

The following paper appeared as part of a festschrift for Stuart C. Hackett, *The Logic of Rational Theism: Exploratory Essays*, edited by William Lane Craig and Mark S. McLeod (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), pp. 153-166.

While I still hold the views expressed in most of the paper, I have since come to the conclusion that the last section on the nature of divine concurrence is wholly inadequate and incorrect. For a much better treatment of the subject, I refer the reader to Francisco Suarez, *On Creation, Conservation and Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20, 21, and 22*, translation, notes, and introduction by Alfred J. Freddoso (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2002). Freddoso's web site also has links to several of his excellent articles on this topic.

What in the World Is God Doing?

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THE IMPORTANCE OF A THEORY OF PROVIDENCE

The central feature of Stuart Hackett's philosophical work is probably his exposition of the cosmological argument as the basis for a Christian apologetic possessing both persuasive power and rational integrity. *The Resurrection of Theism*¹ presents the cosmological argument as the best case for theism and also presents a case for the epistemological substructure needed by Hackett's version of the argument. *The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim*² recapitulates some of the epistemological and metaphysical arguments of *RT*, but its primary aim is to develop a comprehensive case for the "revelation claim" lying at the heart of Christian faith.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess Hackett's apologetic project as a whole. I will say that I am impressed by his courageous willingness to paint a broad picture setting apologetic arguments within a wholistic understanding of God and the world. In passing, I mention that I believe that the section of the introduction to *RCRC* entitled "The Development of the Concept of Revelation," deserves further attention for its suggestion that self-revelation is an act not only of God but of every creature: Revelation occurs in varying degrees and occurs in its fullest sense in God.

However, in this paper my concern is with Hackett's clear understanding that an apologetic for the specifically *Christian* revelation claim must deal with the nature of God's interaction with the world he has created. For the Christian (and the ancient Hebrew), one part

¹ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982). Hereafter, *RI*.

² (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984). I hereafter, *RCRC*. *The Power of God*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1952), Q. 3, Art.?

of God's self-revelation is that He has acted and will continue to act within the world He has created. To assess the claim that such revelation has occurred, it seems to me necessary first to develop a coherent general picture of God's relationship to events within the world. That is, it is crucial to develop some understanding of the notion often called "providence."

Thus I propose, in this paper, to attempt the development of an embryonic notion of providence. I shall try to show that I am operating within a framework of assumptions shared by Stuart Hackett in his apologetic project. However, I believe the end result of my notions of providence may entail some disagreements with Hackett, particularly concerning the nature of miracles.

I need to make it clear that the notion of providence with which I am concerned here is primarily philosophical. So my concern is more with the metaphysical mechanisms of God's activity in the world than it is with theological questions concerning the ends towards which providence directs the world. Moreover, I find it mostly beyond the limits of this paper to deal with the question of providence in relation to the actions of free human agents. I shall only attempt to give some account of God's action in relation to natural agents and/or events in general, realizing that free activity other than God's complicates the matter.

Even within the limits I have set, I believe that an account of God's action in the world has serious ramifications for both Christian understanding and practice. Not only will it have direct bearing on the assessment of revelation claims, especially revealed occurrences of the miraculous, but it will color the way in which one views the nature of petitionary prayer. A Christian's devotional confidence in God's guidance will also be affected by the way God's role in natural events is conceived. It makes a significant difference to faith how one answers the question concerning just what God is doing in the world.

GOD AND SECOND CAUSES

My approach to developing a view of God's relationship to natural agents or events will be to consider a taxonomy of three views concerning God's causal relations to what have traditionally been called "second causes." This way of looking at things simply sees individual objects in the world as causes bringing about events through a causality which is in some way "secondary" to the causality exercised by God as creator, *i.e.*, as "first cause."

