
CROSSING THE BOUNDARY

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF DIVINE IMMANENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Igor Gudyma*

*Mariupol State University, Faculty of History, Department of Philosophy and Sociology,
Kreschatyk street 130, apartment 117, Cherkasy, 18000, Ukraine*

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Abstract

Theologians who used the ‘interventional’ terminology to reproduce the content of ideas about an active God proceeded from the conviction that God possesses sufficient power over the world He created, so that at the time known to Him He would miraculously overcome the natural ordering of the world and convey to man, the essence of his new intentions. The consequences of such efforts were clear, but many theologians who had reason to do so did not share them. As a result of the analysis of theological opinions, a number of signs appear that the use of such terminology, in order to express the image of an active God, causally connected with Creation, is still rather unsuccessful in terms of conveying the entire breadth of the Christian understanding of this issue. The idea of God, which is expressed through the mentioned terminology, forces us to imagine a God who acts in a relatively deistic way and has practically lost contact with the world and man. The idea of the nature of such a God, who manages the affairs of the world through a series of direct creative acts, makes those theologians who make efforts in the field of Theology, where it talks about God as an absolutely perfect being, embarrassed.

Keywords: theology, theism, immanence, hypotheses, analogies

1. Introduction - formulation of the problem

In the modern intellectual atmosphere, among a number of metaphysical questions, the discussion of which concerns theologians, undoubtedly the most pressing questions seem to be related to the existence of God, the modern understanding of the evidence of His existence and, ultimately, the epistemic status of religion itself, its ability to reflect reality. It is also becoming obvious now that modern Theology, as a special form of organization of knowledge, does not shy away from the achievements of empirical natural science and effective schemes of explanations developed by Philosophy in order to justify certain of its propositions. Moreover, according to the statements of modern culturologists, various types of discipline, namely Science, Philosophy and

*E-mail: igorgudyma67@gmail.com, tel.: +380678308447

religion (Theology), within the cultural whole not only interact with each other, but also configure their various combinations and can even ‘flow’ into each other. The most important and acute problems of the religious worldview are presented in that part of theological systems, which is called ‘apologetics’. Its leading task is to defend and justify Christian ideas about faith, the relationship of faith to morality, Science, and Philosophy. Theoretical justification and argumentation, exposition and promotion of the theological teaching on divine immanence occurs mainly by the means of apologetics, for which the defence of the truths of faith sometimes begins with a theoretical understanding of providentialism and miracles. Therefore, in this article, the subject of special interest is *apologetics* itself, moreover, in that part where it is connected with the theological doctrine of providentialism, as an attempt to theoretically justify God’s ability to do the impossible. And from here - using the term ‘theology’ further in the text, we will mainly mean that part of it that is directly related to questions of apologetics.

It is known that the main condition for the effective work of apologetics is its ability to generalize and interpret religious ideas in accordance with changes in the consciousness of believers, moreover, to direct such changes in the right direction and ideologically oppose secular alternatives harmful to religion, to take into account the growing authority of Science and its impressive achievements. Of course, this cannot but affect the system of interpretation and proof of a number of issues of apologetics. And in this regard, carrying out a separate analysis of the content of works where divine immanence is conceptualized makes it possible to consider and understand a wide range of issues directly related to modern religious consciousness, its newest directions, trends and forms. Because is it that providentialism is for the entire system of theology the ‘magic crystal’ where the peculiarities of religious consciousness in general are refracted and find their strengthened external manifestation.

The analysis of the specifics of modern religious and theological thought, directly related to the justification of divine immanence, has an important theoretical significance also because this religious and theoretical thought is at the forefront of current theological searches and is largely oriented towards solving those apologetic tasks related to mastering the data of modern science. This theological thought often acts as a field of ideological and theoretical experimentation, the results of which are designed to confront the powerful spiritual and cultural challenges of the secularized world. In addition, the consequences of such innovations later become assets and are actively mastered by representatives of other theological disciplines. They force theologians to make significant corrections in the content of Pastoral theology, the interpretation of philosophical theology (in Catholicism), that is, they reorient the content and methods of work of those theoretical instances of Christianity, which ultimately determine the fate of Christian Churches that have or want to have broad spiritual prospects in the future.

