women leaving the tomb after being told of the resurrection and telling nobody. The hint is that the apostles were not told either and so if they said they were they were lying. Mark 11:20-23 reads, "In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed here withered!" "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them." This is a warning that as few if any can do that that their faith is not very good. Remember the context is literal - a tree had been cursed and then withered. Remember even Paul was sarcastic about Peter and James and John claiming to be pillars of the Church.

It could be that there is a gospel that ignores the apostles as apostates and claims to be the only accurate gospel and the only one that is scriptural or infallible or divinely inspired. The anonymous gospel, allegedly the work of the apostle John, could be that one.

In John 5:43 Jesus says, I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.

"In the name of" means "by the authority of". So Jesus is claiming to give the very teaching of the infallible God. To disagree with Jesus is to contradict God.

The context is religious teachers. It is hard to believe that any Jewish rabbi teaching the people about God would teach in his own name. To make sense of this, it is important to see that the rabbis Jesus is thinking of are not claiming to teach with the authority of God but are teaching about God. They minister based on what they believe God says and what God wants.

It would be odd if John told us Jesus taught with such authority and then wrote a gospel based on what he believed Jesus taught. That would be John preaching about Jesus in John's own name. The Christian solution is that John is indicating that he believes Jesus is inspiring the gospel so the gospel is as infallible as Jesus.

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In John 10:35 Jesus says scripture cannot be broken meaning cannot be set aside. That is to say, it cannot err.

While it has Jesus quoting the Old Testament as the Word of God it does not actually say if the Old Testament is always verbally reliable. It could be that it was the Word of God and was corrupted. It says the Law was given through Moses but grace and truth were given through Jesus implying that the Law was unreliable.

John 7 tells us, On the great day of the feast, Jesus cried out in the temple, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (37). John explains what Jesus meant in verse 39: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The translations usually read, "for the Holy Ghost was not yet given". The King James Bible put the word in italics meaning they did not find it in the manuscripts they were translating from. Without the word given the text reads that there was no Holy Spirit yet at all. There would be no spirit until Jesus was glorified. This rejects the Old Testament statements about people having God's Spirit.

The Old Testament is not strictly speaking scripture in the eyes of this gospel though it has its uses.

Jesus mentions his words as being the words of God. The Gospel ends by saying its intention is to teach people what they need to know to be saved by God.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31.

The gospel implies that even the apostles will depart from the faith.

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:1-5.

The context is the healing of a blind man. Jesus said the man was not blind because of anybody's sin but because God wanted to cure the blindness as a sign. Jesus says he is the light of the world only when he is in the world and that night is coming. The light will vanish. Strangely the verse has been used to prove that once you die you go to Heaven or Hell and that cannot be changed and you cannot earn any blessings after death. But there is not the remotest chance that Jesus meant that. Are we to assume that when Jesus dies he will no longer do good? What he means is that there will be no real miracles or real devotion to him once he leaves the world. Leaving the world could mean his death but it could mean his ascension to Heaven as well. Jesus was predicting apostasy even among the apostles.

Jesus told the same blind man later that he came into the world to judge it so that those who could not see might see and those who see would stop seeing. He was again warning about apostasy. Those expected to remain faithful would actually end up blind. See John 9:41.

A few chapters later Jesus decides to go and see Lazarus who is sick and is warned that he might be stoned. He replies that there are only twelve hours in the day. He says a man can walk in the daytime without stumbling because he has the light of this world to see and if he walks at night he stumbles for there is no light to guide him. See John 11. Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light." John 11:9.

Why does he mention the twelve hours of daylight? Its random unless he was trying to drive home the point that the light is temporary. His light will be quenched by apostasy and the world will have no light.

The context shows Jesus means he has no time to waste if he wants to guide people for night will come. This warns of apostasy as well. And it is not far off. He implies that his work will stop soon so if he is going to help Lazarus there is no time to lose. There will be no real miracles after Jesus leave the earth.

Why did Jesus say the world hated him first and before his disciples? See John 15:18. He probably means that the world in reality hates him and only hates the disciples because they are his followers. It is not optimistic about there being many good holy people around and implies the Jewish saintly leaders are just actors. It implies that if Jesus starts a religion it will easily depart from the faith.

Jesus said, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come." John 13:33.

The traditional interpretation is that Jesus will go to Heaven and when he goes nobody will go with him. The Churches say

the apostles were to go there much later and that the text allows for that. But that interpretation is a stretch. The key is how Jesus says the apostles and the Jews are in the same boat in John 7:33 and he made it clear that if they die in their sin they cannot go where he is going.

Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. John 12:35.

Jesus warns the apostles that they will be overwhelmed by apostasy and darkness and will not find salvation for they will not know where they are going. The darkness will overtake them so it is stronger than they are.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:10.

That sectarian verse is often cross-referenced with those texts but it should not be. It is about doing good deeds to believers in particular.

Jesus told the Jews that if he alone says he is the Son of God and the mouthpiece of God his testimony is invalid so he cited John the Baptist's testimony. Jesus says he cites it not that he accepts human testimony but that the people may be saved (John 5:31-33). He didn't regard his own disciples who supposedly witnessed his miracles as any good for providing testimony. That is significant. And it is dishonest to say, "This testimony is human and its no good but I will quote it anyway to save you." Mercenary! Anyway Jesus was asserting that real followers were nearly impossible to come by! He even said that the Jews did not have the love of God in them! That is very strong! We would expect him to say that they didn't have much love for God in them but he says they didn't love God at all!

These statements are general and do not imply that all the apostles will apostatise forever. Maybe John returned to the faith.

THE OTHER SHEEP

John 10 - New International Version

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

12 The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.

13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—

15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.

18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

19 The Jews who heard these words were again divided.

20 Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"

Who are the other sheep? Mormons say it refers to the descendants of Israel in America who Jesus visited in the first century according to the Book of Mormon. They say the text promises that the other sheep fold will literally hear his voice for he will personally go to them.

Objections to this view are:

The Book of Mormon is bogus scripture.

The verse does not speak of a personal visit for Jesus said to his apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:16).

The sheep Jesus has refers to Israel. The other sheep are the Gentiles. Jesus had told the apostles to evangelise all nations.

The Gentiles according to Acts became part of the Church so there was one fold.

The objection that Jesus didn't mean a personal visit is wrong. The text says that the fold Jesus was talking to could hear his voice. That was literally true. And it says the next fold will hear it too. So that is literal too. The sheep Jesus had then all abandoned him on the cross. Jesus is merely talking about his sheep as in listeners not as in sheep being true and proper disciples. The sheepfold is not the Church which is seen as a supernatural relationship formed with disciples of Jesus.

Why does he start saying that God loves him because he will die and rise again? That sounds random.

The correct understanding is that Jesus is saying that people alive then hear his voice and are sheep whether they are disciples or not. Then there are other sheep in the future who will hear the same voice. Then one fold will be formed. He starts talking about the resurrection implying that the resurrected Jesus will talk to the other sheep.

The prophecy is about the faith vanishing and being brought back by Jesus personally at some point in the future and then he forms his Church.

The prophecy is about apostasy and restoration.

Jesus on the cross in John says it is finished. This usually is assumed to mean that all God asked for is now accomplished. This seems a stretch considering he had not died yet and had not risen yet and had not ordained the apostles to govern his church yet. It can be read as meaning, "I have done all I can do and was supposed to do." One good interpretation is that the teaching he gave was demarcated from all human teaching and was the teaching of God. The message was complete. It was about the message not what he was doing or not doing or what he had not done yet. As John says the gospel is the doctrine given by Jesus absorbed into your heart novelties are ruled out. New doctrines such as Mary being conceived without sin or same sex marriage being a Christian sacrament are out.

JOHN VERSUS THE OTHER GOSPELS

John is treated by the Church as being one of the four gospels. The others are Mark, Matthew and Luke.

John is too different from the other gospels.

There is no mention of an unusual conception. Matthew and Luke have a story that reads like a virginal conception revealed by God.

Jesus' baptism is never mentioned. John tends to make a God figure out of Jesus and he does not want to have Jesus getting baptised as if he were a sinner.

John the Baptist has no doubts about Jesus. He calls him the lamb of God who is to take away the sins of the world. The other gospels have a John who was unconvinced.

Jesus attacks the Temple at the start of the ministry. The other gospels say it happened at the end.

John's gospel gives seven signs in contrast to the gospels which report loads of miracles. Oddly there are no exorcisms in John. The water into wine sign was only a sign for those who knew there was water in the jars. Choosing such a poor sign and one that had people who were drunk getting more drink smacks of desperation.

No parables at all.