An emphasis on the primacy of the divine causality is, of course, consistent with Hackett's placing of the cosmological argument at the heart of the apologetic enterprise. Likewise, I concur that "the biblical writings regard the natural order itself as continuously sustained in its existence and operation by the operation of an immanent divine agency or causality."³ Both on philosophical and biblical grounds it is reasonable to speak of God as first cause.

³ RCRC, p. 322.

I must also agree with Hackett that it is necessary to reject a view of providence which emphasizes the divine causality to the *exclusion* of the possibility of any genuine causality within the created world.⁴ On such a view, the only genuine agent in any event is God. In the drama of the world, God is the only actor. Second causality, on such a view, simply does not exist. Traditionally, such a view has been called “occasionalism,” and Malebranche is usually seen as its classic expositor. Perhaps the most recent defense of an occasionalistic view of providence is to be found in an article by Del Ratsch.⁵

The denial of second causality seems to be prompted by what Alvin Plantinga has called the “sovereignty intuition,” that God is in control of all that is and occurs.⁶ To allow creatures any causal efficacy of their own appears to limit God’s control of events. Yet the denial of second causality is strikingly counter-intuitive. We regularly speak of matches causing fires, baseballs breaking windows and sunshine melting snow. Moreover, to deny causal efficacy to creatures makes the world a sham or puppet show which God moves for His own enjoyment. I am convinced that the rejection of genuine created causality is a denigration of the value of creation, a rejection of the biblical statement that the world as created is good. Thus I wish to argue that the concern for God’s sovereign control of events may be satisfied within the context of a view of providence which does allow genuine causality to created things.

In the history of philosophy, a view of providence that allows for second causes might be traced to suggestions in the writings of Augustine. Stanislaus J. Grabowski even suggests that Augustine may have held a view of providence much like more sophisticated accounts of second causality to be found in medieval writers.⁷ A greater emphasis on second causality in the Middle Ages may be the result of the recovery of Aristotle’s philosophy.

In the late Middle Ages, a taxonomy of viable views of second causality appears in the work of Luis Molina (perhaps best known for his concept of “middle knowledge”).⁸ He sees three basic positions as possibilities. The first is the occasionalistic denial of second causality, which I have already rejected. The second view, which is shared by Molina with Thomas Aquinas, is that God and created things both participate in the production of natural events. That is, for any natural event, both divine causality and the causality of created things is operative. The third view might be termed “Deistic.” On this latter scheme, God creates individual things with causal efficacy such that they produce events in the world apart from any divine causal action except the conservation of the individual “natural agents” in existence.⁹

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Nomo(theo)logical Necessity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 4 (1987), pp. 383-402.

⁶ See *Does God Have Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980).

⁷ *The All-Present God* (St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1954), pp. 152-54.

⁸ *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione*, Pt. 1, Q. 14, Art. 13, Disp. 26. I am indebted to a partial translation and commentary by Alfred Freddoso. Hereafter, *Concordia*.

⁹ A more extreme view would, of course, be traditional Deism which holds that not even God’s conservation

At first glance, the Deistic view recommends itself; it may be the pre-reflective view of most theists. Grabowski feels that the Deistic view of providence is probably the attitude of many of the Church Fathers before Augustine. Augustine himself may occasionally be interpreted deistically.¹⁰ The Deistic approach also seems to satisfy the sovereignty intuition. As Creator and Conserver of every causal agent, God may be said to be the primary cause of all that occurs. Every event is brought about either by God or by that which depends on God for its continued existence. A match produces a fire only because God conserves it in existence as the sort of thing that can produce a flame. Thus God is clearly in control of all that occurs, since He determines what will exist and what sort of causal efficacy it will have.

The Deistic view also recommends itself by conforming to our common sense practice of speaking of the causal efficacy or power of individual things in just the way I have been doing. Humean philosophers of science are suspicious of talk of causal powers, but the general outlook of a philosophy of science which deals in causal powers has been rehabilitated by analysis of such powers as dispositional properties of things in the world.¹¹ I believe that the difficulties surrounding “causal power” understandings of the natural order (noted by Ratsch¹²) are no greater than the difficulties attached to developing a successful account of nature in terms of universal regularities,¹³ and causal power views have the advantage of being more in line with our ordinary manner of speaking about natural events.

