IMAGES OF GOD AND THE STATE: POLITICAL ANALOGY AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

DAVID NICHOLLS

Oxford, England

PICTURES OF GOD," wrote Friedrich Meinecke, "often contain an element of definite historical thinking."[1] Few theologians today would deny that an understanding of Christian doctrines requires knowledge of the historical context in which they have developed; nor would they deny that the formation and development of such doctrines have strongly been influenced by nontheological factors. In considering the development of Christian doctrines, however, most English-speaking theologians have tended to restrict their discussion of the relevant historical factors influencing this development to "philosophical ideas." The late Geoffrey Lampe, for example, stated that the creeds of Christendom are "products of their time" and conditioned by "the world of thought" in which their authors lived.[2] Maurice Wiles in his early work *The Making of Christian Doctrine* adopts much the same idealist position and more recently refers to the way in which doctrinal development was related to "the particular ideas" of the time. While he agrees that "nontheological factors" may have been influential in determining which groups accepted what doctrines, these factors did not, he believes, exert an important influence upon "the content" of Christian doctrine.[3] What is perhaps most significant about this passage is the list which Wiles gives of the nontheological factors which might be thought to have had an influence; they are "imperial favour, ecclesiastical rivalries or personal ambitions." There is not the slightest hint that other, more fundamental political, economic, or social factors might have played a significant role in doctrinal development.[4]

[1] F. Meinecke, *Historism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) 17.

[2] G. W. H. Lampe, in the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, *Christian Believing* (London: SPCK, 1976) 103.

[3] M. F. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1967) 15–16, 28; also Wiles, *Incarnation and Myth* (ed. M. Goulder; London: SCM, 1979) 11.

[4] In some of his later writings Wiles mentions that the form and structure of the Church must be affected by "the forces and structures of the society in which it is set," that our psychological, social, and cultural heritage affects our experience of God, and that decisions of ecumenical councils may have been influenced by "political and ecclesiastical and psychological pressures." Yet it is essentially in the context of "church history" rather than in that of history that the development of doctrines is thought to occur. See *Working Papers in Doctrine* (London: SCM, 1976) 103, 97; also *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM, 1974) 22.

In this article I wish to point to one area of Christian doctrine which has been positively linked to political developments. I will argue that the concepts and images used of God have been closely associated with images and concepts of political authority, which in turn have been related to institutional developments.[5] It would certainly be an oversimplification to suggest that ideas and concepts used with reference to God are totally dependent on political concepts, which in turn are determined by political or economic structures. Such a simple determinism is untenable. Among the Jews, for example, the development of monotheism may be said to have preceded the monarchical form of government, and there is no reason to suppose that in the ancient Near East divine monarchy is merely a reflection of human monarchy.[6] What is here being suggested is rather that a particular concept used about God becomes *predominant* at a given period of history in a given social situation and that this concept is often closely related to the political discourse of the time, which in turn is dialectically related to the social context in which it operates.

After referring to some recent work in this general area, I shall outline what I believe to be a more fruitful approach, lying in between what may be called an "internal" and an "external" history of doctrine. To illustrate this approach, I shall look briefly at a number of ways in which concepts and images of God have been related to political rhetoric from the Middle Ages to the present day. Part 3 of the article is devoted to a rather more detailed discussion of the thought of Leibniz and of those writers—particularly Bodin and Hobbes—against whom much of his writing on this subject was explicitly or implicitly directed. Here, I shall suggest, is illustrated the subtle interrelationship between religious and political discourse on God and the state, in the context of the social and political arrangements which prevailed in seventeenth-century Europe.

I

Recently published works in English on the concept of God have generally concentrated on the philosophical attributes of God and have paid remarkably little attention to the questions with which I am concerned in this article. Nor, indeed, have the two books of Robin Gill dealt with the social context of specific Christian doctrines, as might have been

[5] By "concepts" I am thinking of abstract terms such as "sovereignty," "justice," "power"; by "images" I mean the more concrete terms, "king," "judge," "mortal god."

[6] This case alone should make us wary of generalizing about the causal role played by imperialism in the growth of monotheism, referred to by Legge and later by Weber and Breasted. See also E. Peterson, "Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem," *Theologische Traktate* (Munich: Kösel, 1951).

expected from their titles.[7] Among continental writers, however, some attention has been paid to these issues. Gonzalo Puente Ojea, Louis Boisset, and Georges Casalis have examined the theological significance of Marxist critiques of ideology, while José Vives, Alfredo Fierro, François Houtart, Adolphe Gesché, Pierre Watté, and J. van Haeperen have considered more specifically how social formations and social thinking have been related to concepts and images of God.[8] Following the work of such anthropologists as Sheils and Underhill, Houtart and Gesché have adopted a somewhat static approach to the question, attempting, in a cross-cultural perspective, to relate the dominant conception of God in a community to the social structure of that community. They divide societies into two basic categories, those with a low degree of control over their environment and those with a high degree of control (Gesché), or, put slightly differently, those with a weak development in productive forces and those with a strong development of such forces (Houtart). The former type comprises kinship and feudal societies and the latter comprises capitalist and socialist societies. The dominant conceptions of God are said to be related to these structural differences. In social formations of the first kind (kinship and feudal), images of God are said to play a role in explaining and justifying natural and social phenomena to the believer, while in the latter formations (capitalist and socialist), religion has become "privatized" and the images used of God are to be seen primarily as responses to personal needs. Such analyses, however, lack a dynamic perspective; they fail to give sufficient emphasis to concrete and specific historical developments and to the way in which images and concepts of God which developed in one period of history frequently acquire a vitality of their own by means of which they may, on the one hand, persist into a later period or, on the other hand, provoke a reaction.

[7] F. Sontag, *Divine Perfection* (London: SCM, 1962); Keith Ward, *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974); H. P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity* (London: Macmillan, 1971). The books by Gill are *The Social Context of Theology* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1975) and *Theology and Social Structure* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1977).

