

Peer Review

Review of: "The Current Impasse in Scholarship on the Resurrection of Jesus: An Attempt to Clear the Undergrowth"

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The topic of this paper is important: competing explanations of Jesus' supposed Resurrection. The author frames this essay as an effort to negotiate what has been an impasse between conservative scholars, who understand the Resurrection as a miracle worked by God, and historians who reject supernatural explanations. The research paradigms of the two groups are different and irreconcilable. The author will review the literature,

“clear the brush,” and mediate the impasse. This is certainly a formidable and almost certainly an impossible goal.

The first part of the paper reviews the literature on the Resurrection, giving special attention to a 2015 review by Simon Joseph that was similarly framed around the competing paradigms. As Simon Joseph had noted, historians offer several explanations for the Gospel accounts: “that Jesus either survived the crucifixion, Jesus deceived his disciples, or Jesus' disciples had visions or hallucinations of a resurrected Jesus.” A historian would not have *prima facie* objections to any of these explanations; for a historian, it would come down to the question of evidence—evidence that would meet a historian’s standard. To this point, no evidence or insufficient evidence that meets the standard has been advanced for the first two possibilities. The author thinks that the third explanation—visions or hallucinations—is the best possibility for satisfying both parties. The author advances the hallucination hypothesis as the best prospect for mediating the differences, *even while admitting that “most evangelical scholars dismiss” it*. But they do so either without taking into account hallucination or without attending to the current literature on

hallucination and delusion in the context of bereavement. The author then shows in detail that visions such as some of the apostles had of Jesus as described in the New Testament fit the description of bereavement hallucinations. The rest of the paper reviews this literature, mostly in psychology, on hallucinations in the context of bereavement, showing in detail how it aligns with the description of the disciples in the New Testament.

Unfortunately, the paper does not and cannot fulfill its purpose. Conservative scholars who understand the Resurrection as a miracle would be no more open to an explanation of a hallucination in the context of bereavement than they would to any other non-miraculous one. Such an explanation, no matter how well supported, would never be acceptable to them, as the author at some points seems to acknowledge.

I do have some radical advice to offer the author that might salvage the much good research the author has done in psychology and related fields: re-write the paper for psychologists. Show in detail how the reports in the New Testament of the Resurrection align with the paradigms on bereavement and delusions in the psych literature. Explain how the disciples' relationship to Jesus

made them particularly vulnerable to hallucination and analyze how the collective reports (as St Paul's claim that the Resurrected Jesus appeared to 500 in 1 Corinthians 15) could be explained as a mass delusion.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.