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# Caroline, Leibniz, and Clarke

*D. Bertoloni Meli*

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The papers which passed between Leibniz and Clarke from 1715 to 1716 have long been considered classics in the history of science and philosophy, attracting a large number of scholarly works. Their exchanges, consisting of ten letters, five by Leibniz and five by Clarke, ended with Leibniz's death in November 1716.<sup>1</sup> The letters deal with issues such as God's role in the universe, the notion of miracles, the cause of gravity, and space and time. The difficulties in interpreting the texts induced most, if not all, editors to present Leibniz's and Clarke's papers together with other writings to provide a context for the dispute and to elucidate the most obscure passages. This tradition was inaugurated by Samuel Clarke himself, who included in his *editio princeps* a number of explanatory footnotes, an appendix with passages from Leibniz's printed works, and additional epistolary exchanges between himself and others on liberty and necessity, all with appropriate cross-references.<sup>2</sup> Later editors made a different selection of explanatory material, emphasizing different contexts and aspects of the dispute.

The context I have selected for this essay centers on Caroline of Ansbach, Princess of Wales, her life and contacts with Leibniz prior to her departure for London, and their correspondence before and during the dispute with Clarke.

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary versions of this paper were delivered at New Orleans, the Dibner Institute, Toronto University, Indiana University, and All Souls College, Oxford. I wish to thank Herbert Breger, Ann Carmichael, Moti Feingold, Marina Frasca Spada, Michael Friedman, Ken Howell, Andrew Janiak, Nick Jardine, Brandon Look, John Milbank, Margareth Schabas, John Yolton and all those who offered comments and criticisms, especially John Murdoch, who delivered the first version of this essay, which is dedicated to I. Bernard Cohen.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Clarke, *A collection of papers, which passed between the late learned Mr. Leibniz and Dr. Clarke in the years 1715 and 1716: relating to the principles of natural philosophy and religion: with an appendix to which are added, letters to Dr. Clarke concerning liberty and necessity, from a gentleman of the University of Cambridge, with the doctor's answers to them: also, remarks upon a book, entituled, A philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty by Samuel Clarke* (London, 1717). See, e. g., P. Desmaizeaux (ed.), *Recueil de diverses pieces, sur la philosophie, la religion naturelle, l'histoire, les mathematiques, &c.* (Amsterdam, 1740<sup>2</sup>). A useful list of editions is provided by V. Schüller, *Der Leibniz-Clarke Briefwechsel* (Berlin, 1991), 566-70.

Portions of this correspondence can be found in the editions by H.G. Alexander and André Robinet, but the letters on which I shall spend more time are curiously excluded. They can be found among Leibniz's political and state papers edited at the end of last century by Onno Klopp, and only in part in those edited by John M. Kemble, and in the recent German edition by Volmar Schüller.<sup>3</sup> The reader unaware of Caroline's life and intellectual horizon may well wonder why Leibniz and Clarke went on relentlessly, month after month, debating in letters addressed to her whether space is the *sensorium* of God, dissecting the notion of miracle, and arguing about God's role in the world. I hope to show that there are several reasons for paying attention to Caroline. The text which has become known as "Leibniz's first paper" was in fact an extract of a letter to Caroline, not intended for Clarke, belonging to an important exchange with the Princess of Wales. Caroline engaged in a dispute with Clarke, passed the extract of Leibniz's letter to him, and sent Clarke's reply to Leibniz together with a request for help. Thus Leibniz's "first paper" ought to be seen as part of his correspondence with Caroline. Later papers between Leibniz and Clarke went through Caroline.

The Princess of Wales was not just a convenient address for the correspondence; nor was she a spectator uninterested in such an intellectual confrontation. She was involved in the dispute by arguing with Clarke and even with Newton, exchanging opinions with Leibniz, and functioning as an arbiter and moderator. Her presence helped shape the style and contents of the letters, and characterizes the genre to which the correspondence belongs. This is a complex issue because of the composite nature of the exchanges: on the one hand we have Leibniz's letters to both Caroline and Clarke, on the other we have Caroline's and Clarke's letters to Leibniz, and Clarke's discussions with Caroline. Clearly the standard label "Leibniz-Clarke correspondence" does not capture all levels of the exchanges. Moreover, in order to appreciate Caroline's status in London it is worth recalling that the wife of George I, Sophie Dorothea, remained in Germany, secluded in the Castle of Ahlden.<sup>4</sup> Without a Queen, the Princess of Wales was the highest female royal. As an example of her influence, it was widely believed at the time that the election of William Wake as Archbishop of Canterbury in December 1715 was due to his close contacts with Caroline. At the time of the dispute Wake, who was a close friend of Clarke, neglected his pastoral duties as Bishop of Lincoln in order to be close to Caroline, with whom he held daily meetings. Thus Caroline was an intellectual woman with strong theological and philosophical interests. All those familiar with Leibniz will be aware of the cru-

<sup>3</sup> O. Klopp, *Die Werke von Leibniz. Erste Reihe* (11 vols.; Berlin, 1864-84); J.M. Kemble, *State papers and correspondence illustrative of the social and political state of Europe from the revolution to the accession of the house of Hanover* (London, 1857); Schüller, *Der Leibniz-Clarke Briefwechsel*.