[8] G. Puente Ojea, *Ideología e historia: La formación del cristianismo como fenómeno ideológico* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1974); Louis Boisset, *La théologie en procès, face à la critique marxiste* (Paris: Centurion, 1974); Georges Casalis, *Les idées justes ne tombent pas du ciel* (Paris: Cerf, 1977); José Vives, "El dios trinitario y la comunión humana," *Estudios eclesiásticos* 52 (1977) 129 ff.; Alfredo Fierro, "Histoire de dieu," *Lumière et vie* 128 (1976); François Houtart, "Sociologie du discours sur Dieu," *Foi et société* (ed. M. Caudron; Gembloux: Duculot, 1976); Adolphe Gesché, "Dieu et société," *RTL* 7 (1976) 274 ff.; Pierre Watté, "Le prince, le maître et dieu: Une thématique dans le contexte de la nouvelle philosophie," *RTL* 9 (1978) 436 ff.; J. van Haeperen, "Expériences politiques de la puissance et tout-puissance de Dieu," *RTL* 9 (1978) 287 ff. Also, on Trinitarianism, Thomas Parker, "The Political Meaning of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Reformed World* 35 (1978) 126 ff.; Gerd Decke, "Trinity, Church and Community," *LW* 23 (1976) 48 ff.; D. L. Migliore, "The Trinity and Human Liberty," *TToday* 36 (1980) 497 ff.

By adopting a historical approach to the question, I believe that it is possible to allow for this relative autonomy which ideas, concepts, and images may attain.

Most historians of Christian doctrine have been concerned with what may be called the "internal" history of doctrine, in the sense that they have attempted to show how doctrines have been modified as a result of a logic and a dynamic deriving from the original revelation recorded in Scripture and in the traditions of the early Church. This internal history is thought to have been affected by three factors: by Christian experience (particularly the delayed Parousia), by ecclesiastical politics, and by changing philosophical frameworks adopted from the secular world.[9] The few attempts to write an "external" history of doctrine have been largely unsuccessful. The essay by Erich Fromm, *The Dogma of Christ*, suffers from a crude and dogmatic assumption about the social function of religion combined with an ignorance of history and theology.[10] The more interesting and suggestive book by Karl Kautsky, *Der Ersprung des Christentums*, published in 1921, founders on a rather simplistic attempt to account for developments in Christian doctrine as a function of the changing class composition of the early Church.[11]

There is, nevertheless, a whole area for investigation which falls somewhere in between internal and external history. Models and paradigms developed in one discipline are frequently employed more or less consciously by writers in other fields of enquiry. Examples can be cited from the social Darwinists of the nineteenth century who consciously adopted models which had been employed in the field of biology.[12] Furthermore,

[9] I am thinking here not only of such English writers as G. L. Prestige, J. N. D. Kelly, M. F. Wiles, G. W. H. Lampe, and W. H. C. Frend (who lays considerable emphasis upon the importance of ecclesiastical politics in the development of doctrine) but also of German writers from A. Harnack to M. Werner. Gregory Baum has made this general criticism: "Theologians often tend to regard the variations of doctrine and theology simply as a development of ideas, without paying sufficient attention to the socio-political reality, of which this development is a reflection" ("Sociology and Theology," *Concilium* 1:10 [January 1974] 23). From what I say in the body of the article it will be clear that I believe the term "reflection" to be misconceived in this context.

[10] Of his essay Fromm writes, "It will attempt to understand the ideas in terms of men and their life patterns, and to show that the evolution of dogma can be understood only through knowledge of the unconscious upon which external reality works and which determines the content of consciousness" (*The Dogma of Christ* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963] 6).

[11] K. Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity: A Study in Christian Origins* (New York: International Publishers, 1925). Some historians would dispute Kautsky's assertion that the primitive Church derived its support principally from the urban proletariat; see R. M. Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (London: Collins, 1978) 11, and Gerd Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1978) 46.

[12] Nor, of course, was the influence one way. Darwin and Spencer were clearly influenced in their theories of biological evolution by the contemporary emphasis upon development and history, exemplified in the writings of Burke, Hegel, Coleridge, and Newman; see J.

as Mary Hesse has pointed out, "some factors which look purely causal and unconscious at first sight may on more careful inspection reveal intellectual and rational components."[13] It is in this context that I wish to explore the way in which ideas of God and the state have influenced each other, with particular reference to the thought of Leibniz. For too long a proper distinction between origin and validity has led to a false belief that the origin of an idea has no relevance to the question of its validity. Only by a study of the origins of an idea is it possible to understand the meaning of that idea, for the meaning is dependent upon the problem to which the idea is a solution or the question to which it is an answer. As it is possible to consider its validity only after having determined its meaning, familiarity with origins is a necessary preliminary to a consideration of validity.

II

Many of the images and concepts used about God are or have been applied also to political authority. Lordship, kingship, sovereignty, and power, judicial, military, and paternal images are all used in political and theological discourse. It is also the case that from earliest times the governing or predominant concept used about God has frequently been a feature of contemporary political rhetoric. Ideas of Yahweh as God of war, as king, as lawgiver appear to be related to Jewish social, and particularly political, structures. In classical Greek thought one of the principal characteristics of both God and the *polis* was *autarkeia.*[14] Perfection was thought to involve self-sufficiency and, as God and the *polis* were the most perfect entities in their respective fields, they were thought of as autarkic. It is noteworthy that this strong emphasis upon self-sufficiency should emerge at a time when there was particular concern with the relationship between the small city state and the larger Greek community. The notion of perfection as involving self-sufficiency has had a long history, has rarely been absent from Western thought,

---

Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1966). I have considered some of the ideas of the social Darwinists and their critics in "Positive Liberty, 1880–1914," *American Political Science Review* 56 (1962) 114 ff.

[13] Mary Hesse, "Hermeticism and Historiography: An Apology for the Internal History of Science," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 5 (ed. H. Feigl and G. Maxwell; Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1970) 139.

[14] A. O. Lovejoy has drawn attention to the importance of *autarkeia* in Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of God but failed surprisingly to relate this to their political theory; see *The Great Chain of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960) 43 ff. For other discussions of the importance of self-sufficiency in classical Greek theology, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ., 1962, 1969) 1, 20 and 3, 230 ff. Ernest Barker pointed to the centrality of *autarkeia* in Greek political thinking generally and in Aristotle particularly but without reference to the parallel in their theology; see *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (New York: Dover, 1959) 5, 233, 390, 402.

and has had a powerful impact upon the development of Christian doctrine. It can be seen to emerge particularly strongly again in the period of early German nationalism, in the writings of Herder, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and others, when once more the relation of the small state to the larger national unit was a matter of major concern. Nor is it purely coincidental that the notion of God's self-sufficiency has been challenged most vigorously by philosophers and theologians from the United States, where interdependence among the several units of the federation is a long-standing phenomenon.[15]

Medieval conceptions of God and the state were manifestly characterized by hierarchy, order, and law, being summed up in the idea of lordship. In scholastic thought God was seen as the origin of the eternal law, which is the principle according to which all things are governed. This law was conceived as stemming from the very nature of God rather than as an arbitrary decree of His will. God cannot act against the eternal law, because to do so would be to act against His very nature and this would imply an imperfection. A thing is not lawful or just because God wills it; it is divinely willed because it is just. So too, in the political field, the ruler decreed positive laws, but if his decrees were contrary to the natural law (which is that part of the eternal law applying to rational beings) they were no longer truly laws. Laws were declared rather than made and were, according to Maitland, conceived as existing independently of the will of any ruler, independently even of the *will* of God.[16] Both God and the earthly ruler thus existed in a context of order based upon laws which they promulgated and administered but did not create.[17] The divine and the earthly monarchs were seen in the setting of a whole hierarchy, of angels and archangels on the one hand, of a feudal nobility on the other:

> What are the monarch his court and his throne?
> What are the peace the joy that they own?[18]

[15] I am thinking particularly of A. N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. It is also significant that United States theologians have been among the foremost critics of monarchical images of God, arguing in favor of a "democratic conception of God" or, less misleadingly, a constitutional idea of God. See particularly the writings of G. H. Howison and H. A. Overstreet.