Therefore, it is no limitation of a Deistic view of providence that it suggests a causal power understanding of the natural order. However, it might be contended that a Deistic view does not afford to God a full measure of honor for and control over what happens in the physical world. His sovereignty requires that God be regarded as the cause of natural events in a more intimate way than is allowed for in the Deistic framework. Such a view makes God, to a certain extent, passive with respect to events in the natural world. He sustains its existence, but its events occur independently of His immediate operation and control. Scripture seems to suggest something more when it attributes to God the events and movements of the natural world.¹⁴ It would do more honor to God and ascribe to Him more control to maintain somehow that He not only creates and sustains individual natural things, but that He is involved immediately in the production of natural effects. Thus He would be not only Creator but immediate Cause of all that occurs.

So Molina presents as the only viable view of providence that scheme held, with variations, both by himself and by Thomas Aquinas. On their view, God acts together with natural things to produce natural effects. When fire burns it is true both that fire acts as an agent, with its own power, and that God acts also to produce the effect of burning.

of existence is necessary for the existence and operation of things in the world, once created.

¹⁰ Grabowski, *All Present God*, p. 152.

¹¹ R. Hare and E.H. Madden, *Causal Powers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).

¹² “Nomo(theo)logical Necessity.”

¹³ Ratsch’s **own solution** to the problem of the description of the natural order is ultimately occasionalistic, though it does include some subtle analysis of the nature of natural law statements.

¹⁴ See Job 10:11 and chapters 38 and 39, as well as Genesis 9:13, 14.

Molina and Thomas differ on just how the causality of God is conjoined with that of natural agents, but they agree that both are active in the production of natural events. They agree in espousing a view of providence which has all the advantages of the Deistic view as well as a stronger notion of God's sovereignty over the natural order. The Latin term for the dual role of divine and natural causality was *concursum*. Thus I would term the view of providence which allows both God and natural things a causal role in natural events a "concurrence" view of providence. Such a view, I believe, is in keeping with Stuart Hackett's own desire both to affirm "an immanent divine agency or causality which pervades the whole of that [natural] order down to its last detail,"¹⁵ and that "This does not mean that contingent entities (persons or things) have no intrinsic causal efficacy of their own."¹⁶

A CONCURRENCE VIEW OF PROVIDENCE

It remains to examine somewhat just what is meant by a "concurrence" in the production of natural events by both God and natural things. One point should be made clear: concurrence is to be understood as an addition to the creative and sustaining role of the divine power. Thus the Deistic understanding of providence is, in effect, included in a concurrence view.

However, defining the "addition" which concurrence makes to our view of providence is no simple task. Such definition most often takes the form of analogy. Aquinas states his own understanding of concurrence in this way: "God is the cause of everything's action inasmuch as he gives everything the power to act, preserves it in being *and applies it to action*, and inasmuch as by his power every other power acts" (My emphasis).¹⁷ Concurrence, for Aquinas, takes the form of the application of the natural cause to its effect. This is analogous to the way a tool like a knife, having the power to cut since it is sharp, is applied to the action of cutting by the wielder of the knife. God moves the natural cause to action as an instrument of His own power to produce the effect.

We find in the older Reformed theologians a doctrine similar to Aquinas's. Here we find made clearer a further aspect of the Thomistic instrument analogy for God's concurrence in natural effects. That is, the participation of God and natural things in the production of events is not equal. God is the more immediate cause of every natural effect. No "creaturely efficacy" is more immediate to the production of an effect than God's action.¹⁸ Thomas intimates this inequality by saying, "the whole effect proceeds from each [God and the natural cause], yet in different ways."¹⁹

¹⁵ *RCRC*, p. 322.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *On the Power of God*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1952), Q. 3, Art. 7.