<sup>4</sup> E. J. Aiton, *Leibniz. A Biography* (Bristol, 1985), 177-78.

cial importance of circumstances of composition in his works.<sup>5</sup> Here I wish to outline the circumstances in which the dispute originated and developed in relation to one of the most obvious issues, namely, Caroline's role.

My reading takes into account issues such as the intellectual horizon of patrons and gender in conjunction with other themes traditionally associated with Leibniz and Clarke. One of the appeals of this dispute lies in the wealth of issues it raises, and my approach does not preclude other interpretations. By focusing on Caroline, I do not pretend to provide the "proper context" or an exegesis of all the points raised in the ten letters exchanged between Leibniz and Clarke. Rather, I hope to provide some reflections for a more accurate characterization of the genre of the so-called "Leibniz-Clarke correspondence." This type of philosophico-theological exchange inspired by a female patron was not uncommon at the time. The important theological correspondence between Leibniz and the historiographer to Louis XIV and convert Huguenot Paul Pellisson, for example, was instigated by and conducted through Sophia, Duchess, later Electress, of Hanover, and involved several others, notably the influential Bishop of Meaux, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I hope to provide a tool for enriching the picture of the dispute in relation to a few specific themes, such as Newton's role as Clarke's advisor, Leibniz's reading of Locke's *Essay*, the implications of the Hanoverian succession, or the little studied role of William Wake between Clarke and Caroline.<sup>7</sup>

### Some Biographical Notes on Caroline

Caroline was born on 1 March 1683 as the daughter of the Margrave of Ansbach (a town South-West of Nuremberg) and Eleanora, daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Eisenach. Despite being born into such a privileged background, she had a very unhappy childhood. Her father died in 1686, when she was three years old, and she moved to Eisenach with her mother. In 1692 her mother married the Elector of Saxony, and they moved to Dresden. In 1694 the Elector died,

<sup>5</sup> See D. Bertoloni Meli, *Equivalence and Priority: Newton versus Leibniz* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> See Aiton, *Leibniz. A Biography*, 171.

<sup>7</sup> See Ernst Cassirer, "Newton and Leibniz," *Philosophical Review*, 52 (1943), 336-69; Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, 1957); Alexandre Koyré and I. Bernard Cohen, "The Case of the Missing *Tanquam*: Leibniz, Newton and Clarke," *Isis*, 52 (1961), 555-66; and "Newton and the Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence," *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences*, 15 (1962), 63-126; L. Stewart, "Samuel Clarke, Newtonianism, and the Factions of Post-Revolutionary England," *JHI*, 42 (1981), 53-72; Stephen Shapin, "Of Gods and Kings: Politics and the Leibniz-Clarke Dispute," *Isis*, 72 (1981), 187-215; also the exchange between J. E. McGuire, "Predicates of Pure Existence: Newton on God's Space and Time," and J. Carriero, "Newton on Space and Time: Comments on J. E. McGuire," in P. Bricker and R. I. G. Hughes (eds.), *Philosophical Perspectives on Newtonian Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 91-108 and 109-33.

as did her mother two years later, and Caroline returned to Ansbach. As a result of her dramatic family situation and frequent moves, Caroline's education must have been even less satisfactory than that normally provided to the female aristocracy. She lacked the systematic training usually provided by a single tutor, and her spelling was and remained very bad. Her correspondents often had to correct and transcribe her letters before being able to make sense of them.<sup>8</sup> Eventually Caroline moved to Berlin, under the protection of the Elector of Brandenburg and his wife Sophie-Charlotte. Caroline found a new home and, in Sophie-Charlotte, moral and intellectual guidance. It was at Berlin that Caroline met Leibniz, who was on excellent terms with the Queen.<sup>9</sup>

In 1703 the Emperor's son, Archduke Karl, indicated his intention of marrying Caroline, provided she converted to Catholicism. Although Berlin was a stronghold of Protestantism and Caroline herself a Lutheran, the prospect of such a high-profile match was warmly welcomed. Karl's uncle, the Elector Palatine, sent his confessor, the Jesuit Father Ferdinand Orban, to Berlin in order to arrange for Caroline's conversion. The procedure involved public disputes between Catholic and Lutheran theologians, followed by private interviews between Father Orban and Caroline, a pause for reflection, and eventually the conversion. Father Orban was not new to such procedures: He had a reputation for being very clever and effective at converting Lutherans. The intellectual confrontation between a Jesuit with systematic training in theology and twenty-one year-old Caroline seemed a foregone conclusion. Unfortunately, we know only few details of the attempted conversion. These details, however, are highly interesting. From a letter by Leibniz, who was allowed to attend their sessions, we know that Caroline and Father Orban debated for hours with the Bible open in front of them. Caroline went through a profound crisis. Contemporary reports confirm the long disputations in front of the Bible, followed by great uncertainties and crying. At the end, the Princess, who could not even spell elementary words, did not convert, thus renouncing to marry Archduke Karl, who later became Emperor Karl VI.<sup>10</sup>