[16] F. W. Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ., 1919) 101; see also C. H. McIlwain, *The High Court of Parliament* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1910) 42. Nevertheless there was, as I have suggested in the text, a positive element in law according to most medieval theorists. This point has been forcefully made by Ewart Lewis in "The 'Positivism' of Marsiglio of Padua," *Speculum* 38 (1963) 541 ff.

[17] Except, that is, insofar as God willed the creation of the universe and can be said thereby to have willed the laws that apply to it; but these are not thought of as arbitrary commands of His will.

[18] Peter Abelard's hymn "O Quanta Qualia."

With the gradual disruption of the feudal mode of production and social organization in the later Middle Ages, this conception of divine and political authority characterized by law was increasingly challenged, though its influence continued through the Reformation period among a number of writers; it was, as we shall see, to be used as the basis for a revival of natural-law conceptions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nevertheless in the relatively disturbed years of the Renaissance and Reformation and into the seventeenth century a new conception of both God and the state emerged as predominant in Western Europe. This was the notion of divine and political authority characterized by will and command. Sovereignty is the distinguishing feature of God and of the king in their respective spheres. This view of authority may be found in the late Middle Ages among nominalist thinkers and was pioneered by claims made by such popes as Innocent III. It is present in Bodin, in the writings of King James I of England and in those of many of his critics, in Milton's prose and poetry, and above all in the thought of Thomas Hobbes. It is in the ideas of the latter that the notion of absolute sovereignty received its most radical formulation both in its religious and in its secular context.

Hobbist ideas of sovereignty led in turn to a number of different reactions which were themselves related to changing political circumstances in Europe. On the one hand, there was the attempt by a considerable number of writers to reintroduce restrictions on sovereignty by appealing to a refurbished conception of natural law. (I shall return to consider one such attempt, that of Leibniz, presently.) Another reaction was marked by a notion of God and the sovereign as detached from the day-to-day running of the world and of the realm: the divine architect and the "night watchman" state. A further type of reaction to Hobbist authoritarianism was distinguished by the acceptance of divine and human authority as absolute and unlimited, but combined with an attempt to ensure that this authority is exercised benevolently. This notion of authority, as power paternally exercised, emerged as predominant in the latter part of the nineteenth century in Western Europe; this was a period in which some of the harshest features of capitalism were present, together with a growing challenge to the economic and social system on the part of the labor movement. The only way the capitalist state could avoid revolution was by mitigating some of the most brutal consequences of the system. In Germany and in Britain particularly, social legislation was enacted and the state adopted the pose of a "friendly society."[19] The paternalistic state was accompanied by a welfare conception of God, an image which is still of great influence today. God is thought of in terms of "caring and concern"; mercy and benevolence

[19] See David Nicholls, *The Pluralist State* (London: Macmillan, 1975) chap. 1.

rather than justice or holiness are His principal characteristics. God and the state, in this welfare view, are to manage and manipulate men for their own good, an approach the working out of which may be seen in the fate of George Jackson, leader of the black "Soledad Brothers." Jackson was imprisoned at the age of eighteen, on a sentence of one year to life, for having driven the getaway car in a robbery in which $70 was stolen. The logic of the sentence was not that of justice but of social conditioning. An acceptance of the process of reformation—or, in this case, more accurately degradation—was the condition of release. His applications for parole were consistently turned down, and after having spent ten years in prison (seven and a half of them in solitary confinement) he was accused of killing a prison guard.[20]

The idea of God which accompanies the growth of the welfare state is frankly assumed by the great German theorist of bureaucracy Max Weber. Discussing Calvin's view of God, he wrote: "The Father in Heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding, who rejoices over the repentance of a sinner as a woman over the lost piece of silver she has found, is gone. His place is taken by a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding."[21] The governing conception of God and the state is one of unlimited power combined with benevolence. It is clearly reflected in writings on the atonement in English from Rashdall to Lampe, where sin is seen as a personal affront to an omnipotent but indulgent grandmother who will forgive and forget at a whim. It is also assumed in the revised liturgies of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, particularly in respect of the "God of power and might" who is nevertheless concerned with "the common good."[22]

Other significant reactions to the notion of authority as unlimited can be seen in the rejection of all coercive authority; atheism and anarchism were explicitly linked by Shelley, Proudhon, and Bakunin.[23] Again we may see the attempt to *oppose* God to the sovereign state, by identifying Him not with the coercive authority but with the victims of this authority, as a reaction to Hobbism. He is the God of the oppressed about whom Lanternari and others have written, the suffering God of Kitamori and Moltmann.

III

I wish now to consider in a little more detail the notion of God and the state as characterized by sovereign will in the writings of Bodin and

[20] G. Jackson, *Soledad Brother: Prison Letters* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

[21] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1958) 103. This highly selective picture of the New Testament God is clearly indebted to the work of Harnack and the liberal theologians of his day.

[22] See David Nicholls, "Recognizing the Social and Political Imagery of the Liturgy," *The Times*, August 16, 1980.

[23] Pierre Ansart points out how Proudhon saw the religious affirmation of God as the

Hobbes and to examine the reaction to this position on the part of Leibniz.

The ideas of Leibniz on God and the state have to be seen against the background of the rise of the absolutist state and the associated growth of centralization in Western Europe. This particular form of the state was the product of a power equilibrium between the feudal aristocracy and the rising bourgeois class[24] and is best seen, in the words of Perry Anderson, as "a compensation for the disappearance of serfdom, in the context of an increasingly urban economy which it did not completely control and to which it had to adapt."[25] Rural discontent and mobility were such that no collection of individual landlords could hope to maintain order. Absolutism may be said to have done for feudalism what fascism on the one hand and the welfare state on the other have done for capitalism; the basic structure of the economic and social organization was maintained by political institutions having social corollaries that conflicted in certain respects with that structure and bringing with them political theories uncongenial to the system they were calculated to preserve. France and England were the countries in which centralization had proceeded furthest and it is no accident that it was in these countries that theories of state sovereignty received their most trenchant formulations, with publicists such as Bodin and Hobbes.

