

A PSYCHOLOGIST IN A CHRISTIAN BOOK LIES ABOUT HOW SANE JESUS WAS

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 extraordinary 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.

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.

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.

There were more religion and cult founders than we will never know or court. Most of them did well besides being insane. Their groups if they got the political power that Christianity ended up with would be telling us how uplifting and sane they were today!

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