Opinions on why Caroline did not convert vary. Her remarkable display of character, however, was welcomed both at Berlin and Hannover, and was presented as an outstanding case of commitment to Protestantism. Leibniz communicated to Caroline that Anton-Ulrich, Duke of Wolfenbüttel, wanted to make

<sup>8</sup> Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women and the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); G. Calvi (ed.), *Barocco al femminile* (Rome, 1992); Natalie Zemon Davis and A. Farge (eds.), *Storia delle donne in Occidente. Dal Rinascimento all'età moderna* (Rome, 1991). Caroline's spelling is reproduced by Kemble. For biographical information on Caroline see *DNB*.

<sup>9</sup> Aiton, *Leibniz. A Biography*, 232.

<sup>10</sup> Klopp, IX, 240, Leibniz to Anton Ulrich, 2 November 1706. Klopp, IX, 107-9; R.L. Arkell, "Des Hauses Oesterreich Werben um Caroline von Ansbach, spätere Gemahlin Georgs II.," *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, 15 (1938), 114-41.

her a heroine in one of his novels, and apparently he did so in *Octavia*. For the rest of her life Caroline reveled in this role of champion of the true Lutheran religion. On Christmas Eve 1714, upon Caroline's recent arrival in England as Princess of Wales, the Bishop of London John Robinson offered to satisfy any doubts or scruples she might have about religion. Caroline replied: "He is very impertinent to suppose that I, who refused to be Empress for the sake of the Protestant Religion, don't understand it fully." A few months later Caroline was the addressee of the letter, whose famous extract begins with the words: "Natural religion herself seems to decay in England very much," which is the opening of the dispute with Clarke. In her letter of 26 November 1715 accompanying Clarke's reply to Leibniz's first paper, Caroline evoked her debates with Father Orban. The exact meaning of her statement cannot be reconstructed because the relevant portion of Leibniz's letter is missing, but the words "You know that I am not at all a Jesuit" were a reminder of her loyalty and reliability.<sup>11</sup>

In 1705, soon after her failed conversion, Caroline had married Georg Ludwig, the Lutheran Electoral Prince of Hannover, thus becoming geographically and intellectually closer to Leibniz. In the same year the Queen of Prussia Sophie-Charlotte died, leaving Leibniz in despair for weeks. Progressively, Caroline almost replaced her as Leibniz's chief female intellectual companion and patron, especially after the death in June 1714 of another of his female patrons, Sophia, Electress of Hannover. Significantly, the *Essais de Théodicée*, the book based on the conversations between Leibniz and Queen Sophie-Charlotte, became one of Caroline's favorite texts. She read it frequently finding great comfort in it and often discussed it with Leibniz. Echoes of those conversations are frequent in their correspondence and in Leibniz's papers against Clarke.

In 1714, following the death of Queen Anne and the accession to the throne of George I, Caroline moved to London as Princess of Wales. Interesting glimpses of her life in London can be caught from the diary of Mary Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber to Caroline. In November 1714 Lady Cowper was asked to provide Bacon's works for her mistress. Later in the month Samuel Clarke visited Caroline and presented her with his books. Clarke was an influential theologian and propagandist of Newton's views. He had delivered the 1704 and 1705 Boyle lectures at Cambridge University and had translated Newton's *Opticks* into Latin. Queen Anne made him one of her Chaplains in Ordinary and Rector of St. James's, Westminster. Thus he was very close to the court and often preached before the Queen. Clarke's heterodox views on the Trinity soon became the subject of conversation and gossip in Caroline's circle. Notoriously, Clarke had gone through

<sup>11</sup> *Diary of Mary Countess Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess of Wales. 1714-1720* (London, 1864), 41; E. Mazingue, *Anton Ulrich Duc de Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1633-1714). Un Prince romancier au XVIIème siècle* (2 vols; Bern, 1976), I, 481-82; Klopp, XI, 52, Caroline to Leibniz, 26 November 1715.

a trial in 1712 for having published a treatise considered to be too close to Arianism, and though he was not censured, he had lost his office of chaplain.<sup>12</sup>