Jean Bodin's theory of sovereignty both in its early version and in its classic form is closely related to his ideas about the nature of divine authority. He believed that the universe is presided over by a transcendent God, "that most mighty king, in unity simple, in nature indivisible,"[26] who works through the ministry of demons. His notion of God is "intransigently monotheist" and there is little place in his system for a Trinitarian view of God.[27] The king is, for Bodin, the living image of God, governing his earthly domains after the pattern of the heavenly.[28] There is one father in a family, one head of a human body, so nature demands a single monarch in a state.[29] As God punishes the wicked through the medium of angels and spirits, so the king delegates to magistrates au-

---

expression of social and political subordination; see *Sociologie de Proudhon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967) 7. For Bakunin see G. P. Maximoff, ed., *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: Free Press, 1964).

[24] F. Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild* (Paris: Alcan, 1934) 442.

[25] Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: NLB, 1974) 195.

[26] *Les six livres de la république* (Paris, 1578) 6:6 (*The Six Books of a Commonwealth*, ed. R. Knolles; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ., 1962, 794).

[27] C. R. Baxter, "Jean Bodin's Daemon and His Conversion to Judaism," *Verhandlungen der Internationalen Bodin Tagung* (Munich: Beck, 1973). See also Pierre Mesnard, "La pensée religieuse de Bodin," *Revue du seizième siècle* 16 (1929) 71 ff.

[28] *Les six livres* 4, 5 (Knolles 498).

[29] Ibid. 6, 4 (Knolles 718).

thority to punish transgressors of the civil law.[30] The principal mark of sovereignty is power to impose laws on subjects without their consent, and law is nothing else than the command of the sovereign in the exercise of his power.[31] In his early *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* of 1566, Bodin recognized that kings are in certain respects subject to law,[32] and even in his later more radical statement of the theory of sovereignty he placed certain limits on the right of the monarch. He is bound by the laws of God and of nature and cannot take the property of another without just and reasonable cause.[33] Yet the principal achievement of the *Six livres de la république* was the removal of effective constitutional limits on the power of the monarch, combined with a rejection of all ideas of legitimate resistance to his commands.

Thomas Hobbes's notorious attempt to strengthen absolutism by basing it upon consent is well known and need concern us here only insofar as it contributed to the ideology which Leibniz rejected. Hobbes identified justice with the command of the sovereign even more evidently and consistently than did Bodin. With respect to God, His doing of a thing makes it just and His right of sovereignty derives from His unlimited and irresistible power.[34] As His right derives from His power, so our obligation to obey derives from our weakness, or rather from the recognition of our weakness.[35] Hobbes strongly emphasized the unity of God and put forward a distinctly "economic" interpretation of the Trinity, in which any real distinctions between the three Persons of the Godhead were rejected, a position which Bramhall perceptively criticized.[36] The office of the earthly sovereign is conceived by Hobbes on the analogy of the heavenly. Furthermore, kings are "vice-gods, or lieutenants through whom he speaks."[37] The sovereign's commands constitute law and no law can be unjust (though it may be unwise). The sovereign determines what is to count as reasonable in the interpretation of law and his decrees enable us

[30] Ibid. 4, 6 (Knolles 507–8).

[31] Ibid. 1, 8 (Knolles 98 and 108).

[32] "Princes speak sophistically against the people when they say that their freedom from the law is so complete that they are not only above the laws, but are not obliged in any way, or even more disgracefully, that what has pleased them has the force of law" (Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History* [New York: Columbia Univ., 1945] 203).

[33] *Les six livres* 1, 8 (Knolles 108–9); see J. H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1973) 70 ff.

[34] Thomas Hobbes, *English Works* (ed. Molesworth; London: Bohn, 1839 ff.) 4, 250; 2, 207; 3, 346; 5, 115 and 146.

[35] Ibid. 2, 209.

[36] Ibid. 3, 488. Hobbes's correction, made in the Latin edition of *Leviathan* (which he refers to in his answer to Bramhall, ibid. 4, 316–17), of a phrase about the way in which Moses represented God, by no means answers the criticism that Hobbes's idea of the Trinity does not allow for the eternal nature of the distinctions between the divine "persons."

[37] Ibid. 4, 199.

to distinguish between religion and superstition.[38] As God is eternal, so Leviathan, the mortal god, enjoys an "artificial eternity," in order that civil society will not dissolve into a state of war at the death of a monarch.[39] Sovereign power in civil society is indivisible; it must be held by one man or body of men, preferably by the former (because the world was created by one God, and other forms of government are "but pieces of broken monarchies cemented by human wit").[40] Yet, although the earthly sovereign is conceived on analogy with God, he is of course in certain respects quite different from God and is not, strictly speaking, irresistible. If there had been a man (or body of men) whose power were irresistible, he might properly have ruled by the authority he derived from such power;[41] the absence of this kind of power led to the creation of sovereignty by consent.

Hobbist theology, political and civil, proved unacceptable even in England. "The English possessing classes," observes C. B. Macpherson, "did not need Hobbes's full prescription," and turned to "the more ambiguous and more agreeable doctrine of Locke."[42] If Hobbism was inappropriate in England, it was even less likely to be attractive to Germans. From the late fifteenth century onwards, efforts had been made by successive Holy Roman Emperors to achieve a degree of central control similar to that gained by English and French monarchs, but to little effect. An orderly and stable Germany would be achieved, if at all, by a federal system of government based upon respect for a law which transcended the positive law of each of the units.[43] This situation is clearly reflected in the writings of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (often spelled "Leibnitz"), who was born in Leipzig in July 1646. After studying law, he began a varied career as diplomat, student, librarian, engineer, and advisor to various heads of state. He died in 1716. Leibniz was a patriot who was manifestly concerned with the well-being of Germany. Next to honoring God, he wrote, the virtuous man will pursue the welfare and glory of his fatherland. "The bond of language, customs, yes even that of a common name," he pronounced, "unites men in a very strong, even though invisible, fashion and makes them in a way relatives."[44]

In his political and theological writings Leibniz constantly criticized

[38] Ibid. 3, 251, 199, 253, 45.

[39] Ibid. 3, 180.