Considering the history of Catholicism over the past three centuries and, at the same time, characterizing the history of the relationship between faith and knowledge, religion and Science, theologian George Coyne, a scientist from the Vatican Observatory, identifies four qualitatively different stages of this relationship. “Four case histories indicate that the relationship between religion and science in Roman Catholicism has, in the course of three centuries, passed from one of conflict to one of compatible openness and dialogue. The four periods of history are: 1) the rise of modern atheism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 2) anticlericalism in Europe in the nineteenth century, 3) the awakening within the Church to modern science in the first six decades of the twentieth century, and 4) the Church’s view at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The approach of Science to religion in each of these periods can be characterized respectively as: 1) temptress, 2) antagonist, 3) enlightened teacher, 4) partner in dialogue.” [1]

It is known that the verification procedures resorted to by Theology, as a type of disciplinary discourse, are fundamentally different from the nature and structure of proofs accepted in Science. And yet, as evidenced by the conclusions of separate studies of the nature of religious and scientific knowledge, religious knowledge can be considered as an equal competitor in terms of importance to scientific hypotheses, without trying to equate the position of religious consciousness with the content of scientific assumptions [2].

In addition, in its study of the nature of reality, as theologians emphasize, Theology should not deviate from the general criteria of common sense, which guide science. Among them, the most important are: a) compliance with the data (criterion of ‘existential relevance’); b) internal consistency, completeness and general reasonableness (‘adequacy’ criterion); c) simplicity (‘economy’ criterion); d) productivity in relation to new ideas. Why this is extremely important for Theology right now - the famous biochemist, clergyman and theologian Arthur Peacock reflects on this. “As an intellectual enterprise, science is characterised by rigour, openness, flexibility, innovation, the welcoming of new insights, and a genuinely international, global community. In all of these respects, its public image stands in marked, and usually unfavourable, contrast to that of religious communities, including Christian ones. These latter tend to be seen, if not as lethargic and supine, as closed, inflexible, unenterprising and immune to new insights, continually appealing to the past, to the ‘faith once delivered to the saints’, and socially divisive. So the Christian Churches have an uphill job to commend themselves globally to a world aware of the vastness of new vistas and opportunities. More particularly, there has been, in the West, at least, a collapse in the credibility of all religious beliefs, notably Christian ones, as they are perceived as failing to meet the normal criteria of reasonableness, so strongly present in the practice of science, namely: fit with the data, internal coherence, comprehensiveness, fruitfulness and general cogency. Yet spiritual hunger is endemic in our times - and attempts to satisfy it lead to many aberrations in the ‘new religions’, the resurgence of ‘paganism’ and ‘Earth cults’, and so on. Intellectual society seems to be full of wistful agnostics who

would like to be convinced that there is indeed an Ultimate Reality to which they can relate but who are not convinced by the claims of the monotheistic religions to be speaking of reality. Thus, all religions, and especially Christianity in the West, face new challenges posed by the successful methodology of the sciences and by the worldview it has generated. Such an intellectual challenge is not new in the history of Christianity.” [3]

2. Presenting main material

The Christian or theistic community in its explanation of the nature of God is especially careful, where it is, of course, possible, to take into account the requirements of the principles of internal consistency, completeness and general validity of its ideas [4]. These efforts acquire special significance for the theological tradition, which includes a large part of modern authors writing on religious topics, namely, the Theology of the perfected being. Its vocation is to develop and justify the concept of the greatest and most perfect being - God, who possesses a number of certain qualities, without any internal contradiction. In the subject-problematic field of the above-mentioned searches, the authors inevitably touch on very subtle and sometimes frankly painful questions that have historically faced Theology in general. The existing situation here is complicated by the fact that God, in whom Christians believe and trust, is endowed in the Holy texts with different and, often, contradictory features. One of such delicate problems-issues that no author can avoid, regardless of his chosen theological position, is the issue of God's actions in the natural environment, the general awareness of how and in what way God influences the world and man.

