

JESUS WAS INSANE[JESUS' MENTAL ILLNESS - PEER JOURNAL](#)

Even those who deny that Jesus existed - and I am one of them – must agree that whether the gospels are true or not they don't give us any confidence in the sanity of Jesus Christ. Even if Jesus didn't exist the gospels could have been based on stories about eccentrics and fairly obscure prophets of the time who did exist.

If we can prove that the Jesus Christ in them was disturbed or mad then that is all we need to destroy Christianity. It would mean that the apostles he chose and the Church he founded were all very silly people indeed. It would mean that we have to be on guard against any other religious movement because if Christianity was founded on the ravings of a madman and was such a success any other religion could have been the same.

We can be sure that there is no evidence for Jesus' sanity and plenty of evidence against it.

You will see plenty of Christian books written in defence of the faith that deny that Jesus was mentally ill and claim that he was the sanest person that ever lived.

Lee Strobel in *The Case for Christ* interviewed a psychologist, a Christian one of course, who claimed that Jesus was so sane he was amazing. The psychologist was Gary R. Collins Ph.D. The book admitted that many people seem to be paragons of sanity and are really quite crazy (page 145) and gave the example of a mentally-ill woman who had killed her husband. Appearing normal and looking normal and acting normal until her trial was in progress, she began to say the craziest things. Evidently the trial brought that out in her. Otherwise she would have been fine. Some forms of insanity can lead to a person keeping the crazy beliefs and delusions to themselves. Insanity can make one do that more easily than it can get one to lift a knife to kill with. It was entirely possible that even the apostles never knew, at least for sure, Jesus was insane and Jesus took his secret with him to the grave. The psychologist claimed that Jesus was saner than himself. As we will soon see he was not wrong about that!

We are told that since Jesus did not dress strangely, cried at the tomb of Lazarus his friend, was angry with justification, had friendships with a varied spectrum of people, didn't have an over-inflated ego, cared deeply for people but was not neurotically addicted to being compassionate and was able to accept people but not their sin he passed all the tests for perfect sanity with flying colours. His emotions were as normal as could be. Nonsense.

We are not told how Jesus dressed or anything about how he looked at all. How could Collins know he had a normal appearance? His living rough and making bizarre demands would so that he was an unusual person and how he dressed was not important. What was important was how he behaved. And his behaviour was undoubtedly eccentric. The gospels saying that Jesus had no privacy even when he wanted it suggests he, in fact, was dressing strangely. People were able to recognise him very easily. Considering the voluminous and drab clothes that were worn by everybody in those days, it should have been easy to become unrecognisable. Jesus was so recognisable that he must have looked a strange character! And dressing in a bizarre fashion and then seeking anonymity is a sure sign of insanity.

Collins, the gospel of John which speaks of Jesus crying at the tomb does not say why he cried. When he planned to raise Lazarus up his crying for Lazarus would indicate that he had mental difficulties. Insane people do cry at funerals. What is ordinary about a man letting somebody die and then going days later to raise him from the dead? What would we be saying had Lazarus not risen? Jesus might have been more than surprised when Lazarus came out. Nothing in the story supports Jesus' alleged sanity.

Jesus went into an insane rage in the Temple and endangered his own life and that of other people and his friends for it drove him to cause a riot. And we are told by Collins to think that this was justified anger! Jesus went berserk for the workers in the Temple were making money out of religion and acting dishonestly. He knew about it before for he was in the Temple often enough. So why snap then? People do things for complicated reasons and we are not given much of an explanation for justification for Jesus' behaviour in the Temple. It is unscientific of Collins to settle for just simply asserting that Jesus was right. Even if the Temple was corrupt that does not in itself justify the way Jesus dealt with it.

Jesus in his core statement of morality, the Sermon on the Mount, said that merely wanting sex with somebody's wife was adultery and merely calling somebody a fool was murder. These ideas are pure paranoia and its remarkable that the crowd didn't say, "He is crazy. Let us go away. We are not wasting another minute listening to this rubbish." We must keep remembering these extreme statements and let them define Jesus for us.