On 11 February 1716 Lady Cowper noted: "Sir Isaac Newton and Dr Samuel Clarke came this afternoon to explain Sir Isaac's System of Philosophy to the Princess." By then, of course, the dispute between Leibniz and Clarke was well under way, and Newton and his allies were aware that Caroline was Leibniz's closest and most powerful ally in England. Despite their fears they had little to worry from King George's accession to the throne, since Leibniz was out of favor with him. In such circumstances close contacts with Caroline proved invaluable. On a material level Leibniz relied on the Princess to have his salary paid. It is more interesting that he tried to be appointed court historian in London. Leibniz skillfully linked his request to his quarrel with Newton: Newton the Englishman had a court position at the mint, Leibniz argued, and now his own appointment as court historian would represent a wonderful occasion for honoring Hannover, Germany, and his own person.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Theologico-philosophical Debates on Gravity and the Eucharist

Leibniz's plans for self-promotion went hand in hand with a systematic attack on Newton and the attempt to discredit him in Caroline's eyes on philosophical and especially theological grounds. In an important letter of 10 May 1715 Leibniz launched a major attack on Newton based on the analogy between gravity and the eucharist, a perfect topic for gaining Caroline's approval. Leibniz claimed that Newton's philosophy was rather extraordinary because on the one hand Newton pretended that bodies attract each other at arbitrarily large distances and "that a grain of sand near us exerts an attractive force as far as the sun, without any medium or means." On the other hand Leibniz argued that the members of Newton's sect (*sectateurs*) denied that we can participate in the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist without any regard to distances and space. Thus they revealed themselves as enemies of the House of Hannover in claiming that the Lutheran doctrine of the eucharist is absurd. Leibniz suggested to Caroline that this was a good argument for embarrassing those *sectateurs*, concluding that as far as he was concerned, miracles were reserved for divine mysteries, not for explaining natural events.<sup>14</sup> The final remark anticipates the

<sup>12</sup> On Clarke see *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, *Dictionary of National Biography*, and L. Stewart, *The Rise of Public Science* (Cambridge, 1992), ch. 3; Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca, 1976), ch. 4; N. Sykes, *William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657-1737* (2 vols; Cambridge, 1957), II, 154-60; W. Coxe, *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (3 vols; London, 1798), I, 272-76, for Caroline's friendship with Clarke.

<sup>13</sup> *Diary of Mary Countess Cowper*, 13, 14, 17-18, 74. Klopp, XI, 37-38, 10 May 1715. Kemble, 528ff.

<sup>14</sup> Klopp, XI, 38-39; L. Verlet, *La Malle de Newton* (Paris, 1993), 341-46.

themes of the dispute with Clarke, especially the notion of miracle, God's role and intervention in the world, and generally a defence of religious orthodoxy. The attack on the Newtonians with regard to gravity and the eucharist, however, was not taken up later. Before speculating on the reasons for this, I wish to clarify the main lines of Leibniz's attack and identify the sources for such extraordinary claims.

The best explanation for Leibniz's views on gravity and the eucharist can be found in the *Théodicée*. The argument rests on the similarity between the notions of *immediate operation* and *presence*. *Immediate operation*, as opposed to *remote operation* or action at a distance, depends on the presence of a body; therefore Leibniz could claim that "the transition from immediate operation to presence is but slight, the one perhaps depending upon the other." Once this dependence was established, Leibniz could exploit the following paradox: the Newtonians pretend to portray as natural their theory of gravity, whereby a body acts at a distance without being present. The Lutheran doctrine of the eucharist, however, implying the real and substantial presence of the body of Christ, was portrayed by them as absurd and was even denied the status of a miracle. Views on the eucharist were related to the claim that after the resurrection the body of Christ is in heaven and sits to the right of his Father. Since a body can only be in one place at a time, any doctrine implying the real and substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist was seen by some as a logical contradiction and therefore as impossible.<sup>15</sup>

Newton owned a copy of Leibniz's *Théodicée*, now in the Trinity College Library, Cambridge, with dog-earrings showing which passages attracted his attention. One of them points exactly to the relevant words in paragraph 19 of the "Preliminary Dissertation" of the *Théodicée*. Moreover, in the General Scholium to the second edition of the *Principia Mathematica* (1713), Newton seems to reply to Leibniz's *Théodicée* with the words: "[Deus O]mnipraesens est non per *virtutem* solam, sed etiam per *substantiam*: nam virtus sine substantia subsistere non potest." At least from the time of composition of *De gravitatione et aequipondio fluidorum*, Newton entertained the notion that God was responsible for gravity through his spatial omnipresence. His striking statement that "virtue cannot subsist without substance," if applied to gravity, appears as a denial of action at a distance. In his third letter to Clarke, Leibniz touched on God's presence when he stated: "God is not present to things by situation but by essence; his presence is manifest by his immediate operation." Notice how careful Leibniz is to emphasize God's presence and immediate operation, though not by situation or in space but rather by essence or metaphysically. In his reply Clarke claimed that God is present essentially and substantially and added a

<sup>15</sup> G. W. Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée* (Amsterdam, 1710), tr. E. M. Huggard; *Theodicy* (LaSalle, Ill., 1951), Preliminary Dissertation, par. 19.



footnote referring to the passage from the General Scholium to the second edition of the *Principia Mathematica* quoted above.<sup>16</sup>