The belief that God is causally connected to all that exists is central to the Christian faith. This belief, among other things, assumes that God's participation in the affairs of the world, after the creation of the latter, is mainly reduced to the preservation and maintenance of the essentiality of the natural, but is not limited only to this. God, as an active cause, realizes His intentions, theologians teach, and through extraordinary cases of divine intervention in natural chains of events in miracles. Considering the traditional Christian understanding of God as a Creator, a powerful causal agent who continues to actively interact with the sphere of His Creation, Thomas F. Tracy, a theologian from Bates College, emphasizes the difference between the different ways of creative activity of God - a grandiose creationist act, as the beginning of Creation, a general providence and special ways of God's influence on the world: “The affirmation that God acts in the world has played a central role in the theistic religious traditions, and there are a number of ways in which this idea can be understood. God acts as the creator who calls all finite things into being and sustains their existence at every moment. In this way, God acts directly with every causal operation or intentional action of creatures. By virtue of endowing created things with causal powers of their own, God can be also understood to act indirectly by means of the order of Nature. Theists have typically affirmed that particular events can be identified as

special acts of God, at least in the sense that they play a distinctive epistemic or causal role, and perhaps also in the sense that they reflect a direct divine action that affects the course of events or the lives of individuals. The latter form of special divine action raises difficult questions of theological interpretation, and it presents one of the points at which the dialogue between religion and Science has been most fascinating and fruitful.” [5]

In the history of theological thought, one can find many examples that demonstrate exactly this understanding of God’s effectiveness in miracles, when he directly intervenes in Nature. The functioning of the so-called ‘interventional’ terminology in Theology is closely related to such an understanding, which conveys the modality of divine actions in the world precisely as God’s intervention in Nature, an invasion of its regularity, and even an obstacle to the normal flow of its processes in general. To what extent does this understanding of the nature and actions of God correspond to the principle of non-contradiction, which any theology prefers to adhere to, and is it possible to model the image of the most perfect supernatural being - God, when the system of judgments about him includes provisions about the possibility of God’s intervention in the world created by Him?

As for modelling in general, in Science it and all accompanying analogies are usually resorted to under complicated conditions of studying the object or to significantly facilitate the understanding of its inner nature. Theology, which is a theoretical justification of religious consciousness, often claims some resemblance to Science, and sometimes, in the most daring efforts, to supremacy over it. Emphasizing the relativity of scientific knowledge and its imperfection, and contrasting them with the absoluteness and universality of eternal religious truths, Theology, nevertheless, is actively enriched with concepts that have gained wide circulation in modern science. The operation of the latter is intended to testify to the proper academic reputation of Theology and its correspondence to the advanced intellectual orientations of the current culture. In the process of expressing certain provisions of its faith, especially when trying to correlate them with the facts of human experience, Theology also tries to use, albeit in a rather original way, some scientific methods of understanding and interpreting reality. Among such scientific means of acquiring knowledge, close attention of theologians is attracted by modelling and the analogies that necessarily accompany it. Jan Barbour, a well-known scientist and theologian, insists on the development of fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation between Theology and Science: “A New Context for Theology. I hold that the main sources of religious beliefs, as systematized in Theology, are the religious experience and the stories and rituals of a religious community. However, two particular areas of theological reflection must take into account the findings of contemporary science: the doctrine of human nature and the doctrine of Creation.” [6]

It is known that theological models, to a lesser extent than other conceptualizations and doctrines, manage to find their comprehensive and adequate conceptual expression, and yet the theological consequences of such measures (promotion of theological models) are mostly evaluated favourably for a number of reasons. According to the scientist and theologian Ian Barbour,

theological models figuratively convey the content of the narrative. Moreover, this is done more effectively in models than in metaphors, since the former are more developed, however, at the same time, models are less abstract, and therefore more visualized, compared to concepts. Barbour points out that theological models have a number of functions that are not inherent in scientific models. They, first of all, express a certain relationship that is determined by the internal nature of religion, that is, religious models pursue both theoretical and practical goals. Models in Theology, too, are designed to excite and strengthen faith. Models are crucial for the change and reorientation of the individual, which is what most religious traditions strive for, Barbour notes. And, finally, in Science, models are always in a subordinate position in relation to theories; in religion, on the other hand, Barbour insists, models have the same value as conceptualized faith, because they reveal the organicity of narratives that function in religion. Despite the fact that theological models are somewhat inferior to exclusively rationalized means of expressing faith, theologians try to reproduce the image of God in them in such a way as to avoid contradictions that may follow their ideas and judgment systems [6, p. 176].