A woman was brought to him to see if he would allow her to be stoned to death for adultery. If he didn't they could say he was taking a stand against God's word which demanded that she be liquidated brutally. Strangely he wrote on the ground and said that whoever has no sin can stone her. Thus he said that stoning her is an honour. He dragged it out for all he had to do was walk away for they could not stone her anyway. It was banned by the Romans and the mob had not followed the proper legal procedure as laid down by the God Jesus, according to some, claimed to be. He punished her with terror.

Albert Schweitzer held that Jesus was insane. His Jesus believed that the kingdom of God, the overthrow of all the nations and the replacement with God's kingdom, was about to happen any day and when he was on the cross he cried that God had forsaken him for he was dying and none of what he had predicted had taken place. His Jesus gave insane teachings believing that it was foolish to bother trying to stop somebody thieving for the world was about to end.

Jesus said many irrational things such as that God saying he was the God of the deceased Abraham, Isaac and Jacob meant that God was God of the living not the dead so that the dead were still alive. There was no reason to take such a bizarre interpretation of what God said. God said it in the Law of Moses, in the Book of Exodus, and the Law never gives any hint of an afterlife. It promises only material blessings for obeying God.

We are not told that the people he associated with were really close friends. Everybody has friends even when they are crazy. He did not accept everybody. He told a woman that she and her suffering daughter were dogs (Matthew 15:26) and to confirm it he only helped her after she admitted it.

The claim that Jesus was not ego-bloated is untrue. But the book would answer that Jesus made great claims about himself just because they were true and he backed them up with evidence. The Case for Christ maintains that Jesus gave unique teachings, worked miracles over nature and did healings to prove that he was who he said he was. But the trouble with miracles is that all believers are selective in what miracles they will believe in. For example, the Protestant regards the miracles unique to Catholics as psychic fraud, trickery or the Devil's work as he schemes to keep people away from the truth and get people damned in Hell with himself and his angels. The Catholic Church only recognises miracles as from God if they fit its theology and if they don't the Church ignores them. So this is doctoring the evidence. Also the gospel miracles are not as well backed up as modern miracles are. And miracles are so extraordinary that one can be forgiven for not believing in them unless one sees them – an attitude the apostle Thomas had. The bigger and stranger the claim the more evidence is needed. Jesus' miracles would be no help for we cannot have commonsense and believe in them.

It is no less equally certain that if Jesus did not claim to be God but to be the greatest man ever or the supreme messenger of God he was still insane. Strobel's book tells us that Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever meaning he thought he himself was better than John for in other places he claimed to be superior to John. Jesus should have said nothing and let others decide. After all, if God was with him God could influence them to see that so that Jesus wouldn't need to say it. His saying it was therefore boasting.

Collins admits that the opponents of Jesus felt that he was raving mad but says they were not professionals and so they had no competence in judging Jesus' sanity. He quotes John 10:20 for support saying that the people were accusing Jesus of being mad because he claimed to be the good shepherd. The critics of Jesus are being said to have proved themselves to be too silly to rely on because they accused Jesus of being mad just because he said he was the good shepherd. This would be tantamount to saying Johnie was mad for claiming to be a good mechanic. Collins is totally unfair and it is terrible that the ancestors of the Jews have to be insulted to save Jesus. That is insulting the Jews of today. Why is he unfair? For Jesus was not condemned because of his use of the good shepherd title at all. He was condemned because in John 10:19 he said he would die and rise again. He was making outrageous claims for himself. Jesus himself said that miracles proved nothing (Matthew 7:22) and yet he expected the Jews to believe he would die and rise again. Surely he would concede that if he could say such things anybody could?

The Jewish rabbis and leaders considered Jesus to be insane and we must remember that they were the counsellors and psychologists of their day. You don't need to be a professional to judge somebody insane and nobody can deny that we don't have the right to accuse these people of not intelligently and honestly believing that Jesus was crackers. People with a good talent for rational thinking and rational habits have as much right as psychiatrists to judge somebody insane for insanity is in essence simply a failure to see or like reality. So people who knew Jesus and said he was mad are not to be listened to and Collins comes along twenty centuries later reading a few books on Jesus has the right to say they were wrong! Maybe they were but what right has he to demand authority and knowledge of Jesus' mind? Jesus own family believed that he was mad (Mark 3:21) and they could hardly be accused of being unfair to him for they were deeply ashamed of him which proves they really sincerely believed he was mad. Also they were so sure, they even brought scorn and stigma on themselves by admitting they believed Jesus was mad to everyone. They didn't care for they were so sure.