[40] Ibid. 4, 165–66.

[41] Ibid. 3, 346.

[42] C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ., 1962) 106.

[43] Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany: The Reformation* (New York: Knopf, 1959) 39 ff.; and T. K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford Univ., 1975) 68.

[44] G. W. Leibniz, "Ermahnung an die Deutsche," in *Die Werke von Leibniz* (ed. O. Klopp; Hannover: Klindworth, 1864–84) 1/6, 188–89.

theories of absolute authority, divine or human. He fully accepted the analogy between God and the civil magistrate which his adversaries drew, but firmly rejected the notion that authority must be conceived in terms of despotic power. Acknowledging the fact that power is one of the valid constituents of authority, he insisted that this power must be exercised in accordance with law and justice. As God acts in conformity to eternal principles of right, so the king must govern in conformity to natural justice. God, like the good king, is benevolent and wished to maximize welfare by bringing into existence the best of all possible worlds. Unlike the earthly bureaucrat, however, God knows all, foresees all, and is therefore able to arrange everything so that the best is not only sought but realized. Leibniz's famous essay *Theodicy* is an elaborate attempt to vindicate the goodness of an all-powerful and omniscient God in face of the evil and pain that is found in the world. A constant concern in his theological and political writings is with order and harmony. As God's government of the universe manifests order, so must the king's government of his realm; as the divine economy provides for the reconciliation of apparently conflicting forces, the civil authority must rule by principles of accommodation, seeking always to conciliate clashing interests on the international and domestic fronts.

Gaston Grua has convincingly and exhaustively shown how Leibniz conceived of God as operating within a structure of law.[45] According to Leibniz, this fundamental law is a consequence of God's understanding, and he assailed Descartes for suggesting that the eternal truths of metaphysics and geometry as well as the fundamental moral law are to be ascribed to God's *will.* The works of God as found in the universe are really good and not simply for the formal reason that God has made them.[46] Goodness and justice have grounds independent of will and power.[47] Leibniz rejected the Hobbist view of God, outlined above, which "despoils God of all goodness and of all true justice". By ascribing to God a power which is essentially unrelated to justice, Hobbes represents him as a tyrant.[48] Leibniz criticized those who "have assumed a despotic power when they should rather have conceived a power ordered by the

[45] G. Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle et théodicée selon Leibniz* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953).

[46] Leibniz, "Discours de métaphysique" (1686), in G. W. Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters* (ed. L. Loemker; Dortrecht: Reidel, 1976) 304, and in Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften* (ed. G. I. Gerhardt; Hildesheim: Olms, 1875–90) 4, 427. See also J. Jalabert, *Le dieu de Leibniz* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) 138 ff.

[47] Leibniz, "Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice" (?1702), in Leibniz, *Phil. Papers* 562; see *Mittheilungen ans Leibniens ungedruckten Schriften* (ed. G. Mollat; Leipzig, 1893) 42.

[48] Leibniz, *Theodicy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951) 402; see Leibniz, *Phil. Schriften* 4, 398.

most perfect wisdom,"[49] and he rejected the idea that God is characterized by *Machtwille*—an unrestricted will to power.[50] Furthermore, the justice which is ascribed to God is of the same kind as the justice which is expected from men; the term is used univocally and Leibniz would have sympathized with John Mill's strictures on Sir William Hamilton and his disciples for their equivocal use of moral terms when applied to God and man. "Universal right," the German philosopher maintained, "is the same for God and for men."[51] This principle is, of course, one of the basic assumptions of the *Theodicy*.

For Leibniz, then, God is to be thought of not as "an absolute prince employing a despotic power."[52] Nevertheless, the model he follows is that of "enlightened despotism," as we would call it today. God is thought of as a monarch who is absolute and sovereign without being arbitrary.[53] He is a sovereign monarch in the sense that He is the sole ruler of the universe, sharing His authority with none and subject to the will of none.[54] Although, as I have emphasized, Leibniz rejected the idea that God is characterized by naked power, he does insist that God is omnipotent. In an early dissertation he went so far as to define God in terms of "infinite power,"[55] while in his later writings power is said to be one of the perfections that God possesses.[56] Power is, in itself, good; other things being equal, it is better to possess it than not. Power becomes a *certain* good, however, only when it is united with wisdom and benevolence, as it is in God.[57] In conformity to his principle of sufficient reason, according to which nothing occurs in the world without a sufficient reason accounting for it, Leibniz also maintained that God cannot act independently of

[49] *Theodicy* 53; *Phil. Schriften* 4, 29. Cf. "*Justitia.* Ex bonitate sapientis, etiam secundum nostras notiones. Non despotismus. Moralitas ex natura est, non ex arbitrio divino" (Leibniz, *Textes inédits* [ed. G. Grua; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France] 2, 474).

[50] Leibniz, "On the True *Theologia Mystica*" (?1690), in *Phil. Papers* 368.

[51] Leibniz, *Theodicy* 94; *Phil. Schriften* 4, 70. See J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London: Longmans Green, 1889) 126 ff.

[52] Leibniz, *Theodicy* 127; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 106.

[53] G. Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle* 372–73.

[54] Leibniz' use of the term "sovereignty" must therefore be distinguished from the Hobbist and Austinian use which stipulates that the sovereign creates law by his command and is therefore above the law. Indeed, for Leibniz, "sovereignty" is compatible even with "the existence in the state of a superior" ("Codicis juris gentium diplomatici, praefatio" [1693], in *The Political Writings of Leibniz* [ed. P. Riley; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1972] 175; *Die Werke von Leibniz* 1/6, 488).

[55] Leibniz, "Dissertatio de arte combinatoria" (1666), in *Phil. Papers* 73; *Phil. Schriften* 4, 32.

[56] Leibniz, "Discours de métaphysique," *Phil. Papers* 303; *Phil. Schriften* 4, 427; see also "Le monadologie" (1714), in *Phil. Papers* 647; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 615.

