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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Were the Resurrection Appearances Hallucinations? Some Psychiatric and Psychological Considerations

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David Strauss hypothesised as far back as the nineteenth century that the resurrection appearances the disciples saw were nothing more than subjective visions, actually hallucinations.¹ Others followed Strauss's lead, and further developed his idea. However, none of these thinkers were able to establish a convincing case.² Still, the hallucination theory has never truly died. In fact, it remains an option for those who seek an alternate explanation to the gospels' record of Christ's resurrection. This paper will examine two modern-day proponents of the hallucination theory, Gerd Ludemann, and Michael Goulder. Specifically, I will critique the validity of their claims in light of what psychiatry and psychology tell us about the nature of hallucinations, especially the nature of mass hysteria-induced hallucinations.³

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- 1 That Strauss could not accept a literal resurrection is obvious from the manner in which he begins his treatment of the resurrections appearances: 'The proposition: a dead man has returned to life, is composed of two such contradictory elements, that whenever it is attempted to maintain the one, the other threatens to disappear. If he has really returned to life, it is natural to conclude that he was not wholly dead; if he was really dead, it is difficult to believe that he has really become living.' David F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus* vol. 3 (Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press, 1998), p. 359; repr. of *The Life of Jesus* trans. George Eliot, (London: Chapman Brothers, 1846). This naturalistic, anti-miraculous view of the world is usually at the bottom of any attempt to deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, right up to our own day. This is certainly the case with Michael Goulder, whose views will be examined in this paper. Goulder is a former Anglican minister, who left the priesthood when he lost his faith in God.
 - 2 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man* trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 95-96.
 - 3 There is a good amount of debate, even among those who do not believe that Jesus' body was literally resurrected, as to the nature of the 'appearances'. Some believe the resurrection appearances were outright hallucinations, while others think that, although the disciples did not actually see the physical, resurrected Christ, God gave them personal, subjective visions of Christ which confirmed He was indeed alive in some spiritual sense. For the purposes of this paper, I will be taking the position of the New Testament writers, who stress the fact that the apostles objectively saw the resurrected body of the Lord. 'It must be remembered that to the apostles and their opponents alike resurrection meant one thing – resurrection of the body.' F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 66. I find the hallucination/subjective visions dichotomy a bit misleading, since the purpose usually seems to be to sneak around, as it were, the fact that Christ was resurrected bodily, as the New Testament insists. Those who take the subjective

A good starting point is the scriptural accounts of the resurrection appearances. In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul summarizes those appearances. He states that the risen Christ appeared to, in chronological order: Peter, the twelve disciples, 'five hundred brothers', all of whom saw the risen One at the *same time*, James, 'all the apostles', and finally, Paul himself. (This list omits the women whom Christ appeared to in Matthew 28, and John 20. These appearances have great apologetic value, since the testimony of women in first-century Palestine was considered worthless. Therefore, this can hardly be a fabrication the gospel writers concocted in order to help their cause, for it surely would have had the opposite effect.) The first thing which must be said is that the appearances are varied. That is, they occurred to different persons, at various times. Second, they are substantiated. Paul mentions the fact that of the five hundred, most are still alive. In other words, Paul is saying that, if anyone doubts that Christ has really risen, there are hundreds of witnesses who will verify that he has indeed been seen alive. For Paul, the resurrection was the event that proved the gospel to be true. If the resurrection did not occur, Paul was wasting his life preaching a false faith, and the faith of all Christian believers was in vain (1 Cor. 15: 12-19). Since Paul bases the validity of the entire Christian religion on the resurrection, it hardly seems likely that he would claim there were hundreds of witnesses to the event, if he could not produce such witnesses to silence a skeptical inquirer.⁴

Gerd Ludemann's position is that Peter was the first one to 'see' the risen Christ, just as Scripture maintains. However, it was not really the risen Lord he saw, but merely a vision that was brought about by Peter's guilt complex, a complex which resulted from his denial of his Lord after Christ's arrest. Peter's vision in turn 'became the initial spark which prompted the further

vision tacked apparently think they can maintain the integrity of the New Testament resurrection reports, while at the same time rejecting the 'unscientific' notion of a man rising corporeally from the dead. For instance, Ludemann makes this distinction between vision and hallucination, but the end result of his theology is the same: Christ did not bodily rise from the dead. See William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann, *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment?* Paul Copan & Ronald Tacelli, eds., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 53-4, 150-51. However, in the latter passage, Ludemann is open to the idea that Christ, from heaven, did indeed make appearances to his followers.