Jesus' own mother thought he was mad and he refused to meet her saying he had found new family, those who listened to the word of God. She had diagnosed him with possession. If you read the gospels, people with epilepsy and mental illness were considered possessed. This was so cruel that it shows that when Jesus validated that evil culture of fear by exorcising

he did more harm than good.

The Jews when they accused Jesus of being mad meant he was demon possessed (John 10:20). They were not saying he was a madman foaming at the mouth. Jesus was not that kind of madman. They were saying he was very eccentric. Perhaps he seemed normal most or some of the time. That would make them feel he was possessed for nobody can see a demon and not all possessions are necessarily gruesome and tormenting. Satan might possess a man to use him to lead people away from the truth and ruin God's plan.

Collins declares Jesus sane just on the basis of four short gospel books three of which used largely the same material and repeated what each others said when you need more than that. Collins needs help.

Collins says in the book that there are some psychiatric patients who won't respond to treatment and blames demons for that. This was said to get around the fact that nobody reasonable believes in possession these days and yet Jesus performed tons of exorcisms of demons. But not getting better only means that medicine is imperfect not that demons are involved. To tell mentally ill people that they even might be possessed is downright criminal and cruel. You would be more terrified of evil supernatural forces than you would be of natural ones for the former have more freedom to do the evil they want. There is no doubt that Jesus was guilty of great insensitivity and self-absorption when he advanced the view that demons can take over and harm people. Collins needs to see that he himself is guilty of this too.

Collins ignores the evidence of paranoia in Jesus when Jesus said that the vast majority of people are demon-possessed. Jesus told the Jews that if Satan cast out Satan that his empire would collapse (Mark 3:24). Clearly then Satan couldn't work without possessing as many people as possible at least to some degree. Logically, most possessed people must just act normal with nobody knowing the evil forces that are controlling them or influencing them. Why couldn't Satan put a demon out and send it to somebody else when it suited him? That Jesus rejects the suggestion while believing that the Devil was extremely powerful in the world indicates that there was nobody else to possess! So everybody in the world must be possessed. He wasn't sure of his own mental health when he had to believe that everybody was possessed. He stated in Matthew 12 that a demon can be exorcised and come back to take over the victim with seven others when it finds nobody else to possess though the victim will have got his life together and be a good person. When it can happen to a healthy and decent person who came through a demonic attack far stronger there isn't much hope for the rest of us! And especially when the demon that did the tormenting before comes back with seven friends! It is obviously better to put up with a demon than to try and get rid of it. He said that these visitations from demons would happen to the generation he was a part of which he described as an "evil generation". He also stated that nobody was good or to be called good but God alone (Mark 10:18) and indicated that he trusted nobody at all for he said that people who go wrong in small things should not be trusted in greater (Luke 16:10). All this is a classic sign of severe mental illness.

Jesus attracted people who as far as rationality was concerned had problems. Most people are weak at rationality especially when it comes to religious claims they want to believe in and so they would devote themselves to lunatics who seem relatively sane. Jesus failed to attract people of great intellectual calibre, though he brought in some who thought they had, which often happens when lunatics run a sect.

Sanders mentioned the fact that in the ancient world and in Palestine at the time of Jesus, exorcists were known to engage in frenzied and erratic behaviour. Jesus was known to be an exorcist. He certainly did strange things at times such as writing on the ground aimlessly and spitting on the ground to make mud paste that he rubbed into the eyes of the blind. He claimed to be equal to God in some way. This resulted in the Jews lifting stones to kill him. He engaged in long and raving rants against the Jews.

