

Was Jesus Homosexual?

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This article attempts to explore the possibility that Jesus was a homosexual by referring to studies made by psychiatrists as well as to Biblical sources. For over a century various psychiatrists have thought that Jesus was a paranoid schizophrenic and we now know that the most frequent cause of schizophrenia is the repression of homosexuality. The Gospel of John has two passages that seem to confirm the hypothesis that Jesus was homosexual.

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Introduction

Until very recently, it would have been considered taboo or even blasphemous to pose the question of Jesus' sexual orientation or to suggest that he might have been a homosexual. Times have changed and we now know that homosexuality has existed in all cultures, in all nations, and in all epochs. We also know that it is not a choice and should not be considered immoral. Even psychiatrists who, as early as 1835, dealt with the question of Jesus' psychosis did not dare investigate the nature of his sexual orientation. For them, schizophrenia was considered less scandalous than homosexuality. Since the gay liberation movement has made homosexuality a subject that is no longer taboo, it is time to make serious speculations about the nature of Jesus' libido.

Psychiatrists' Speculations

In 1913, the world famous Alsatian theologian Albert Schweitzer published a book based on his doctoral thesis which offers a summary of the speculations of various psychiatrists concerning the nature of Jesus' psychosis. It was published in an English translation with the title *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* by Beacon Press in Boston in 1948. What is remarkable in this short book is the enumeration of symptoms of schizophrenia that these psychiatrists discovered in reading the Biblical account of Jesus' life without one of them posing the question of his sexual orientation. Today we know, of course, that the most frequent cause of schizophrenia is the repression of homosexuality, as is vividly documented in the brilliant book *Schizophrenia: The Bearded Lady Disease* by Michael Mahoney. The irreconcilable difference between the superego that cannot accept homosexuality and the id that has irrepressible homosexual urges leads to a schizophrenic psychosis. In this psychosis, one receives communications from God in the form of beatific visions, divine voices, mystical raptures, and religious ecstasies. The Hungarian psychiatrist Thomas Szasz summarises this phenomenon thus:

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“If you talk to God, you are praying. If God talks to you, you have schizophrenia” (Szasz, 1973, p. 101). Certainly God spoke to Jesus, thus he was schizophrenic.

Schweitzer’s doctoral thesis and book make an analysis of the works of three psychiatrists who thought that Jesus was schizophrenic. At the time schizophrenia was called paranoia. The three are David Friedrich Strauss, whose book *Das Leben Jesu* was first published in 1835; Georg de Loosten, whose book *Jesus Christus vom Standpunkt des Psychiaters* was published in 1905, and William Hirsch, whose book *Conclusions of a Psychiatrist* was published in 1912. Schweitzer does not agree with the findings of these psychiatrists since he, as a Christian, simply could not admit that the founder of the Christian religion was not perfectly sane.

Among the symptoms of schizophrenia that these psychiatrists discovered in their analysis of Jesus’ life and thought are the following: “the quixotic and the fanatical” (Schweitzer, 1948, p. 35), “a born degenerate” (p. 37), “an extremely exaggerated self-consciousness” (p. 37), “a very slightly developed sense of family and sex” (p. 37), Jesus considering himself “a completely supernatural being” (p. 37), Jesus was in “a highly nervous, excitable state” (p. 38), Jesus had “visual hallucinations” and “suffered from voices” (p. 39), he had “megalomania, which mounted ceaselessly and immeasurably” (p. 41), “religious paranoia” (p. 42), Jesus had “a verbal and auditory hallucination” (p. 43), Jesus had “a hebephrenic crisis” (p. 53).

What is absolutely fascinating in these psychiatrists’ diagnoses of Jesus’ psychosis is that not one of them even poses the question of Jesus’ sexual orientation. They were all limited in their minds as well as in their writings by the taboos of their epoch. It was not until 1948 that a psychiatrist had the courage to admit the truth that there is almost always a connection between homosexuality and schizophrenia. In his Foreword to Schweitzer’s book, Winfred Overholser, the president of the American Psychiatric Association, comes out with the long awaited truth: “We now know, of course, that the emotional and homosexual factors are highly important, and that paranoia is no more a purely intellectual disorder than any other psychosis” (Schweitzer, 1948, p. 13).

It might be interesting to refer to other cases of men becoming schizophrenic because of the repression of their homosexuality. One was Québec’s most famous poet, Émile Nelligan, who was hospitalized for schizophrenia in 1899 at the age of 20 and who spent the last 40 years of his life in an insane asylum. Another was the German judge Daniel Paul Schreber, whose book *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (2000) prompted responses from Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. According to Joachim Köhler’s book *Zarathustra’s Secret* (2002), Friedrich Nietzsche was a homosexual who had to repress his sexual longings while living in Germany and who found some release with adventures with young men in Sicily. The repression of his homosexuality was obviously the cause of his schizophrenia, which caused him to be hospitalized in an insane asylum for the last 11 years of his life.

My own personal struggles with Christianity, homosexuality, and schizophrenia are described in my book *What Rough Beast* (2017). At the age of 16, I was forced to undergo psychiatric torture in order to be cured of my homosexuality, which resulted in my becoming schizophrenic and being hospitalized for 15 months.

Biblical Sources

There is one passage in the Gospel that shows that Jesus was considered to be mentally ill by those who knew him: “And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself” (Mark 3:21). To be “beside oneself” simply means to be mentally ill.

The Gospel of John offers two passages that reveal Jesus' homosexuality. John tells us that Jesus loved one of his disciples and that they were seen in physical contact with each other in public: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). For two millennia Christians have been reading this passage without once thinking that it suggests that Jesus was homosexual. If we changed the name they might realize that their religious faith has blinded them to what seems to be obvious: "Now there was leaning on Elton John's bosom one of his fans, whom Elton loved". No one reading this last sentence would doubt that it indicates that Elton John was homosexual. Why should there be different criteria for Jesus?

The other passage that shows the profundity of Jesus' love for his special disciple is at the crucifixion when he speaks to his mother "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" (John 19:26). What is most fascinating about this crucifixion scene is the absence of the other disciples. It is very possible that it was Jesus' reputation of loving another man and of being seen in physical contact with him that so scandalized the Jews and made them want Jesus to be crucified. The very idea that a man who considered himself to be the Messiah could actually be a homosexual would have been enough to warrant this death sentence. Pilate could not understand why the Jews wanted Jesus to be crucified, but Pilate came from Roman culture, which did not condemn homosexuality.

Conclusion

Cynical atheists would all agree that the possibility that Jesus was a homosexual schizophrenic would prove that there is no truth in the Christian religion. They would say that the myths, moral codes, rituals and ecclesiastical structures of the Christian religion are ultimately based on the hallucinations of a man who lived two thousand years ago and are thus of no importance.

Christians, on the other hand, should say that they are totally indifferent to whatever psychiatrists might want to say about Jesus. They would admit that if psychiatrists had been active in Palestine when Jesus was alive, they would have incarcerated him in an insane asylum, or given him electric shock treatments, or performed a lobotomy on him, or locked him up in a chemical prison with their tranquilizers. They would simply have prevented the Christian religion from existing.

The truth of the Christian religion resides simply in the fact that Christ's words continue to save lives, to release people from an existence of meaninglessness and evil, to mend broken minds, and to cure sick souls. It is most unfortunate that many, if not most, psychiatrists have never recognized the salutary value of religious faith.

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