4 For some of the problems the early Christians would have had perpetrating a resurrection deception, see Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, p. 66. And, for one of the best defences of the traditional understanding of Christ's bodily resurrection, as well as some devastating criticisms of the resurrection-as-visions theory, see the debate between evangelical scholar William Lane Craig and Gerd Ludemann, in *Jesus' Resurrection*, especially pp. 46-51, and pp. 163-206.

series of visions mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. The subsequent appearance of Christ can be explained as mass psychoses (or mass hysteria). This phenomenon was first made possible by Peter's vision'.⁵ Ludemann rules out the position taken by some, that although these were subjective visions, nonetheless they were God-initiated: 'these were psychological processes which ran their course with a degree of regularity – completely without divine intervention.'⁶ Goulder's position is essentially the same as Ludemann's. That is, Peter was the first to have a 'Jesus hallucination', brought on by the stress of Passion Week, or perhaps by the shame he felt because he had denied his Master, while the later resurrection appearances should best be considered the result of mass hysteria.⁷ Both Ludemann and Goulder are clear that they do not believe there is any supernatural element present in any of the resurrection appearances.

Now, it is certainly *possible* that Peter's severe guilt caused him to have a hallucination of a risen Christ. Hallucinations can be triggered by a number of different factors.⁸ But the aim of this paper is to examine the resurrection appearances-as-vision hypothesis to see if it is truly a *plausible* option. Ludemann's and Goulder's case stands or falls on whether or not *all* of the sightings of the risen Christ can be explained away in naturalistic terms as cases of mass hysteria. I do not believe that they can, but first, we must have a working definition of some key terms.

The following is a psychiatric definition of what constitutes a hallucination: 'an individual seer must perceive an auditory or visual stimulus (or both), and believe that this stimulus really exists (*i.e.*, that it is not imaginary or only in one's head). Second, a third party (read: clinical psychologist or psychiatrist) must be unable to detect a stimulus of any sort that corresponds to the seers (*sic*) perception.'⁹ Hallucinations are distinct from visions, for with visions

5 Gerd Ludemann, *What Really Happened to Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1995), p. 130.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

7 Michael Goulder, "The Baseless Fabric of a Vision," in *Resurrection Reconsidered* Gavin D'Costa, ed., (Oxford: England, 1996), pp. 51-55. Goulder makes the same point in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment*, pp. 96-98.

8 Peter D. Slade and Richard P. Bentall, *Sensory Deception: A Scientific Analysis of Hallucination*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 82-109.

9 Michael P. Carroll, "The Virgin Mary at LaSalette and Lourdes: Whom did the Children See," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, March 1985 no. 1, vol. 24, p. 58.

there are stimuli present which a third party can observe.¹⁰ Another thing which must be kept in mind is this: '[h]allucinatory and related perceptual experiences are essentially private and subjective. That is, at the instant in time at which the experience occurs, no other person shares the same experience.'¹¹

Based on these definitions, it is quite surprising that so many persons would have the very same sort of hallucination, namely, the dead Jesus presenting himself as alive, since hallucinations are, by definition, intensely private matters. Both Ludemann and Goulder seem to believe that the succession of visions of Christ only properly begins with Peter, while not addressing the visions that occurred to the women. However, as explained above, the appearances to the women are almost certainly historical. So, if the women first saw Christ, and only later did Peter see him, we have an example of three different persons having exactly the same hallucination. There was no time for mass hysteria to develop since Peter saw the resurrected Lord very shortly after the women did. Plus, it is obvious from Scripture (Luke 24:10-11) that the women's testimony about what they saw was not taken seriously, so there was no atmosphere of anticipation which could have served as the basis for Peter's vision. Given the fact that three different persons all saw the resurrected Lord, it is hard to discount the three sightings as hallucinations, since hallucinations are very much individual affairs.