The teaching in the other gospels is not here. In John 14:30 Jesus says he will not say much for Satan the prince of the world is coming and they have nothing to do with each other. What does he mean? He is implying that anything he will say will be distorted. When he said nothing to validate any other gospel, it is clear that he is denying they have his teaching.

There is no Last Supper mentioned. John 6 speaks of eating Jesus' body and drinking his blood but there is no way this is linked with food or drink. Jesus was preaching to people not having supper with them.

Jesus does not agonise in the garden about the impending crucifixion. He even boasts that he has no problem going ahead with being crucified (12:27).

Jesus seems to be crucified in a private place. The other gospels have a Jesus who struggles to face the cross and who is

crucified very publicly.

Jesus says he kills himself on the cross despite it looking like it was done to him (10:18).

John in many things contradicts Mark and this could be deliberate. Perhaps John knew Mark's gospel and didn't give a damn about it.

The Christian response to all that is that John knew the stuff was covered in the other gospels which was why he never mentioned them. That is only an assumption for John never says that. Also there are too many silences for comfort. Some of them if not all are silent because the thing never happened. That is the way the world works. To assume that the several omissions are NEVER implying denial is too much.

We see that if John is true the other gospels are false. We see that if people were inventing a Jesus then John did that expertly.

THE EPISTLES

The First Epistle of John starts with declaring that they have received the beginning of something and then touched it and verified it.

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete."

FF Bruce observes that the beginning is the gospel message and not Jesus. Some scholars say it could have a dual meaning - that Jesus is Jesus and is also the gospel message which would mean that to know the gospel of John is to know Jesus. Whatever, it seems that the writer is claiming that they got revelations about Jesus and then met him in visions which confirmed the revelations. The gospel came before the vindication.

The gospel claims that anybody who says he has no sin is a liar and the truth of God is not in him at all. It does not say it just means people who think they have never sinned or people who think they do not sin any more but used to. So clearly it means both. This tells us that nobody alive is completely free from sin. They always have some sin in them. If all sin will be punished with eternal damnation then there is no hope except by somebody like Jesus keeping the law of God for us in our place. The statement that there is no truth of God at all in the person who says they have no sin is an extreme one. Surely there must be some truth in them? But it shows that John was teaching a black and white gospel. We must remember too that many of the religious people claiming to be without sin were civil and decent people in the eyes of their neighbours. John did not have any time for shallow thinking which considers people good just for being okay neighbours. Holiness had to go deeper than that.

In John 6:53, Jesus asserts that unless his listeners symbolically munch his body and drink his blood they will not have life in them. He implied that none of his listeners were on the road to Heaven for life is the fulfilled life which is a life that is closed to God. Jesus said that those "who eat the bread that I shall give shall never die unlike the Israelites in the wilderness who ate the manna and died." If you have no life in you, you are not connected with God at all.

In the First Epistle of John we read that we are not to pray for the person who commits the deadly sin and that not all sin is deadly. Catholics say that this is mortal sin which they do not believe because they pray for mortal sinners. When John bans such prayer it is plain that the sinner cannot repent. He must mean the sin of refusing to accept God's salvation on one's deathbed for what else could it be? The text says nothing about a saved person reverting to being an unsaved person. It could be that just as true faith and holiness is a sign of predestination, that certain sins are signs that the sinner is predestined to everlasting damnation and that God has no intention of giving that sinner the gift of faith and salvation.

Some however say that John is not talking about dying people. Indeed there is nothing in the text that explicitly says he is. They argue that if you know homosexuals or adulterers or heretics or murderers then you must not pray for their conversion and just hope they get the Hell that is coming to them. The text certainly does reject the notion that we are not in a position to know who is rejected by God and who is not. Again we have a black and white gospel.

The First Letter of John claims not that Christians need no teacher but that the persons addressed by his letter don't need one.

But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. 1 John 2:27

(ESV)The anointing is usually taken to mean the Holy Spirit. If the people need no teaching then why is he writing to teach them? He means that the Holy Spirit guides people to believe only his teaching. John alone then ha preserved the true Christianity.

Christians try to water down John's teachings - usually they say that John had a hyperbolic way of talking. But they cannot give any justification for this view. It is only an excuse. They would not use that excuse if somebody else wrote a letter and told you to judge adulterers as damned. And John does make it clear he regards his flock as little children so he would not confuse them with poetic hyperbole.

The real Christian does not say a book is the Word of God unless the book indicates that it is the Word of God. Thus it is wrong if you are a Christian to depend on the gospels as God's truth. John is the only exception.