The issue of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist was controversial not only between Catholics and Protestants but also among the Protestants themselves. The followers of Zwingli, for example, reduced the participation of the body of Christ in the holy communion to a “mere figurative representation”: in the holy communion we receive nothing but bread and wine. By contrast the Lutherans, despite the presence of different shades of opinions in the Augsburg Confession and even in Luther’s own writings, defended the idea of a “concomitance” of the bread and wine on the one hand and the body and blood of Christ on the other, namely the idea that both substances are received at the same time. Often this position was referred to as “consubstantiation,” though Leibniz preferred the former denomination. The position of the Reformed, or Calvinists, is quite complex and controversial, but it may be characterized thus: although the body and blood of Christ are in heaven and in the eucharist the substance of bread and wine does not change, we do partake of the body and blood of Christ which are fed to us in a spiritual manner by the Holy Spirit. Leibniz claimed that, subject to certain conditions, Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines could be reconciled to a high degree. Lastly, the Catholic position is that the bread and wine in the eucharist are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ despite the fact that our senses fail to detect any transformation.<sup>17</sup>

John Locke’s synopsis on these matters in *A second vindication of the reasonableness of Christianity* provides a concise and useful account of the Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Zwinglian doctrines, respectively:<sup>18</sup>

And is not every sincere Christian indispensably obliged to endeavour to understand these words of our Saviour’s institution, “This is my body, and this is my blood?” And if, upon his serious endeavour to do it, he understands them in a literal sense, that Christ meant, that that was really his body and blood, and nothing else; must he not necessarily

<sup>16</sup> Newton’s copy of Leibniz’s *Théodicée* is in Trinity College Library, Cambridge, classmark NQ.8.82; I. Newton, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica. The third edition (1726) with variant readings*, ed. Alexandre Koyré and I. Bernard Cohen, with the assistance of A. Whitman (2 vols; Cambridge, 1972), II, 762.

<sup>17</sup> *Theodicy*, Preliminary Dissertation, par. 18; Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1986), 70-71 and 109; H. Grass, *Die Abendmahlslehre bei Luther und Calvin* (Gütersloh, 1954<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>18</sup> John Locke, *A second vindication of the reasonableness of Christianity*, in *The Works of John Locke* (10 vols.; London, 1823), VII, 390-91; Arthur W. Wainwright (ed.), *A paraphrase and notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians by John Locke* (2 vols; Oxford, 1987), I, 45-46, 215 and 439, claims that Locke believed the third version.

believe that the bread and wine, in the Lord's supper, is changed really into his body and blood, though he doth not know how? Or, if having his mind set otherwise, he understands the bread and wine to be really the body and blood of Christ, without ceasing to be the true bread and wine; or else, if he understands them, that the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed given and received, in the sacrament, in a spiritual manner; or, lastly, if he understands our Saviour to mean, by those words, the bread and wine to be only a representation of his body and blood;... is he not obliged in that sense to believe them to be true, and assent to them?

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Locke attacked explicitly any doctrine requiring the real and substantial presence of the body of Christ in the eucharist:<sup>19</sup>

The *Ideas* of one Body, and one Place, do so clearly agree; and the Mind has so evident a Perception of their Agreement, that we can never assent to a Proposition, that affirms the same Body to be in two distant Places at once, however it should pretend to the Authority of a divine *Revelation*.

With regard to the Lutheran doctrine, which is our main concern here, Leibniz claimed that theologians agree that

God may ordain not only that a body operate immediately on divers bodies remote from one another, but that it even exists in their neighbourhood and be received by them [as in the eucharist] in such a way that distances of place and dimensions of space are of no consequence. Although this effect transcends the forces of nature, they do not think it possible to show that it surpasses the power of the Author of nature.

Therefore, according to Lutheran theologians, the body and blood of Christ can miraculously act on those who receive the eucharist as if they were present. Likewise, action at a distance ascribed by Leibniz to Newton is not impossible, but it is miraculous. We are going to see presently why Leibniz can claim that place and space can be disregarded.<sup>20</sup>

This link between Lutheran theology and action at a distance is of considerable interest in grasping the connections between different areas of Leibniz's

<sup>19</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1979), 692.

<sup>20</sup> *Theodicy*, Preliminary Dissertation, par. 19.

system. Bertrand Russell's famous quip that Leibniz's rejection of action at a distance was due to "mere prejudice" appears unconvincing in this light.<sup>21</sup> Nor is the presence of theological preoccupations an exception in Leibniz's system. His doctrine of the eucharist requires a *real* and *substantial* presence of the body of Christ. Thus, the notion that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ was seen to require a careful exegesis of the biblical text in conjunction with an appropriate philosophical notion of substance. If substance, in a metaphysical sense, is endowed with extension, the differences among the main interpretations of the eucharist cannot be bridged. In Leibniz's system, unlike Newton's, substance is endowed with activity and passivity, not with extension, which appears only at the level of phenomena or physically. In the eucharist, however, the presence of the body and blood of Christ have to be interpreted not physically but "hyperphysically," to use Leibniz's own word, namely going beyond phenomenal appearances. Beginning very early in his career Leibniz tried to present such views, namely, the removal of the notion of extension and its unwanted corollaries from the metaphysical notion of substance, as a way to reconcile different doctrines of the eucharist, such as the Calvinist, the Lutheran, and initially also the Catholic.