But if these initial hallucinations are hard to explain, the dilemma becomes exponentially more complex when we turn to the matter of mass hysteria, upon which Ludemann and Goulder base the greater part of their respective cases. These scholars are saying, in effect, that the great majority of Jesus' appearances in the New Testament are examples of mass hysteria, an hysteria that fed off the initial hallucinations of Peter. To evaluate their claim, the nature of mass hysteria must be briefly examined. Mass hysteria does not usually involve visions at all. Rather, mass hysteria takes seeming mundane events and attributes to them 'mysterious, and to some degree anxiety-producing causes'.¹²

10 *Ibid.*, p. 58. Many of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary thus qualify as visions, since many observers have reported seeing some type of 'luminescence,' although the seer actually sees, or thinks he sees, Mary.

11 Slade and Bentall, *Sensory Deception*, p. 16.

12 James R. Stewart, "Sasquatch Sightings in North Dakota: An Analysis of an Episode of Collective Delusion," in *Exploring the Paranormal: Perspectives on Belief and Experience*, George K. Zollschan et al. (eds.) (Gard City Park, NY: Avery Publishing Group, New York, 1989), p. 289.

Some examples, culled from various geographical locations over the past fifty years include such varied phenomena as 'windshield pits, phantom anesthetists or slashers and mutilated cattle'.¹³ A case has also been made that chronic fatigue syndrome, Gulf War syndrome, the recovery of repressed memories, satanic ritual abuse, and alien abductions are all modern-day examples of mass hysteria, yet none of these involve hallucinations.¹⁴

As for those instances of mass hysteria that *do* involve visions of some sort, Goulder sights several examples: the statue of Mary at Knock moving, the phenomenon of UFOs, and 'Sasquatch' sightings (Sasquatch, or Bigfoot is, of course, a huge, ape-like being that supposedly haunts the Western parts of the U.S.).¹⁵ Goulder maintains that these examples are analogous to the New Testament visions of the resurrected Jesus. However, I do not think these examples are at all comparable to the sightings of the risen Christ, for the following reasons.

With regard to the moving statue sightings at Knock, the first problem with Goulder's analogy is the fact that the statue of Mary at Knock actually *exists*. It is an object that can be seen by anyone who goes to Knock, not just those who may be suffering from 'Roman Catholic mass delusion'. It is quite a jump from thinking one has seen a veridical object (the Mary statue) move slightly to a full-blown hallucination of a dead person (the risen Jesus).

Actually, the miraculous happenings at Knock can be traced back to 1879 (Goulder is apparently referring to more recent sightings of Mary's statue moving), when actual visions of Mary, as well as of St. Joseph and St. John, were reported by up to fourteen persons over a one-and-a-half-hour period.¹⁶

I assume Goulder would think that this is similar to what happened in the New Testament with the sightings of the risen Christ. However, a few things must be borne in mind. First, the visions of Mary were confined to a single location, whereas Christ appeared to multiple persons at various locations. Second, the seers at Knock did not report that Mary spoke to them,¹⁷

13 *Ibid.*, p. 288-89.

14 Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 115-201.

15 Goulder, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, p. 53.

16 Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 204-205.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

whereas the risen Christ had quite a bit to say to his surprised disciples! Also, these Knockian visions are best described as illusions, since there was some sort of mysterious bright light that seems to have served as an optical catalyst for the visions.¹⁸ So, as with the more modern sightings of the moving statue at Knock, there was something ‘there’ (in this case the bright light) which served to stimulate the seers’ imagination. Again, the New Testament reports of a dead man appearing, talking, and even eating, seem to be quite a different matter.