Among a number of models and theological conceptualizations of Christianity, it is impossible not to notice a certain commonality in the understanding of God's participation in earthly affairs. Their proposals and explanations, as a rule, come from the belief in the timeless existence of a supernatural being who created this world and directs events in it according to his own understanding, being at the same time transcendent to it. Statements about the fundamental otherness of God, his non-natural kind and way of being, give grounds for judgments that God can significantly change the course of earthly events, cancel or suspend the effect of the same laws that he laid as the basis for the Creation of the world in ancient times. However, in the existing debates where God's relationship with the world is discussed, the traditional basis of specifically Christian statements about 'God's affairs' has recently been opposed by quite constructive (in terms of argumentation and persuasiveness) assumptions and models that express a new understanding of the process of God's world governance. The opposition of incompatible points is largely determined by the doubts of a part of theologians about the validity of statements about God, who intervenes in everyday earthly affairs, changing what was once and for all determined by him in ancient times. Thus, the Anglican theologian Arthur Peacock draws attention to the fact that it would be extremely illogical and inconsistent for a theist to assume that God intervenes in the world processes created by him, in the Divine fabric of existence, of which humanity is an integral part [3, p. 110].

The analysis of a number of approaches of modern authors who write on religious topics makes it possible to clearly see that the term 'intervention' is perceived ambiguously by the general public of theologians, its use is met with doubts, and its circulation raises a number of serious questions; commitment to the use of 'interventional' terminology, in the continuation of the theological expression of the 'God-world' relationship, has recently been exposed to a

number of reasoned theological alternatives. Thus, the scientist and theologian John Collins examines the theological situation, where instead of using the term ‘supernatural phenomenon’, in the case of establishing the modality of God’s actions in the world, the term ‘intervention’ is used, and draws attention to the fact that not all theologians agree with this substitution, because it turns out that God intervenes from time to time in the life of His Creation, when ordinary life takes place without any participation on his part. “Some people like to use the word ‘intervention’ where I have used ‘supernatural event’; in such cases, they say, God ‘intervenes’ in the working of His Creation. Some theologians don’t like this way of speaking, because it makes God sound like an intruder, and because it suggests that God is not active in ordinary or natural events.” [7]

The tendency to use ‘interventional’ terminology when characterizing a miracle could, according to the convictions of a number of apologists, prevent a false analogy in the perception of God as a landlord who lives outside his possessions; such a God would essentially be a *deus otiosus*, that is, a ‘useless, inactive deity’ who does not show any signs of his activity in the world and, accordingly, cannot act as an object of ritual-worship practice and functional worship. Such essentially deistic minimization of the spectrum of God’s interaction with the world, where his creative possibilities were catastrophically narrowed, was, as is known, a consequence of the dominance of mechanistic views on the world. The idea of intervention moderates religious dualism, which is extremely expressed in deism, by justifying the proposition that God sometimes, nevertheless, returns to the world from a transcendent dimension in order to realize his intentions. Aware of the value of such ideas both for apologetics and for Pastoral theology, whose representatives prefer to distance themselves from the ideas of the inactive God of deism, who does not maintain contact with either the world or man, the theologian John Collins calls on theologians to be exclusively accurate in expressing the ways of God’s effectiveness in the realm of His own Creation. He categorically insists: “I must admit that my mind is divided over this: if the terms ‘intervention’ and ‘interference’ really do give people the wrong idea about God’s work in ordinary providence, then let’s not use them” [7, p. 169]. However, later, as if recalling the missionary needs of the Church, he makes an attempt to soften the unappealability of previous judgments: “On the other hand, we have to recognize that the terms are analogies - it’s as if God were to interfere. And analogies have their limitations, as we’ve already seen; but they also have their strength, namely that they make their point vividly.” [7, p. 169]