¹⁸ See Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 259-62.

¹⁹ *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, trans. AC. Pegis, et al. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1975), Bk. III, chap. 70.

Both Thomists and Reformed theologians argue that the “difference” in the causal roles of God and natural things in the production of events is simply the difference in the mode of causation proper to a first cause as opposed to a second cause. But such an explanation really adds nothing to our understanding of just what the natures of the concurring causes are. The only illumination seems to lie in the instrument analogy. A natural effect proceeds from God as agent, but from a second cause as instrument. It is hard to see how such an analogy makes God’s action more immediate, though it clearly makes God’s agency primary.

Molina was unsatisfied with the Thomistic view. He attempts to show the difficulty with the instrument analogy by observing that there are two kinds of instruments through which an agent might work. One sort requires the constant operation and application of the agent in order to produce an effect—a knife is this sort of instrument. But the wielder of such an instrument has such a great causal role that it would appear that the instrument analogy collapses into occasionalism. God, once again, is the only genuine agent.

A second sort of instrument has a power to act independently of its agent—Molina utilizes semen as an example, but perhaps a computer or other automatic mechanism is more relevant in 1989. In any case, if natural causes are the latter sort of instrument, then God’s concurrence is unnecessary. This is because such an instrument may continue to produce its effect even after the agent that set it in motion has ceased to exist.²⁰ There is no need for any immediate action by God. Moreover, the instrument analogy, in general, does not allow for an immediate action of God to produce an effect. All God’s action is pictured as mediated through a natural cause. So Molina seeks a different analogy with which to describe the nature of the concurrence relationship.

Molina’s own view of concurrence is founded on an analogy of simultaneous cooperation between agents. God and a natural cause are the simultaneous causes of a natural effect. God’s action is not an action on the cause, moving it to produce an effect, as in the Thomistic view. Rather, it is an immediate action on the effect, together with the cause. The actual analogy often suggested is that of two men pulling a boat up the beach. The two act together to produce the single effect of the boat’s movement.

In contemporary terms, both the Thomistic and Molinist views of concurrence see God’s causality and the causality of a natural cause as necessary conditions for the production of a natural effect. Together, God and a natural cause are the sufficient condition of a natural effect.²¹ I Molina’s view differs in maintaining that the divine and natural causes function “simultaneously.” Moreover, Molina differs from Thomas in the contention that God’s concurrence is a general action in natural events rather than a specific, particular movement of an instrument. That is, on the Thomistic view, the reason a particular effect

²⁰ Luis Molina, *Concordia*, Pt. I, Q. 14, Art. 13, Disp. 26.

²¹ However, note that Thomas as often speaks as though God and a natural cause were each, separately, a sufficient condition for the production of a natural effect (*On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, Bk. III, chap. 70, art. 8).

follows from a particular cause, instead of some other effect following from the same cause, is that God's action in moving the natural cause is particular. It is, in effect, God's causal action that determines the kind of event produced.

But on Molina's view a greater role is ascribed to the particularity of natural causes. God, in general, concurs with the production of effects in the natural world appropriate to the kinds of causes which exist. When a piece of paper is burned, God's action is not described as "burning the paper," but as a general cooperation with an action particular to fire. The paper burns because it is the particular nature of fire that it consumes paper, not because God executes a particular action of burning.

Now the Molinist position that God's concurrence in natural events is a general rather than a specific action seems to me to have several advantages for the continuing development of a theory of providence. The first advantage I have already touched on: If God's action in a natural event is general and the action of a natural cause in the same event is particular to the kind of cause involved, then there is the beginning of an understanding of the "division of labor" between divine and creaturely causality. Such a division avoids in a more definite way the collapse into occasionalism which appeared in the instrumental picture of concurrence. Natural things remain genuine causes and make a definite contribution to the production of events.