Thus, the Marian visions and the moving statue at Knock can be understood as resulting from any number of factors: unexplained natural phenomena (the bright light) which are misconstrued, the way the sunlight, or shadows, fall in a certain way and, of course, the air of miraculous expectancy with which many Catholics visit shrines. (And bear in mind, there was no such expectancy that the dead Jesus would appear to his followers. But more on this below.) All of these factors could lead to a classic case of mass hysteria (and I believe this may be what happens with many of the Marian visions worldwide), but such hysteria would not be applicable to the resurrection appearances, where various (at one time hundreds) of people, who were not miracle-hungry pilgrims, saw a dead man who had risen. It is far easier to misconstrue what is before our eyes than to suddenly see something that does not exist in reality.

Goulder also sees the UFO phenomenon as shedding light on the Christ appearances. The first thing to be said is that UFOs *may* exist! – and, if they do exist, sightings of them certainly cannot be considered as examples of mass hysteria. I myself am a skeptic, but there is no way to disprove their existence. Goulder would only have a valid analogy here if we knew for certain that they do not exist. But, even if they do not exist, when people report UFO ‘sightings’, they often are seeing something veridical, be it a comet, a shooting star, or some kind of man-made aircraft.¹⁹ I myself, while in the Nevada desert, saw a red, dot-like object darting through the desert sky, with movements that were far too quick and erratic to be an aeroplane or helicopter. Of course, I am dubious that it was a saucer full of little green

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

¹⁹ For examples of how mundane objects are easily misinterpreted as UFOs, see Donald H. Menzel and Ernest H. Taves, *The UFO Enigma* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 129-178.

men, but I know I saw *something*. So, as with the Knock example, Goulder's UFO analogy fails, because he examines objects that probably objectively exist (be they UFOs, comets, or something else), and tries to compare them to hallucinations, which do not, save in the mind of the individual seer.

But it is with an outbreak of Sasquatch, or Bigfoot, sightings in North Dakota that Goulder believes he has the strongest analogy to what happened with the resurrection appearances.²⁰ Briefly, the sightings started in the fall of 1977 in South Dakota. A B-grade Bigfoot movie had been popular in the state that summer. Suddenly, sightings of the hairy beast began to be reported. It started slowly at first with a few Native American boys, but eventually hundreds reported having seen the monster. Goulder tells us that six factors can explain these sightings, and that these factors have close parallels to the sightings of the resurrected Jesus. However, at least two of his six points seem highly problematic. The first point I wish to address is his claim that there was an existing social/cultural framework into which to fit the Bigfoot sightings. In parallel fashion, the early Christians had a similar framework into which to place the resurrection appearances, namely, the general resurrection that signalled the dawn of God's kingdom. His second point is that spotting the creature brought instant celebrity status to the seer. Similarly, for the first Christians 'seeing' the risen Jesus provided similar status, and also proved they were 'right' about Jesus and his claims all along.²¹

It may be true that the Bigfoot seers had a framework within which to fit their sightings (*e.g.*, the B-grade movie that summer, the Native American Bigfoot fables that had long been in circulation, and the oft-repeated rumours of Bigfoot sightings which had originated in the Pacific Northwest). However, it is not true that the early Christians had anything like a social/cultural framework into which a 'risen' Jesus could possibly fit. As Wolfhart Pannenberg has written: 'The primitive Christian news about the eschatological resurrection of Jesus – with a temporal interval separating it from the universal resurrection of the dead – is, considered from the point of view of the history of religions, something new, precisely also in the framework of the apocalyptic tradition.'²²

