

Review of: "Exploring the Role of Bereavement Hallucinations in Early Christian Resurrection Beliefs"

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First, I appreciate the article's examination of the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus as believed by early Christians up to the present day. Most accept them as real events, but some refer to them as grief hallucinations, collective delusions, or non-corporeal resurrections. Using methods offered by modern psychological and anthropological studies of grief, sensory experience, and attachment theory, the article shows that there was a cultural and psychological context in first-century Palestine that facilitated this phenomenon. In fact, the article offers an alternative explanation for the followers' experiences that is consistent with established interdisciplinary research. In reaching this conclusion, there is no refutation or reference to any theory.

The approach used in this study offers a different perspective on the origins of resurrection belief, challenges traditional interpretations, and encourages further scholarly dialogue on the relationship between psychology and the study of religion. In the first section of the paper, I outline the work done by New Testament scholars on the proposal that the Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus can be explained by a combination of grief hallucinations and collective delusions on the part of his followers. Of course, most evangelical scholars are quick to dismiss this possibility, but even those more liberal who accept it do so without adequately referring to the work of psychologists and psychiatrists in the field. My suggestion is that the collective hallucination/delusion hypothesis is plausible but needs to be confirmed by reference to interdisciplinary studies, since only here can we hope to find current research on the relevant phenomena.

However, despite the novelty of this study and the methods used to obtain its results, its conclusions remain the subject of endless debate for me. "Individual hallucinations, leading to collective delusions, would serve this purpose and save Jesus' followers from the humiliation and shame of acknowledging the failure of their hopes." As the authors acknowledge: "The main aim of this paper is not to urge that this hypothesis be adopted in any detail, but to suggest, against the general traditionalist position, that it is as viable as the traditional explanations espoused by Craig (2008: 230–34, 371–77, 384–87, 395–99; contrary to Cavin and Colombetti 2019), Wright (2003: 686–96, 706–18), and others."