Proposing models of God’s interaction with the world structure, as was shown above, theologians often resort to separate analogies, the vocation of which is the need to convey as convincingly and vividly as possible - exactly how God in individual and unique cases of miracles reorients the events of the world, by interfering in its cause and effect connections, in order to implement your new intentions. However, using the powerful resource of analogies, their imagery, the theologian (as it was seen earlier from the words of John Collins) should not forget that not every analogy gives the right to identification. In addition, the obvious conclusion from the above follows that the efforts of a

wide range of authors who work in the field of the Theology of the perfected being are sometimes practically nullified when they, trying to describe the interaction of God with the world with the help of 'interventionist' terminology, are exposed to an insurmountable theoretical obstacle. Because the attempts to simultaneously talk about God, who supports the existence of the world, by unfolding its (the world's) regularities, and God, who in certain unique cases acquires the intention to interfere in the cause-and-effect relationships of His own Creation, thus violating the fundamental principles established by earlier, they inevitably lead theologians into the field of complex questions that cannot be answered unambiguously and which, in most cases, will have negative theological consequences. Another purely logical aspect is added to the stated problem. If we nevertheless assume that the introduction of an additional causal factor into the ordering of the Universe, by interfering with its cause-and-effect relationships, takes place from time to time in order to realize the incomprehensible intentions of God, then how consistent and consistent these steps will be interpreted in the light of the doctrine of the perfection of God? Philosopher and Catholic theologian Brian Davies draws attention to this knot of problems: "But what of the notion of divine intervention? And what of the notion of a violation of a natural law? Are these not essential to the notion of a miracle? Here there are a number of points to be made, the first of which concerns the notion of God intervening." [8]

The integrity and logical coherence of apologetic works and teachings, which showed sensitivity to the ideas of supernatural intervention in the world, events of social life and the fate of an individual person, will also be eroded by considerations of the moral plane. After all, not everyone will agree with the ideas in which God, who from time to time prefers to intervene in the ordering of the world in order to realize his incomprehensible plans, at other times will show indifference to factors unfavourable to human prosperity or will openly ignore the dark and tragic sides of human existence, because all this will place too heavy a burden on the consciences of theologians.

Even if we take into account the purely apologetic aspect of the question and take into account the arguments of those theologians who resort to the term 'intervention' in the name of protecting theism from the theoretical proposals of deism, with its assertions about an inactive and uncontactable God who distanced himself as much as possible from natural changes and fate humanity, then even in this case the theological position of 'interventionism' will be quite vulnerable. It is very doubtful, from the point of view of real theological content, that it is the idea of supernatural intervention that is the essential feature that, in the end, will determine the choice of one of the two competing explanations of the divine providence, since the declaration of the idea of intervention is unlikely whether it will be decisive in the distinction of theism from deism, as if its (idea) acceptance will fully correspond to the content of theism, since the declaration of the idea of intervention is unlikely whether it will be decisive in the distinction of theism from deism, as if its (idea) acceptance will fully correspond to the content of theism.

Proving common sense, in the end, gives reason to doubt the sufficient prudence of a person who is inclined to believe reports of such miraculous 'interventions' only on the basis of evidence. As you know, the greatest exponent of such doubts was the Scottish philosopher David Hume. He was persistently convinced that human testimony cannot be a sufficient basis for claims about God's miraculous interventions in the world: "Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors" [9]. Moreover, the burden of proof assumed by the proponent who tries to prove that such a miraculous intervention in the causal relations of nature did take place is increased by the need to show, in addition, that the event in question is indeed contrary to the laws of Nature. The latter makes the probability of providing an exhaustive argument for the accepted thesis so small that a person, as a rule, is inclined to express disbelief in statements of this kind, rather than accepting them completely and unconditionally. Moreover, the burden of proof assumed by the proponent, who tries to prove that such a miraculous intervention in the causal relations of Nature did take place, is increased by the need to show, in addition, that the event in question is indeed contrary to the laws of Nature. The latter makes the probability of providing an exhaustive argument for the accepted thesis so small that a person, as a rule, is inclined to express disbelief in statements of this kind, rather than accepting them completely and unconditionally.