It is thought that since Jesus lived in a society that expected the Messiah and an apocalyptic disaster that since he was conditioned by these beliefs he was not insane for taking them as seriously as he did. It is true that sane people can expect god men to appear and the world to end but if one of them starts claiming to be a god like being and the instigator of the end that is a totally different thing. Christians expect the world to perish in fire or nuclear war because the Bible says so. If one of them started a nuclear war because of that belief even the Christians would say he was insane. They would not use the fact that the person believed as they do as evidence that he was sane.

It is thought that if Jesus was suffering from a disorder those who took him seriously such as his disciples must have been as well. But perhaps it was the disciples being conditioned by the intense desire for the Messiah to come at that time that made them devoted to him and turn a blind eye to signs of Jesus' madness?

Others say that though Messianic claimants are often insane, Jesus was not for he thought he had reason to claim to be the Messiah. Actually he had not. The gospels are forced to invent implausible genealogies for him to show that he fitted the requirements. And Jesus himself spoke of fake messengers of God who could do miracles and heal like he could. Also Jesus learned the Old Testament off by heart like all Jews did. And when he tried to fulfil prophecy, he was fulfilling prophecy that was not in the real Old Testament but in a Greek mistranslation of it. Plus he was consciously trying to fulfil these

prophecies as he did in the case of the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. That does not sound like the behaviour of a man convinced on rational grounds that he was the Messiah. If he thought he was the Messiah then he did not think this on solid grounds or excusable grounds.

Caiaphas had to try Jesus. He went to the trouble of getting lying witnesses so as to be able to find Jesus guilty of blasphemy which carried the death sentence. He didn't know that Jesus was more than willing to be convicted and put to death and had been making that clear by his behaviour and statements during arrest and so on. A man wanting to be put to death like that is mentally diseased.

It is absolutely certain that if Jesus claimed to be God or to be the greatest prophet ever that he was insane. Why? Because he left no reason for us to believe in his claims. The Christians argue that he couldn't have been insane for he backed up his claims with miracles. But Jesus himself claimed that the resurrection was the only real sign. The Jews asked him for a sign and he said he would give them none but the sign of Jonah (Luke 11:29,30). Some scholars think this sign was the resurrection or just the message of repentance. Jonah seems to have risen from the dead after being swallowed by a fish and he preached repentance. But the context demands we take sign to mean miracle. So it was the resurrection. Mark says there will be no sign full stop (Mark 8:12). This means that no evidence will be given for his resurrection and it must be believed by faith alone. Christians say Mark was referring to the same talk as in Luke and just summarised it so there is no contradiction. There is. The words do not agree.

Another problem is that the crucifixion could have been a hoax. Another man could have taken Jesus' place on the cross which would rule out the resurrection being a sign. The gossellers may say that Jesus died on the cross but that was only their interpretation of events. They could have been honest but wrong. Christian faith is not based on the resurrection but on what men said. It is based on reports about something not the something itself. Irrationally, the men are considered to be right just because they made an interpretation for which there is no evidence for.

For the resurrection to succeed as a proof of Jesus' authenticity and divine commission it needs to be something that only an honest God could do. But we only assume that God alone has the power to raise the dead. Also, if demons or whatever cannot raise the dead, they can make it look like they can.

It is also curious that the resurrection was not a resuscitation but a return from death that transmuted Jesus into a totally transformed mode of existence meaning Jesus had to reveal it in visions.

The resurrection failed to be proof for Jesus. The notion that it is proof is based on the monstrous and unjustifiable presumption he made that the Devil and magicians couldn't duplicate the resurrection visions! Remember Jesus vanishing from a tomb proves nothing by itself. You would need him to appear to people to tell them why his body is not in the tomb and that the reason is that he was raised. So the visions are more important than the missing body. And if visions can happen without God being behind it, then there is no more to be said!

The gospels indeed have failed to convince us that Jesus was sane.

The Christian system was designed to produce psychopaths and neurotics. You can't expect much else when you look at the ravings of its founder particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. Gaze at its bloody history for proof. It has been very successful in producing religious mental disease.

THE CASE FOR CHRIST, Lee Strobel, HarperCollins/Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1998

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