The second advantage of holding God's concurrence to be a general influence is that there is thereby created some room for a plausible solution to the problem of defining God's providential action in relation to the free actions of human agents (and perhaps other sentient, free creatures). The specific character of a free act would depend upon the causal action of the created agent (upon that agent's "volition" or "choice," perhaps), and God's part in the free act would simply be a general concurrence in the production of an event, the specific nature of which is determined by the free created agent. Thus, even in the case of events resulting from free action, God could be said to be the cause of all that occurs, yet without it being required that God *determines* all that occurs. The possibility of such a solution to the question of freedom and providence, in fact, appears to have been Molina's primary motivation for developing his own view of concurrence.

The Molinist solution to the problem of free will also makes some movement possible in another area of the discussion of providence. If we may attribute to God a general resolve to concur with the actions of free creatures, rather than a series of specific decisions to move free creatures to particular actions, then there is a happy resolution to the problem of moral evil in sight. Or, at least, the problem of moral evil is moved to a point where theodicy may begin to offer a reasonable account. That is, while it appears to be difficult to account for a specific decision on God's part to participate in the production of an evil action, it seems plausible (and I believe plausible accounts have been offered) that there could be a good account of a general divine intent to concur with free actions irrespective of their moral nature. Of course, there remains the difficulty that, on traditional notions of omniscience, God knows all the specific results of such a general concurrence with free ac-

tion. But that is a problem in any scheme of providence, and Molina's view has the virtue of eliminating a specific divine participation in the production of evil acts.

I believe that there is a third advantage to Molinism. A general divine concurrence with natural events allows for the existence of genuine contingency or chance in the natural order. Moreover, genuine contingency is allowed for, but not required. The Deistic view is the only other theory of providence which makes such an allowance. On either an occasionalistic or Thomistic account, God acts specifically to produce each event which occurs. If a genuinely contingent event, to give a simple definition, is taken to be an event which is not determined, either by previous events or by a free agent, then it is difficult to see how such events could occur in the occasionalistic or Thomistic world. The most that could be said is that some events might be contingent from a human epistemic framework. We would simply be unable to *know* the parameters of God's production of such events.

Recent interpretations of quantum theory in physics have seemed to lean toward understanding the indeterminacy of quantum phenomena as a genuine, rather than an epistemic, indeterminacy. That is, certain quantum events, such as the motions of electrons, appear to be genuinely contingent, happening by chance (within certain parameters as defined by quantum theory). Since our current best understanding of the physical world includes genuine contingency, it would behoove us to leave genuine contingency as a live option in any theory of providence.

I have already noted that contingency in the form of free action not determined by God is possible in a Molinist world. If we suppose that God has created some natural things, such as quantum particles, with a power for actions which neither He nor prior events determine, then it seems reasonable to suppose that such indeterminate events will be genuinely contingent as long as God's concurrence with such events is general rather than specific. God would still participate in quantum events, but His participation would take the form of a general consent to the production of *any* event within the parameters of possibilities for such events. Such a scheme would leave us free to regard at least some events in the world as the products of genuine chance.

The possibility of genuine contingency within God's providential activity in the world is suggestive for theodicies concerning *natural* evil. If some natural events happen by chance and are not specifically determined by God, then it is possible that at least some natural events which cause pain and suffering are the results of chance and are *not* the result of any specific action of God. This is, of course, not a solution to the problem of natural evil even if all evil natural events are the results of chance.²² As Peter van Inwagen indicates, it simply shows that theodicy will proceed on firmer ground in trying to offer some account of why God created a world in which natural evil is allowed to occur, rather than seeking explanations for the occurrence of specific evils. For if a specific event is the result of chance,

²² Van Inwagen makes this point clearly in "The Place of Chance in a World Sustained by God," in Thomas V. Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 211-235.

then there is, clearly, no explanation for it except a general explanation or reason for a world in which chance events may occur.