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

22 Pannenberg, *Jesus*, p. 96.

The early Christians may have had an idea of the general resurrection of the dead, as Goulder maintains, but they certainly had no idea that they were to have a dying (much less rising!) Messiah. Even Strauss, the father of the resurrection-as-visions theory, admitted that there was no substantial Old Testament teaching which predicted such a messiah, and that the disciples had to 'stretch' their exegesis of the Old Testament in order to find the predictions that confirmed their experiences of the risen One.²³ Indeed, the Old Testament Scriptures speak of three different resurrections (resuscitations, really) which were accomplished by the prophets Elijah and Elisha (in one case, by the bones of Elisha). However, none of these cases 'led to any sort of supernatural consequences in the further life of the resuscitated persons'.²⁴ And, it could be added, none of these served as any sort of harbinger of the messiah. Thus, the early Christians truly had no tradition with which to reconcile the resurrection of Jesus, be it an Old, or New Testament, one. F.F. Bruce opines that the common Jewish beliefs of the day held no room for a crucified messiah.²⁵

Nor was the belief prevalent that a resurrected messiah would, in turn, generate a mass resurrection of the dead. In fact, there were various views regarding the messiah. For some, he would be a mighty military leader who would deliver the Jews from Roman oppression. But, generally speaking, the messianic expectations of the early New Testament period were somewhat nebulous, although his acting with divine power on behalf on God seems to have been a common thread.²⁶

Goulder's second comparison between the Bigfoot sightings and the early Christian community also fails. Certainly, those who 'saw' Bigfoot at once became celebrities, especially since the media eventually descended upon the town. 'Seeing Bigfoot became a way of gaining prestige and living in the limelight, at least temporarily.'²⁷ But there are two reasons why this analogy cannot be applied to the resurrection appearances in the New Testament.

23 Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, p. 370.

24 Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (trans. Wilhelm C. Linss) (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), p. 49.

25 F.F. Bruce, *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 15-16.

26 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (Mahwah: NJ, Paulist Press, 1994), pp. 159-61.

27 Stewart, "Sasquatch Sightings," p. 292. This article, by the way, provides much of the basis for Goulder's theory that the resurrection appearances were episodes of mass hysteria.

First, the Christians had been taught the value of humility by their Master, and so it is not likely that so many of them would have sought public acclaim and adulation in this manner. Even more damning to the analogy, though, is the fact that the Bigfoot sightings were rather playful; it is exciting to tell your friends that you have seen a monster! One could claim to have seen the creature without any negative repercussions. Not so with those who saw the risen Christ. For a Christian to proclaim that he or she had seen alive a man both the Roman and Jewish authorities despised and executed was to expose oneself to political and religious persecution. We know from the Book of Acts the type of trouble one was in for once he or she made a public confession of faith in Christ (*e.g.*, the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7).

Speaking of Roman and Jewish authorities, the power of authority comes to bear on the question of mass hysteria. It is symptomatic of mass hysteria cases that, when the community leaders cannot offer an adequate explanation of the phenomena, the hysteria tends to grow even more out of control. In the case of the Bigfoot sightings, the local authorities were at a loss to explain the panic, and so they actually increased the hysteria: 'Their inability to provide reassuring explanations and answers increased the mysterious aspects of the sightings and actually, although not deliberately, gave credence to the extraordinary explanation....When control agents/agencies cannot adequately explain the case of something unknown, they unwittingly are placed in the position of being accomplices to those who 'believe' in the fantastic interpretation.'²⁸

The New Testament does not tell us precisely how the Jewish leadership responded to the reports of the appearances of Jesus,²⁹ although they surely heard about them (*e.g.*, Peter and John's speech before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4). But one can imagine that they were not nearly so, shall we say, flabbergasted, as were the authorities in South Dakota. One can imagine the response of the Jewish leaders (especially the Sadducees, for they denied the reality of any type of resurrection), when confronted with Christians who claimed to have seen the 'resurrected' Jesus. The Jewish leaders would have had many options. They might simply call the Christians liars, or they might

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

²⁹ The chief priests and elders do, however, concoct the story that the disciples stole the body of Jesus. This is done to explain away the fact of the empty tomb (Matt. 28: 12-15).

say the visions were demonic; Christ himself was accused of being possessed by demonic forces (John 8: 48-53). They could say the Christians were mad, the same charge which is sometimes levelled against Jesus in the gospels. However, based on what Acts tells us about the kind of persecution the early church faced, it is very doubtful that the Jewish authorities would have displayed the type of puzzlement that was shown by the authorities in the case of the Bigfoot sightings. Even if the Jewish leaders had accepted as factual the reports of the resurrection, they would not have encouraged the disciples in their messianic interpretation of the event.³⁰