[57] Leibniz, "Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice," *Phil. Papers* 564; *Mittheilungen* 48.

reasonable motives[58] and he rejected the suggestion of Samuel Clarke that the sufficient reason for God's action can be "the mere will of God."[59] "A mere will," he replied, "without any motive is a fiction, not only contrary to God's perfection, but also chimerical and contradictory."[60] Elsewhere, however, when dealing with the question why God created Adam, he replied: because God chose to do the most perfect thing. In response to the further question, why God chooses or wills the most perfect thing, he replied that God wills it freely, that is, because He wills to; "so He willed because He willed to will and so on to infinity."[61] This position of the 1680's is not, though, typical of his mature thought. The freedom of God which Leibniz was here concerned to assert is exercised by His acting according to His eternal nature, which is not to be conceived of as a limit on His freedom. The motives according to which He acts incline without necessitating. Leibniz' insistence on the role played by will and freedom in God is due to his belief in the personal nature of the Divinity, which implies some concept of will.[62] He assailed those who make of God a metaphysical being without thought, will, or action, which is equivalent to identifying Him with nature, the world, or fate. "God," he continued, "is a definite substance, a person, a mind."[63] It is therefore surprising to find Leibniz called a pantheist or a panentheist.[64]

As J. M. Gabaude has pointed out in a suggestive article, the God of Leibniz is to the Cartesian God as the wise and enlightened monarch is to the despot.[65] Despite his vigorous criticism of arbitrary government, Leibniz is, as I have already noted, an apologist of "enlightened despotism." In his day, he claimed, there was no prince so bad that it would

[58] Leibniz, *Theodicy* 300; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 285.

[59] S. Clarke, in *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence* (ed. H. G. Alexander; Manchester: Manchester Univ., 1956) 20; Leibniz, *Phil. Schriften* 7, 359.

[60] Leibniz, ibid. 36; *Phil. Schriften* 7, 371–72.

[61] "Itaque voluit quia voluit velle, et ita in infinitum" ("Réflexions sur Bellarmine," in *Textes inédits* 1, 302).

[62] Leibniz, "Dialogue entre Théophile et Polidore" (1679), in *Textes inédits* 1, 285. Leibniz rejected what he called a "Socinian" notion of God, conceived as "un homme qui prend des résolutions selon les occurrences," but insisted that his own view, which acknowledged a hypothetical necessity in God, did not deprive Him of His absolute freedom. Having chosen to create Adam, God was bound to accept the consequences which were implied in the very concept of Adam, but He was not obliged to have created Adam at all. In choosing to create Adam, God chose at the same time everything that follows from this, in the same way that a wise prince, when he chooses a general, should realize that he is at the same time choosing those subordinate officers whom he knows that the general will appoint, "qui ne detruisent pourtant point son pouvoir absolu ny sa liberté" (Leibniz to Landgraf Ernst [1686], in *Phil. Schriften* 2, 19).

[63] Leibniz, "Selections from the Paris Notes" (1676), *Phil. Papers* 158.

[64] W. Stark, *The Fundamental Forms of Social Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) 7.

[65] J. M. Gabaude, "Théopolitisme leibnizien," *Annales de l'Université de Toulouse: Homo X* 7, 4 (1971) 70.

not be better to live under him than in a democracy.[66] Whether Leibniz took the divine government as a model which the earthly ruler should emulate, or whether he projected on to God a conception of civil government of which he approved, is a question to which I shall return. Ideally the monarch would relate to his realm as God relates to the universe; they both exist within a situation of order, and conduct their government according to principles of justice which are "founded in the immutable nature of things."[67] In the best state the monarch possesses power sufficient to put into effect his good will,[68] and even in the imperfect states that actually exist it is important that rulers should not have their hands tied, "for this makes them incapable of providing for the needs of the state quickly enough."[69] Nevertheless, to say, as many would,[70] that "it is not power, but the bad use of power which is worthy of blame" would, he maintained, be an oversimplification. It is dangerous, even for a virtuous ruler, to establish powers and rights which are "subject to corruption" in the hands of his successor.[71]

The justice required of a monarch, like the justice of God, involves retribution. As God leaves nothing without its just reward or punishment[72] and has arranged things in such a way that "all virtue produces its (own) reward and that all crime punishes itself sooner or later,"[73] so in a perfectly governed state each good or bad action must have its appropriate recompense.[74] General happiness is thought of being entirely compatible with justice, though it should not be assumed that the ruler's concern for the whole should lead him to neglect the interests of the parts. In a well-regulated commonwealth things are arranged as far as possible to the interests of individual citizens; so God in His government of the universe takes the good of individuals into account insofar as this

[66] Leibniz an Landgraf Ernst (1683), in *The Political Writings* 186; Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1938) 1/3, 313.

[67] Leibniz, "Monita quaedem ad S. Pufendorfii principia" (1706), in *The Political Writings* 71; Leibniz, *Opera omnia* (ed. L. Dutens; Geneva, 1768) 4/3, 280.

[68] J. Baruzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre* (Paris: Alcan, 1907) 371.

[69] Leibniz an Landgraf Ernst (1683), in *The Political Writings* 186; *Sämtliche Schriften* 1/3, 313.

[70] For example, in our own day, Preston King, *Fear of Power* (London: Cass, 1967).

[71] Leibniz an Landgraf Ernst (1683), in *The Political Writings* 186; *Sämtliche Schriften* 1/3, 313.

[72] Leibniz, in *Nouvelles lettres et opuscules inédits de Leibniz* (ed. A. Foucher de Careil; Paris: Durand, 1857) 7. See also Leibniz à Arnaud (1690), in *Phil. Papers* 360; *Phil. Schriften* 2, 136; and "Principes de la nature et de la grace fondés en raison" (1714), in *Phil. Papers* 640; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 605.

[73] Leibniz, "La félicité" (1694–98), in *Textes inédits* 2, 581.

[74] "Mémoire pour les personnes éclairées et de bonne intention" (mid-1690's), in *The Political Writings* 105; *Lettres et opuscules inédits de Leibniz* (ed. A. Foucher de Careil; Paris: Landrange, 1854) 277–78. See also "Monadologie," in *Phil. Papers* 490; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 622.

may be done without disturbing the universal harmony.[75] Leibniz' notion of "compossibility," according to which certain goods are incompatible and cannot exist together in any possible universe,[76] enables him to assert that even in the best possible arrangement of things the absolute good of each component may be unrealizable.