In the current intellectual atmosphere, the discussion of acute problems of modern Theology is sometimes quite strongly influenced by a number of external, non-religious factors. Some of them, to one degree or another, force theologians to review their seemingly inviolable ideological preferences and give them a new interpretation, or at least make tangible corrections in their assessment. In the light of the new picture of the world offered by modern science, they are trying to subject certain aspects of the issue of 'God's affairs' to theological re-evaluation, since the modern natural-scientific paradigm, the content of which worldview orientation was a new, non-linear understanding of the phenomenon of determinism, provided for the rejection of the use of the idea of external force in relation to the world causality. The new horizons opened by Science encouraged theologians to define new ideological orientations on their own. Nowadays, even among Christian theists, there are sometimes calls to methodologically honour the 'principle of naturalism', according to which 'creation interprets creation'. In the light of such declarations, God is 'denied' the opportunity to intervene in the orderliness of world creation; such a God does nothing directly or creates nothing directly. In the religious consciousness of Christians, the theoretical efforts of theologians, aimed at substantiating the concept of God as a perfect being, found consonance with the concepts between which thoughts about direct divine causality were rejected. They talked about God, who, as a higher Being, gives order to the materiality of the world, which is endowed by God with a high level of organization; God also provides the world with properties of a different kind, aimed at the complete disclosure and actualization of previously created potentialities; God is in such a world and next

to it. The world, which is characterized by its own full-fledged organization, is considered by theologians to be 'functional integrity', in addition, the idea of the perfection of the created world, the absence in the latter, according to the authors' beliefs, of functional deficiencies, flaws in the organization, gave religious ideologists grounds for statements that God has no reason to interfere with the existing harmony of world creation.

However, even the first look aimed at this kind of argumentation allows us to understand that a number of these and similar techniques and operations, the purpose of which is to affirm the theological authenticity of methodological naturalism, is unjustly given the name 'proof'. The well-known theologian and logician Alvin Plantinga draws attention to the acuteness of this issue in modern Theology: "Part of the problem, of course, is to see more clearly what this methodological naturalism is. Precisely what does it come to? Does it involve an embargo only on such claims as that a particular event is to be explained by invoking God's creative action directly, without the employment of 'secondary causes'? Does it also proscribe invoking God's indirect creative action in explaining something scientifically? Does it pertain only to scientific explanations, but not to other scientific assertions and claims? Does it also preclude using claims about God's creative action, or other religious claims as part of the background information with respect to which one tries to assess the probability of a proposed scientific explanation or account?" [10, p. 21] The vulnerability of such a proof lies in the fact that the method of logical demonstration chosen by the authors only partially supports the thesis, providing the last minimum of theological persuasiveness, but does not allow one to avoid one serious theological flaw. The fact is that the models of the 'presence of God', which showed sensitivity to the ideas of methodological naturalism, deprived God of a number of his traditional possibilities, which, in the end, caused a sceptical attitude towards them, and the latter a complete distrust.

In the history of theological thought, Alvin Plantinga is convinced, the implicit reason for devotion to the given principle can be explained as a consequence of the rejection of the 'God-of-the-gaps theology'. Alvin Plantinga does not miss the opportunity to name the features of the 'God-of-the-gaps theology' and, ultimately, reduce them to the following system: "The following, therefore, are the essential points of God-of-the-gaps theology. First, the world is a vast machine that is almost entirely self-sufficient; divine activity in Nature is limited to those phenomena for which there is no scientific, i.e. mechanical and naturalistic explanation. Second, the existence of God is a kind of large-scale hypothesis postulated to explain what can't be explained otherwise, i.e. naturalistically. Third, there is the apologetic emphasis: the best or one of the best reasons for believing that there is such a person as God is the fact that there are phenomena that Natural science cannot (so far) explain naturalistically." [10, p. 25] Having omitted a number of nuances traditionally associated with this type of theology, it should be noted that, in general, its ideologues affirm the existence of God, the signs of whose invasion they begin to talk about when one or another phenomenon fails to find an appropriate scientific explanation. In this

sense, reference to the fact of extra-terrestrial intervention in the order of Nature is especially desirable when it is not possible to find a law in its structure, from the point of view of which it would be possible to explain this or that hitherto unknown phenomenon, or to finally establish the cause, which generates it. That is why thinkers who profess the principle of methodological naturalism in Theology are so zealously opposed to the 'God-of-the-gaps theology' and the closely related 'interventional' terminology. It is also obvious that the theoretical position of the authors who try to bring God out of the 'white spots' of our ignorance is also quite shaky. Plantinga rightly calls this theological phenomenon 'anaemic, rarefied semi-deism', and he sees the essential flaw of such religious beliefs in limiting the sphere of God's activity only to the gaps that exist in our knowledge of the world.