Finally, mass hysteria as a phenomenon in history must be looked at in terms of the fruit it has produced. Ludemann and Goulder, if they are to maintain the position that the resurrection appearances are nothing more than another example of mass hysteria, will have to address the following three items. First, it must be admitted that nothing good has ever come of cases of mass hysteria. In fact, they often have quite negative results. One need only think of the Salem Witch Trials, or the ‘communist’ witch-hunts of the 1950s. These are just two examples, but history is replete with cases of mass hysteria that end in disaster³¹ and it is not surprising that such delusions end poorly, for they are founded upon nothing but deception; falsehood rarely produces anything of lasting worth.

Second, mass hysteria episodes always die out. The most common reason is simply that interest in the phenomenon begins to diminish. The demise of the Bigfoot epidemic is probably paradigmatic for most cases of mass hysteria:

In sum, the episode dies a ‘natural death’. The failure of believers to produce even a shred of credible evidence regarding the existence of Bigfoot eventually caused interest and enthusiasm to wane. Outbreaks of collective delusion seem to have within them the ‘seeds of their own destruction’. When the basic assumption of the episode (*i.e.*, the existence of a monster) rests upon a delusion evidence [*sic*] other than that of a circumstantial nature can never be presented. Eventually people tire in their efforts, their zeal diminishes and the episode quietly disappears.³²

30 Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, p. 49.

31 Showalter, *Hystories*, pp. 4-5, 24-5.

32 Stewart, “Sasquatch Sightings,” p. 302.

Third, cases of mass hysteria which are centred on a charismatic leader cannot survive that leader's demise. Mass hysteria fades away when it is centred around a 'pathological fanatic', or messiah-like figure. The hysteria abruptly draws to an end when the source of the hysteria is removed: 'When the pathological leader is removed the pathological spell seems to disappear. Every mass delusion, however intense, disappears once its cause is eliminated.'³³

None of the above-mentioned reasons for the demise of cases of mass hysteria is remotely applicable in the case of Christianity. With regard to the first point, Christianity did not come to a bad end. In fact, just the opposite is the case. The disciples who saw the resurrected Jesus bequeathed their religious convictions to their successors, who eventually conquered the Roman world for Christ, and eventually much of the globe. With regard to the second point, the same thing may be said. Interest in Christianity never waned, but rather grew, so much so that it is today the world's largest religion. With regard to point three, the death of Christianity's 'messiah-like figure' certainly did not spell the demise of Christianity – indeed, it was the very catalyst, along with the resurrection appearances, which spurred the religion's amazing growth. In this context, even orthodox Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide has said of the origin of the Christian faith that

no vision or hallucination is sufficient to explain such a revolutionary transformation [in the disciples]. For a sect or school or an order, perhaps a single vision would have been sufficient – but not for a world religion which was able to conquer the Occident thanks to the Easter faith.³⁴

To sum up, the resurrection appearances-as-visions theory is not persuasive, for the following reasons. One, hallucinations are by definition private mental affairs which are only experienced by the individual seer; that several persons would have the very same hallucination is not well supported by the medical literature on the topic. Two, to claim that the resurrection appearances were examples of mass hysteria flies in the face of what is generally known about the nature of mass hysteria. Three, the resurrection appearances could not

33 A.M. Meerlo, *Delusion and Mass Delusion: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs*, No. 79, (New York: Smith Ely Jelliffe Trust, 1949), p. 71.

34 Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 125-26.

have been cases of mass hysteria, for they did not end in disaster, the way that actual cases of mass hysteria always have. To suggest that the resurrection appearances were hallucinations might be understandable, indeed, inevitable, if one is working from a purely naturalistic framework, in which the very concept of bodily resurrection is an utter impossibility. But the objective evidence does not favour such an interpretation.

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