Therefore, I maintain, for reasons offered in the second section, that a concurrence theory of providence will best fit our ordinary understandings of the operation of the natural world *and* that such a theory will adequately maintain the theological intuition that God is in sovereign control of all that occurs. In the last section, I have argued that a Molinist view of concurrence has distinct advantages over other views which seem to lapse into deist or occasionalist outlooks. But a difficult question remains.

JUST WHAT IS CONCURRENCE?

The reader would be perfectly correct to note, at this point, that though concurrence has been described as a general, immediate, simultaneous action of God to produce the effect, the exact nature of the divine concurrence remains unclear. What is it that the divine action adds to the production of a natural event over and above the conservation in existence of the cause and the action of the cause itself? I confess that I am not entirely satisfied with the best answer I can give to this question, for it seems to bring the concurrence view suspiciously close to the Deistic understanding of providence.

The best description I can give of a Molinist notion of concurrence, beyond what was said in the last section, is that it is a general decision of God to sustain in existence not only natural things and their causal powers, but also the effects produced by natural things. So, in a sense, concurrence is an extension of the divine conservation of all things in existence.

If conservation is understood as a moment by moment continuous creation of all things (not a re-creation, for things surely do not pop in and out of existence), then perhaps it becomes clearer that concurrence may be a kind of conservation of a natural effect. If it is given to a natural cause to be able to produce an effect, it is nonetheless necessary that God, at the same time the effect is produced, will that the effect remain in existence. The effect, at the moment of its production, requires the divine conservation like any other natural thing.

But, it might be objected, causes and effects do not seem to be the same sort of thing. Causes, at least on the scheme I have been working with, seem to be objects, that is, individual substances of some sort. Effects, on the other hand, seem to be better described as events, a much more elusive type of entity. Thus it would appear difficult to understand what conservation of an effect, an event, would amount to.

Now a whole metaphysical can of worms has been opened in the last paragraph. A standard philosophical notion of events (a notion usually connected with Roderick Chisholm) is that events are states of affairs, that is, abstract entities. Such abstract entities become “concretized,” or instantiated in the arrangements of actually existing individual things. Thus an event is not, itself, an individual thing. Events exist as abstract entities, that is, as descriptions of arrangements of individual things which may or may not be actually

instantiated in the arrangement of the world. It is also possible to develop a conception of events as purely derivative entities. Events exist only insofar as they actually occur in the arrangement of the world. Events have no abstract existence apart from the actual arrangements of individual things.

However, I believe that we can reach a helpful description of an effect without solving the problem of the ontological status of events. I would suggest that an effect can be described as a succession of arrangements of individual things. The simplest way to picture this description of effects is atomistically.²³ We may view the world as an arrangement of “Newtonian” particles existing moment by moment in various arrangements of relative position and velocity and exerting various influences on each other such as attraction, repulsion, and so forth. The atomistic picture is simple, but the notion of arrangement of individual things could be construed in other ways, for example, as an arrangement of quantum entities, Leibnizian monads, or ordinary objects such as trees, tables, and stones. In the latter cases the description of the relationships which make up the arrangement would be more complex, but it will still be possible to conceive the world at any particular moment as a particular arrangement of individual things.

So, if we describe the world at a given moment, call it T, as an arrangement of all the individual things, then the production of an effect at some future moment, call it T+1, will simply be the production of a change in the arrangement which existed at T. Since the arrangement of the world is obviously changing constantly as a plurality of effects are produced by a plurality of causes, the arrangement of the world will be different at each successive moment.²⁴

I have already noted that God’s creative activity is usually construed as a moment by moment conservation of all things in existence. But it is clear that God not only conserves all things in existence at any given moment, but that He also conserves them in existence in their arrangement at that moment. Since that arrangement is constantly changing, God’s act of conservation is, in effect, a decision at each moment to conserve a new arrangement of things. God wills not only that each individual thing should exist at a particular moment, but that each thing should exist in all its new relationships with other things. Concurrence, then, is a general decision on God’s part to conserve the world moment by moment *along with* all the changes in its arrangement produced by the causal activity of things in the world.