Thus church reunion was linked to the problem of spatial extension via the doctrine of the eucharist and the notion of substance: these were central concerns to Leibniz throughout his life. From this perspective his system appears as a series of highly interconnected constraints requiring a far deeper analysis than the sketch I am able to provide here. According to Paul Schrecker, Leibniz's *Tentamen expositionis irenicae trium potissimarum inter Protestantas controversiarum*, composed in October 1698, contains the clearest and most concise exposition of Leibniz's irenic views. In that essay, published anonymously in 1709 in a posthumous work by the Lutheran theologian Philipp Jakob Spener, Leibniz outlined the connections between his views on substance and extension on the one hand, and Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines of the eucharist on the other.<sup>22</sup>

The *Théodicée* helps us to understand why Leibniz linked gravity and the eucharist in his letter to Caroline. The problem of identifying those followers of

<sup>21</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (London, 1937 [1900]), par. 47.

<sup>22</sup> P. Schrecker (ed.), *G. W. Leibniz. Lettres et Fragments Inédits sur les problèmes philosophiques, théologiques, politiques de la réconciliation des doctrines protestantes (1669-1704)* (Paris, 1934), 26-27, 41-34, 86-89, and 94-99. Leibniz's *Tentamen expositionis irenicae* appeared in Ph. J. Spener, *Consilia et judicia theologica latina* (Frankfurt a.M., 1709), 105-10, esp. 107-10; see C. Mercer and Robert C. Sleight, Jr., "Metaphysics: The Early Period to the *Discourse on Metaphysics*," in N. Jolley (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge, 1995), 67-123, esp. 68-69, and Daniel C. Fouke, "Metaphysics and the Eucharist in the Early Leibniz," *Studia Leibnitiana*, 24 (1992), 145-59; "Dynamics and Transubstantiation in Leibniz's *Systema Theologicum*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 32 (1994), 45-61. The issue figures in the correspondence with Bartholomaeus Des Bosses, in D. Rutherford, *Leibniz and the Rational Order of Nature* (Cambridge, 1995), 278-82.

Newton who attacked the Lutheran doctrine as absurd, however, is still open. There can be no doubt that John Locke was one of those Leibniz had in mind. In all English editions of the *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book IV, Locke claimed that the Catholic notion of transubstantiation was absurd. The passage reads:

Take an intelligent *Romanist*, that from the very first dawning of any Notions in his Understanding, hath had this Principle constantly inculcated, viz. That he must believe as the Church (*i.e.* those of his Communion) believes, or that the Pope is Infallible; and this he never so much as heard questioned, till at forty or fifty years old he met with one of other Principles; How is he prepared easily to swallow, not only against all Probability, but even the clear Evidence of his Senses, the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*?

In the 1700 French translation by the Huguenot refugee Pierre Coste, however, the relevant passage was transformed into an attack on the Lutheran doctrine commonly known as consubstantiation. Setting aside some minor changes, Coste altered “*Romanist*” into “*Lutherien*” at the beginning and “*Transubstantiation*” into “*Consubstantiation*” at the end, omitting the reference to the Pope’s infallibility in the middle. It is of considerable interest to Locke scholarship that in his “translation,” Coste often expunged or transformed those passages containing direct attacks on Catholic dogmas. Probably Coste and Locke had a French Catholic audience in mind for the translation of the *Essay*.<sup>23</sup>

In this paper, however, I am considering our variant from a Leibnizian perspective. We know that Leibniz relied heavily on Coste’s translation while composing his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, where the attack on the Lutheran doctrine is noticed and rebuked with an elaborate disquisition. Philaethe-Locke presents the following as an example of an absurd opinion. Interestingly, Leibniz’s version is based on Coste’s translation:<sup>24</sup>

Take a man who, though intelligent, is convinced of the maxim that one should believe what is believed in one’s communion, as it is taught at Wittenberg or in Sweden: will he not find it easy to accept the doctrine of consubstantiation and to believe that a single thing is at once flesh and bread?

<sup>23</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 91 (lines 12-18); 400 (lines 15-19); 692, (lines 3-7—deleted by Coste: this passage is quoted above in the text—10-11); 708-9 (lines 26-33 and 1-9); 713 (lines 6-7, 10, 14-16). See also N. Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke: A Study of the “New Essays on Human Understanding”* (Oxford, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> There are several references in Leibniz’s correspondence pointing to his reliance on Coste’s translation, e.g., Aiton, *Leibniz: A Biography*, 277; G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding* (Cambridge, 1981), tr. and ed. P. Remnant and J. Bennett, 513.