From the conducted comparative analysis of the position of the supporters of methodological naturalism and the main provisions of the of the 'God-of-the-gaps theology', it becomes obvious that the incompatibility between those who denied direct divine causality and those who used 'interventional' terminology to express the action of God, which inexplicably changes the established order of Nature, follows from their ideological opposition. These two theological positions are also unlikely to enrich traditional Christian Theology, which is in fact equidistant from the vulnerability of the first and the extremes of the second.

In the history of the development of religious and philosophical ideas, alternative versions of the explanation of God's activity were put forward with a claim to a more correct understanding of the features of his interaction with the world. However, doubts about their theological reliability did not contribute to the spread of these views among Christians. One of them includes occasionalism. In this system of ideas, in contrast to theistic theology, where it is assumed that the elements of the world are endowed with certain natural properties that give them a certain character of functionality, the existence of immanent properties of objects is denied, and it is said that any influence on things is carried out directly by God. God orders and harmonizes causes and effects in such a way that His interaction with the world is realized as nothing more than a continuous 'miracle' - the result of God's direct intervention in Nature, the elements of which are deprived of the ability to act independently. The latter do not have a number of properties that would allow them to behave in this way and not otherwise, they only give an occasion to God to do something directly, to direct the events of the world, so to speak, in a 'manual mode'. The second direction includes those who assert that all existing phenomena, all facts of experience should be connected only with natural causes caused by the action of general providence. Miracles, accordingly, include any event that satisfies the needs of a person, but at the same time one for which a person cannot find an exhaustive explanation (it goes without saying that such an event in the theological sense is devoid of supernatural content). This direction of knowledge of God has not yet received a clear and generally accepted name, but, given its content and theological claims, it is conditionally called 'providentialism'. It should be recognized that the thematization of a miracle as an event capable of finding its justification in terms of a natural explanation, at first glance, has a

significant apologetic potential. The value of the latter, however, in the theological sense is clearly imaginary and, in the end, is reduced to nothing by one significant drawback - such ideas about miracles do not in any way correspond to the content of Holy Scripture.

There are reasons to believe that the final results of the considerations that underlie the given alternative streams of knowledge of God, in the end, make it possible to explain the miracle in the same way. In both cases, it will have to be considered an event that satisfies the specific needs of a person and, although apparently initiated by God, nevertheless, in fact, devoid of a supernatural substrate. Despite the existing differences in the content of the above positions, it should be recognized that both of them, to a large extent, have lost the essential specifically Christian understanding of the miracle. Thus, occasionalism teaches that there is nothing natural in the world, since everything is the result of direct, permanent divine intervention. In a practical sense, such teachings encourage such an expanded interpretation of the scope of the concept of 'miracle' that it could be extrapolated to almost any event (which, of course, is viewed through the lens of a religious worldview). Such claims, however, have never been favoured in Christian Theology, as they have in no way involved the specifically Christian dimension of the miracle; to the same considerations of the moral plan, which, according to similar interpretations, put the burden of moral responsibility for the dark side of earthly existence on God to the full extent, led the issue of miracles to a dead end. The position held by the supporters of providentialism regarding miracles cannot be considered successful either, because the assertion of a world where everything is done in a natural way leaves no room for miracles and, in the end, turns out to be detrimental to the latter. The complete disregard of the difference between natural and supernatural, natural and miraculous causes, on the one hand, such a broad understanding of the miracle that, again, any natural phenomenon or event is declared miraculous. In this case, the uniqueness and inimitability of the miraculous is emasculated, which provoke relapses of mythological thinking.