God and the monarch are thus both concerned with maximizing the happiness or welfare of their subjects. Unlike the latter, however, God has perfect knowledge. He "has foreseen every thing; He has provided a remedy for every thing beforehand."[77] Leibniz made this point in the context of his dispute with Samuel Clarke. The German philosopher had argued that the Newtonian theories involved an unsatisfactory notion of God's relationship to the universe according to which He needs to "wind up His watch" from time to time to keep it going. "Nay, the machine of God's making is so imperfect, according to these gentlemen, that He is obliged to clean it now and then by an extraordinary concourse, and even to mend it." His own theory, in contrast, according to which the same force remains in the universe passing from one part of matter to another, restricted the intervention of God to the sphere of grace rather than to that of nature. Newton told Richard Bentley that he had composed his scientific works with "an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity";[78] Leibniz dismissed this "god of the gaps." He also rejected Newton's monolithic conception of God—a *pantocrator* characterized by dominion, power, and will. Leibniz, with his strong Trinitarian doctrine of a God who works according to the eternal laws of His nature, found the Newtonian position unacceptable. Clarke responded to this challenge by arguing that the notion of the world as a great machine, which he ascribed to Leibniz, is materialistic and fatalistic, finding no place for an idea of God's providence or government. Clarke then elaborated the political analogy. "If a king," he wrote, "had a kingdom, wherein all things would continually go on without his government or interposition, or without his attending to or ordering what is done therein; it would be to him, merely a nominal kingdom, nor would he in reality deserve at all the title of king or governor." Those who would contend that government can proceed perfectly well without the active participation of the king, he went on, might well be accused of wishing to get rid of him altogether. So the Leibnizian view of God which asserts that "the causes of the world can go on without the continual direction

[75] Leibniz, "De rerum originatione radicali," *Phil. Papers* 490; *Phil. Schriften* 7, 306–7.

[76] For an early formulation of the principle of compossibility, see: "Not all possibles per se can exist along with others; otherwise absurdities would follow" (1676); *Phil. Papers* 168.

[77] Leibniz to Clarke, in *Leibniz-Clarke Corr.* 18: *Phil. Schriften* 7, 358.

[78] Leibniz to Princess Caroline (1715), ibid. 11–12; *Phil. Schriften* 7, 352. Newton to Bentley (1692), in Isaac Newton, *Omnia opera* (London; 1779–85) 4, 429.

of God, the Supreme Governor," tends to "exclude God out of the world."[79]

Leibniz took up Clarke's political analogy. God's kingdom is not a nominal kingdom, because He continually maintains the world in being. It is like saying that "a king, who should originally have taken care to have his subjects so well educated, and should, by his care in providing for their subsistence, preserve them so well in the fitness for their several stations, and in their good affections towards him, as that he should have no occasion ever to be amending any thing among them; would be only a nominal king."[80] We find here and elsewhere in Leibniz' writings a manifest concern for welfare as a proper end of civil government, as it is of God's government of the universe, "where nothing is neglected, where every hair on our head is counted."[81] In civil society the poor must be furnished with a means of livelihood, agriculture must be developed and vocational training organized. Conscience, honor, duty, and interest unite in obliging the ruler to combat poverty in his realm, and it is his duty to aim at "making his subjects happy."[82] As a recent commentator observes, Leibniz' concern for welfare combined with his bureaucratic authoritarianism "anticipates a good deal of later German practice; some of Bismarck's domestic policies might not have been uncongenial to him";[83] nor, we might add, would those of post-1945 British governments (with the possible exception of Mrs. Thatcher's).

The God of Leibniz, as Gabaude has pointed out, seeks to maximize productivity by obtaining the greatest possible variety, wealth, and abundance in the universe at the lowest cost.[84] This theme has been developed at length by Jon Elster, who sees Leibniz' God as modeled upon the rational entrepreneur of an emerging capitalism, who aims at maximizing net good rather than gross good by a cost/benefit approach.[85] The Leibnizian conception of God is, in Elster's view, an anticipation rather than a reflection of a capitalist system which was only nascent in Germany at this time, and he admits that Leibniz' own activities in the explicitly economic field frequently assume a mercantilist view of things.[86]

[79] Clarke, in *Leibniz-Clarke Corr.* 14; Leibniz, *Phil. Schriften* 7, 354–55.

[80] Leibniz, ibid. 19; *Phil. Schriften* 7, 358.

[81] Leibniz, "Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice," *Phil. Papers* 570; *Mittheilungen* 61.

[82] Leibniz, *Theodicy* 165; *Phil. Schriften* 6, 145. See also "Moyens," in *Oeuvres de Leibniz* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1859–75) 4, 150–51, and Leibniz to Herzog Johann Friedrich (1678), in Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe* 1/2 (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1927) 83.

[83] Patrick Riley, Introduction to *The Political Writings* 25.

[84] J. M. Gabaude, "Théopolitisme leibnizien" 71.

[85] Jon Elster, *Leibniz et la formation de l'esprit capitaliste* (Paris: Aubier, 1975) 14 and 110.

[86] Ibid. 26 and 239.

Elster also makes it clear that Leibnizian conceptions have an importance for the history of economics and sociology which is "rétrospectif et hypothétique seulement," for they appear to have exercised no significant influence upon the actual developments of the disciplines.[87] Elster would seem therefore to give a centrality to economic analogies quite out of proportion to their significance in the writings of Leibniz. He nevertheless defends his "lecture économique" of Leibniz on the ground that the German philosopher himself suggested the analogy.[88] Yet the analogies drawn by Leibniz are normally political rather than economic, and theology is for him (in the words of Baruzi) "une sorte de jurisprudence spéciale."[89] It is the king or the prince rather than the capitalist entrepreneur who plays a role analogous to that of God and it is by no means clear that Leibniz thought of these monarchs as entrepreneurs. He certainly applied *mathematical* techniques (such as games theory) to theological and political problems,[90] but he rarely applied explicitly *economic* techniques to these problems. A political reading of Leibniz is therefore much more in line with his own conceptions than is the economic reading suggested by Elster.

The ideal of a federal or pluralist state[91] which Leibniz held and his concern for the unity of Christendom both stem from his belief in the importance of community. In an ideal state, families which have similar interests would make up clans, "these clans would make up guilds or castes out of which cities would arise; these would enter into provinces, and all countries finally would stand under the Church of God."[92] This federalism might be seen as relating to the Trinitarian conception of God as unity in community. In his early writings Leibniz insisted that the idea of God as self-reflecting spirit requires a Trinitarian formula analogous to the subject, object, and act of knowing. Later, however, he maintained that the Trinitarian doctrine can be known only by revelation.[93] He employed Augustinian concepts of the "persons" as "three relative realities in a single absolute substance."[94] Although it should be said that

[87] Ibid. 121.

[88] "La lecture économique, en effet, ne fait qu'expliciter et rassembler en réseau les analogies socio-économiques dont fourmille l'oeuvre de Leibniz" (ibid. 27). In fact, Elster does much more than this by imposing on Leibniz a conception of economics different from, and in some respects in conflict with, the (mercantilist) conception which he held.

[89] Baruzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre* 201.

[90] See, e.g., the discussion of the Polish question in Elster, *Leibniz* 145; cf. Leibniz to Burnett, *Phil. Schriften* 3, 190.

