

The Physics of a Miracle

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Abstract

There are three explicit references in the Christian Gospels to a strange phenomenon that occurred after the resurrection of Jesus. Even though the resurrected body is understood to have been physically the same as the body that was crucified only a few days earlier – down to the very wounds themselves – somehow the people who knew Jesus best did not recognize Him. How could Mary Magdalene and the disciples have looked at the face of their friend and teacher and seen someone different? As strange as this is, the notion of a single physical body yielding different, even contradictory, observations happens to be a central feature of Quantum Theory. It is tempting to draw certain parallels with the phenomenon described in the Gospels, but the traditional understanding of Quantum Theory does not allow these parallels to go very far. However, the “triangular” interpretation of Quantum Theory, introduced at the 2009 COV&R conference in London, does not suffer from the same limitations. In fact, as we trace through the logic of “triangular observation,” we find that it is entirely compatible with the Gospels’ description of the post-resurrection body of Jesus. The result is an “explanation” of the misrecognition of Jesus which does not simply explain it away. Triangular observation provides a scientific context in which to discuss this miracle without sacrificing the central mystery that makes it a miracle in the first place. In this way, we develop a truly common ground between the physical sciences and theology, and this ground is nothing other than the sphere of mimetic human relationships.