3. Conclusions

The above allows us to assert that one of the primordial questions of the Christian worldview has always been the awareness of the relationship between God and the world, and numerous religious interpretations of the interaction of God and creation, as an indispensable component, included the doctrine of the immanence of God and the doctrine of miracles as the self-manifestation of the divine. Various theological reflections of religious consciousness, the purpose of which was to bring the belief in the miracle of the intellectual basis, along the way, quite widely used models and analogies, which, as is known, facilitate the process of understanding the teachings. The phrases 'God's intervention in Nature', 'God's entry into the world' became widely used to express the meaning of some of them. Ideas about God, who from time to time can acquire intentions to prevent the unfolding of the cause-and-effect relationships of

Nature, in order to effectively implement his unexpected determinations, became elements of teachings about miracles. Their theological content directly indicated that God cares about humanity, addresses him, and man, in turn, was given the opportunity to visually observe the embodiment of God's intentions for himself and tried, in the end, to understand them. Those of the theologians who used the 'interventional' terminology to reproduce the content of ideas about an active God proceeded from the conviction that God possesses sufficient power over the world He created, so that at the time known to Him He would overcome the natural orderliness of the world in a miracle and convey to man the essence of His new intentions. The consequences of such efforts were clear, but they were not shared by some theologians who had reason to do so. Among the most significant counterarguments directed against the ideas of extra-terrestrial intervention in the natural world are the following.

- 1) The use of the term 'intervention of God' forces us in one way or another to mean His absence in the world, which as a result of his intervention changes to presence. The world, in this way of reasoning, is imagined as devoid of God, as it develops according to previously established laws that operate by themselves. When God from the transcendent dimension, nevertheless, in an unknown way, returns to the world, a miracle happens. Traditional Christianity is unlikely to approve of such, essentially deistic, ideological preferences, where God occasionally intervenes in earthly affairs, at a time when their normal course is by no means marked by God.
- 2) The attempt of theologians to adhere to the principle of non-contradiction, when presenting their own propositions of knowledge of God, may seem unconvincing when they profess the idea of supernatural intervention in the world. After all, it is extremely difficult to reconcile, avoiding contradictions, judgments about God, who lays down certain inviolable laws as the basis of the existence of the world, and later from time to time prefers to interfere in their functioning. The idea of the nature of such a God, who manages the affairs of the world through a series of direct creative acts, makes those theologians who make efforts in the field of theology, where it talks about God as an absolutely perfect being, embarrassed. And even the theist, who keeps the attributes of 'ubiquity' and 'omnipresence' of God in focus, will always find convincing means to refute the thesis about miracles, precisely as cases of divine intervention.
- 3) The idea of God's interaction with the world structure, which is explained through the terms of 'interventional' theology, causes scepticism and, sometimes, mistrust due to considerations of a moral nature. If God changes the world through a series of direct invasions, why do the latter have no place when there is an immediate need to prevent human misery or to nullify the dark sides of human existence. Moreover, no reference to the unpredictability of supernatural determinations and their extraordinary character can hardly be entirely accepted in favour of this idea.
- 4) The proofs presented in the middle of the 18th century by David Hume are recognized as quite weighty regarding doubts about the authenticity of legends about miracles as cases of supernatural intervention in the world.

Hume demonstrated through a series of arguments that in a situation where we find ourselves faced with the complete absence of modern analogues of the miraculous, we have to count on and rely exclusively on human testimony about them. However, no human testimony, as Hume argued, can in principle act as a strong enough argument in favor of a miracle.

The phrases ‘God’s intervention in Nature’, ‘God’s intrusion into the world’ and others similar to them, which clearly mean God, who permanently corrects the events of the world through a series of direct creative acts, are in the active vocabulary of believers and are also used in the relevant theological literature. As a result of the analysis of theological opinions, a number of signs appear that the use of ‘interventionist’ terminology to express the image of an active God, causally connected with creation, is nevertheless rather clumsy and unsuccessful in terms of conveying the entire breadth of the Christian understanding of this issue. Moreover, the idea of God, which is expressed through the mentioned terminology, forces us to imagine a God who acts in a relatively deistic way and loses contact with the world and man. There is reason to say that those authors who strive to create a logically coherent and convincing doctrine of miracles, capable of meeting all modern intellectual requirements, are unlikely to come to terms with the marked defects of such theological concepts.

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