[91] On this notion see Nicholls, *The Pluralist State*, and Nicholls, "Gladstone, Newman and the Politics of Pluralism," in *Newman and Gladstone: Centennial Essays* (ed. J. Bastable; Dublin: Veritas, 1978) 27 ff.

[92] Leibniz, "On Natural Law," *Phil. Papers* 430.

[93] Grua, *Jurisprudence universelle* 252.

[94] "Trois Estres Relatifs dans une seule substance absolue" (Leibniz to Burnett [1696],

Leibniz did not, as far as I know, himself develop the analogy between the pluralist state and the Trinitarian God, it is clear from his general way of thinking that each conception was related to his notion of unity in community, as indeed was his passionate desire for the unity of the Church.

For Leibniz, then, as for many thinkers before and after him, there is a close analogy between divine and political authority, between God and the state. If it is the case that God is to the universe as the ideal ruler is to his realm, we may properly ask which side of the analogy is thought to be known and which side is being illuminated. At times Leibniz seems to say: You know how God rules the universe, this is how the monarch should govern his realm;[95] at other times: You should "envisage God as the sovereign monarch of the universe, whose government is the most perfect state that one can conceive."[96] In one of his works, *A System of Theology*, Leibniz maintains both positions in the space of two pages.[97] Undoubtedly he would say that each side of the analogy illuminates the other, as does St. Paul in his analogy of the relationship between man and woman in marriage to the relationship between Christ and the Church.[98] One interpreter sees his conception of God as "the idealist projection and justification of the king,"[99] while another suggests that his conception of the kingdom of God provides a model for the earthly kingdom.[100] When the former states that God is a projection of the king, it is certainly not the king as he actually is but as he ought to be. Leibniz' analogy serves (among other things) as a "mirror of princes" in the medieval sense. We may, then, ask why Leibniz put forward this particular conception of authority as ideal rather than any other. A partial explanation, which is implicit in what I have been saying throughout this article, is that this view of authority is one that would make possible the kind of Germany and the kind of Europe he wanted to see. Nevertheless,

---

Phil. Schriften 3, 175). Cf. J. Galot, who writes: "Communauté et personne sont posées ensemble; une personne n'existe que comme relation avec les autres personnes. Sa réalité est celle d'un être relationnel. Un 'moi' n'a de sens que dans son rapport avec d'autres 'moi'" (*La personne du Christ* [Gembloux: Duculot, 1969] 42).

[95] Leibniz, "Le portrait du prince" (1679), in *The Political Writings* 88; *Die Werke von Leibniz* 1/4, 465.

[96] Leibniz, "Méditation sur la notion commune de la justice," *Phil. Papers* 570; *Mittheilungen* 61.

[97] "Anyone who could understand the whole order of the Divine economy, would find therein a model of the most perfect form of commonwealth" (Leibniz, *A System of Theology* [London: Burns & Lambert, 1850] 2). "God ... is the beneficent Prince of all intellectual beings, and in some sense their legislator" (ibid. 4).

[98] Eph 5:23 ff.

[99] Gabaude, "Théopolitisme leibnizien" 69.

[100] Werner Schneiders, "Respublica optima: Zur metaphysischen und moralischen Fundierung der Politik bei Leibniz," *Studia Leibnitiana* 9 (1977) 23.

one of the reasons he wanted to see a federal Europe presided over by an enlightened despot was that it mirrored a traditional conception of God which he endorsed.

IV

I have suggested in the very general historical section (II above) that there is frequently a close connection between images or concepts of divine and civil authority. In a more detailed consideration of Leibniz that followed (section III) I have illustrated some of the subtle ways in which this connection works itself out in the thought of a major European writer. Elsewhere I hope to show that Leibniz is but one example of this tendency to conceive of God and the state fulfilling an analogical role in relation to their respective realms. In this article I have dwelt mainly on how this analogy has been developed by intellectuals, but it is also possible to trace the way it has been employed, more or less consciously, in such popular forms of communication as hymns, sermons, newspapers, and pamphlets. It is also interesting to note that analogical thinking on this pattern frequently has consequences which are strikingly different from, and sometimes opposed to, the conclusions of logical or univocal thinking. For example, some radical publicists of the seventeenth century, adopting the latter mode of thought, argued that if God is king of the world, then monarchs and magistrates are, like other men, mere subjects of the heavenly king and cannot legitimately make claims to divine right.

The relationship between concepts of God and the state on the one hand and the relationship between these concepts and the concrete historical situation in which they emerge as predominant on the other is complex. While it is clear that the political and religious institutions with which people live will strongly influence their political and religious experience respectively and that the form this experience takes will in turn affect in a significant way the principal concept they use about God and the state, it is also true that these concepts themselves affect developments at the institutional level. It should be noted that concepts of God influence the development not only of religious but also of political institutions (as illustrated by the way paternalistic concepts of God have reinforced the legitimacy of the welfare state), just as concepts of the state influence ecclesiastical as well as governmental developments (for example, the post-Reformation emphasis upon state sovereignty manifestly encouraged Erastian developments in Church polity). Furthermore there would appear to be mutual influence at the conceptual level, frequently conscious (as in the case of Leibniz and many of his contemporaries), though sometimes unwitting.

Two final remarks are appropriate. If the position I have been maintaining is true, it would be foolish of politicians and bureaucrats to ignore

the governing concepts of God which are entertained by the population of their state, for such concepts may be used as legitimations of, or as threats to, the institutions these men represent. Ecclesiastics would likewise be well advised to acknowledge the importance of concepts and images used of the state. Or, to put the point in a slightly different way, the conclusions of this article imply the possibility of a political critique of the images of divine authority and a theological critique of the state.

Secondly, I have in the course of this article been concerned with predominant or governing concepts. Minorities within both Church and state, holding different or opposed ideas, have always existed, and it is not the case that their dissent can be understood as a simple function of their social class. Also I have spoken of "influence" and "affect" rather than of "determine" and "cause" when discussing the relationship between concepts and institutions. Use of the latter terms by some sociologists of knowledge would have implications that render the question of the validity of these concepts irrelevant to ask and impossible to answer. An English writer has recently suggested that the theological Cinderella should seek a new dancing partner in the sociology of knowledge.[101] The dance, however, is not (as Professor Nineham assumes) a "lady's invitation"; theology must come to terms with the sociology of knowledge willy-nilly. Yet theology would be well advised to be on her guard against the suffocating embrace of this Prince Charming; otherwise at daybreak we may find ourselves confronted with an academic pumpkin!

[101] D. Nineham, *Explorations in Theology* (London: SCM, 1977) 134 ff.