In Wittenberg and Sweden the dominant religion was a particularly orthodox form of Lutheranism, as opposed to a more conciliatory or “syncretic” one predominant in other centers. Theophile-Leibniz, like many Lutheran theologians, denied that the term “consubstantiation” represents accurately the Lutheran, or better the Evangelical, position, and claimed that the bread and body of Christ are miraculously received without the latter being spatially included in the former. Philalæthe-Locke’s reply is highly interesting:<sup>25</sup>

I apologize if I have followed the common view about these gentlemen. And I do now recall noticing that this *real participation* has been supported by some highly capable Anglican theologians.

Since Coste was living at Oates with Locke and his translation was approved by Locke, Leibniz ascribed the attack on Lutheranism to Locke himself. This identification fits very well indeed with the relevant passage in the *Théodicée*, where Isaac Newton and John Locke are classed together with regard to the issue of gravity. In 1715 Caroline was reading Locke and asked for Leibniz’s opinion on his philosophy, which is discussed both in the relevant letter of 10 May 1715 and in the opening paper of the dispute with Clarke. It is possible that, in addition to Locke, Leibniz had others in mind. In a letter to Thomas Burnet of 1712 he mentioned reports on some Anglicans attacking the Lutheran doctrine of the eucharist as no better than papist transubstantiation. Behind those attacks Leibniz suspected political machinations against the Hanoverian succession, in favor of the Catholic Pretender. Leibniz claimed he wished his *Théodicée* to be translated into English so that the Lutheran doctrine be properly explained and the threat to the Hanoverian succession removed. In his correspondence with Caroline, Leibniz insinuated that at Cambridge, whence Newton came, and Oxford, where he had allies, there was a party opposed to the Hanoverian succession.<sup>26</sup>

### The *grande affaire*

The previous sections provide a fresh perspective for reconsidering the dispute with Clarke in the context of Leibniz’s connections and correspondence with Caroline. The nature of their relationship, Caroline’s philosophico-theological inclinations, and her position at court were cleverly and carefully exploited by Leibniz in his attempt to undermine his rivals.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 513-15.

<sup>26</sup> Klopp, XI, 40, Leibniz informs Caroline of Locke’s approval of Coste’s translation of his work. E. Michaud, “Leibniz et l’Eucharestie,” *Revue Internationale de Théologie*, 10 (1902), 693-712; see C. I. Gerhardt (ed.), *Die philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz* (7 vols; Berlin, 1875-90), III, 323; Klopp, XI, 38, Leibniz to Caroline.

Leibniz's efforts to display the theological dangers of Newtonianism to Caroline were not merely intellectual, but extended to editorial and political undertakings adding a new dimension to the dispute. Once again, the parallel correspondence with Caroline is a useful tool for reconstructing his strategy. Three related issues deserve singling out.

Publication plans for the exchanges between Leibniz and Clarke were being drafted during the course of the dispute.<sup>27</sup> Thus the contenders were writing aware of an audience going beyond Caroline, including the general public and especially divines and philosophers. This aspect is of considerable interest in relation to the following points. Throughout the time of his dispute with Clarke, Leibniz was trying to have his *Théodicée* translated into English. Caroline informed him that the Bishop of Lincoln, William Wake, had indicated Clarke as the only one capable of accomplishing the task. Clarke was a close friend of Wake and visited him frequently at his house. Interestingly, Leibniz wished the translation to be dedicated to Caroline and to state explicitly that it had been carried out and published at her own request. He was trying to exploit Caroline's own admiration for his book in a public forum: his explicit and implicit references to the *Théodicée* in the dispute with Clarke were a private reminder to Caroline that his attack on Clarke relied on a text well known to her and which she had already approved of, and at the same time a public display of her support, once the *Théodicée* had appeared with her *imprimatur*. No wonder that Clarke refused to translate it, even at the cost of displeasing the Princess of Wales, and that Leibniz tried to find a different translator through Pierre Desmaizeaux.<sup>28</sup> Lastly, the Hanoverian succession and Caroline's high position at court put on the agenda an issue which had long been close to Leibniz's heart, namely the reunion of the churches. His original plans in the 1660s concerned Catholics and Protestants. This project, however, suffered serious setbacks around 1690 and was practically abandoned. From about 1700 Leibniz became one of the protagonists of the plans for the reunion of the Protestant Churches, namely, the Evangelicals or Lutherans, the Reformed or Calvinists, and the Anglicans. The years immediately preceding the Hanoverian succession saw the involvement of several theologians in such plans, notably Daniel Ernst Jablonski, first Chaplain to the King of Prussia at Berlin, Leibniz at Hannover, and John Sharp, Archbishop of York, John Robinson, Bishop of Bristol and later of London, and William Wake, Bishop of Lincoln, in England. Leibniz used the *Théodicée* as a

<sup>27</sup> Klopp, XI, 191, Caroline to Leibniz, 19 September 1716.