Thus, for any given causal event, God’s concurrence in the production of an effect is His general decision not only to conserve in existence the cause and those things upon which it acts, but also to conserve the cause and those things upon which it acts *in a new arrangement* produced by the cause. This is a general decision to conserve whatever effects

²³ I owe this picture to Peter van Inwagen, “The Place of Chance in a World Sustained by God,” p. 226ff.

²⁴ I see no *a priori* reason why a past arrangement might not be duplicated at some future **moment**, but it may be that the nature of time and entropy prevents such duplication. If such a duplication were possible, I do not believe that it affects my argument.

are produced by a cause according to the nature of the cause, so that, in the case of quantum particles or free sentient agents, the effect may be one of a number of possible effects.

I believe that my account of concurrence as conservation of effects, which are construed as new arrangements of individual things, is not simply a return to the Deistic view. On the Deistic view God appears to be simply a passive observer of the operations of the world He has created and sustains in existence. The notion of concurrence acknowledges a moment by moment participation by God in the operations of the world by a general decision to sustain the world's existence in each new arrangement as it is produced. Perhaps my account simply reduces concurrence to a refinement of the Deistic view, but if that is the case, it is nonetheless a needed refinement and a corrective to the Deistic view as usually stated.

Thus far, I do not think I have suggested anything about God's providential relationship to the natural order with which Stuart Hackett would not concur. But if the general picture of providence which I have suggested is accepted, there follows what I take to be a fairly simple and satisfying definition of the nature of the divine activity in the production of the miraculous. If God's ordinary providential activity is conservation of individual things and concurrence with the effects they produce, then miraculous activity is the result of a divine decision to produce an effect, or arrangement of the world, which could not or would not have been produced by individual things operating on their own in the sphere of ordinary providence. That is, a miracle is an event beyond the power of natural things, given only God's conservation amid concurrence. With such a definition of miracle I am sure that Hackett would disagree.²⁵ But, of course, a student need not agree with all the views of his teacher in order to acknowledge the enormous debt owed to one who, more than anyone, provided an example of careful thought about things divine. To Stuart Hackett I am so indebted.

Stuart Hackett's Comments on My Paper:

- 1) I agree with your over-all view of providence as represented by the Aquinas/Molina tradition; and I agree with your rejection of both the denial of second causality and the position of Deism (moderate or extreme). Providence involves God's immediate involvement in the production of natural effects by natural agents (what you call concurrence).
- 2) The instrument analogy of Thomas seems not too misleading for natural agents that are not persons and do not possess freedom in the morally relevant sense; but it does tend to collapse into the denial of second causality altogether.
- 3) I am fascinated by Molina's view of "general providence," but I doubt that it accomplishes its primary purpose of attributing greater significance to second causality

²⁵ *RCRC*, p. 322.

(especially for free agents), because God's continuous preservational activity would render the providence particular after all.

- a) Of course, I agree that God's causality allows genuine contingency to free agents, so that God does not determine causally the morally relevant actions of free agents, but this would be true even if providence were particular.
- b) I simply do not see how Molina's view would make the problem of moral evil any less vexing, since God's causality sustains the being and actions of all contingent beings on either his view or that of Thomas.
- c) If the sort of "genuine contingent event" allowed for by Molina's view is to be a contra-causal event, then, on my view that would be rationally unintelligible (cf. Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason – which need not entail determinism).

4) Re. the concept of miracle:

- a) My view of miracle does not entail that there can be no miracles in the sense of your definition.
- b) It only claims that a Christian apologetic would not be disturbed *if* in fact there were none in your sense.

Thanks, Steve, for a really insightful article.