<sup>28</sup> Klopp, XI, 50, Caroline to Leibniz, 14 November 1715; see Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, 33 and 157-58. Newton visited Wake on two occasions, 8 and 13 November 1706. A general description of Wake's diary is in G. V. Bennett, "An unpublished diary of Archbishop William Wake," *Studies in Church History*, 3 (1966), 258-66; Klopp, XI, 132, Leibniz to Caroline, 18 August 1716, and 178-79, Leibniz to Desmaizeaux, 21 August 1716.

tool for his reunion plans. He sent a copy to Archbishop Sharp, who could read only the Latin summary at the end and who apparently liked it enormously. These attempts failed for a variety of reasons, including Sharp's death early in 1714.<sup>29</sup>

Leibniz's justly famous attack on the doctrines of absolute and uniform space and time at the beginning of his third letter to Clarke closely resembles the structure of one of the most delicate and important reasonings of the *Théodicée*, where Leibniz is at pains to explain that God created the best possible world and could not have created a better one. Leibniz admits that it is always possible to find a better creature or particular substance within the universe, but it cannot be said that God could have created a better universe for several reasons, a crucial one being that we would be violating the principle of sufficient reason. If God had not created the most perfect universe, what reason would he have had to choose any particular degree of lesser perfection? This is the crucial passage:<sup>30</sup>

It is therefore not a question of a creature, but of the universe; and the adversary will be obliged to maintain that one possible universe may be better than the other, to infinity; but there he would be mistaken, and it is that which he cannot prove. If this opinion were true, it would follow that God had not produced any universe at all: for he is incapable of acting without reason, and that would be even acting against reason. *It is as if one were to suppose that God had decreed to make a material sphere, with no reason to make it of any particular size.* This decree would be useless, it would carry with it that which would prevent its effect.

In this passage Leibniz reduces a reasoning *ad absurdum* by constructing a situation in which God has to make a choice lacking a sufficient reason. Since the example refers to the entire universe, which would consist in a sphere, it appears that God would lack a sufficient reason to choose any one particular radius. Leibniz seems to imply that the radius could be determined independently of the universe. However, one could have argued that all the infinitely many cases with spheres of different radii would be indistinguishable because no external or independent unit length could be established. Therefore, according to Leibniz, they would be identical. Although Leibniz's example is open to

<sup>29</sup> G. J. Jordan, *The Reunion of the Churches: A Study of G. W. Leibnitz and His Great Attempt* (London, 1927), ch. 7 on the reunion of the Protestant Churches; see A. T. Hart, *The Life and Times of John Sharp Archbishop of York* (London, 1949), 266 and 272-73, and T. Newcome, *The Life of John Sharpe, D.D. Lord Archbishop of York* (2 vols; London, 1825), II, 279-83.

<sup>30</sup> *Theodicy*, paragraphs 195 and 196, my emphasis. A dog-ear in his own copy of the *Théodicée* indicates that Newton paid attention to paragraph 195.

objections and is less elegant than those in the third letter to Clarke, it is easy here to discern the same line of reasoning which was later improved upon and applied against Newton. In his refutation of absolute space and time Leibniz would argue that if space and time were something absolutely real and uniform, God would lack a sufficient reason for arranging the bodies in one way rather than another, changing for example east into west, or for creating the universe at one particular instant rather than another, such as a year sooner. Here the orientation of the bodies and the time of creation serve a purpose analogous to the radius of the sphere in the example from the *Théodicée*. However, according to Leibniz's refined argument against Clarke, if one rejects absolute space and time, all the different cases would become indistinguishable and therefore they would be identical. Thus God would not have to make a choice lacking a sufficient reason.

As for the project of church reunion, the accession of George I to the throne raised a number of relevant issues. At the coronation ceremony, for example, the king took the communion *more anglicano*. Later he did not convert but rather, according to Leibniz, judged that the Anglican and Lutheran Churches did not differ in fundamental dogmas but only in minor points, such as the liturgy.<sup>31</sup>

Around January 1716, before writing his third paper to Clarke, Leibniz tried to reactivate the process of church reunion. This time the "organ chosen by Providence," to use his own words, was Caroline. In his long and important letter to the Princess of Wales, Leibniz outlined the history of previous attempts and provided practical advice on how to proceed. While composing the letter Leibniz thought that the Archbishop of Canterbury was still Thomas Tenison. Before sending the letter, however, he learnt that Tenison had died and that William Wake, Bishop of Lincoln, had been chosen as his successor. This was very exciting news indeed. The Bishop of Lincoln was an advocate of church reunion, very close to Caroline and, as she had often claimed, a great admirer of the *Théodicée*. Caroline was delighted at Wake's election, so delighted that it was believed, by Wake himself among the others, that his election was due to her influence with the king. The diary of William Wake shows that over long periods Wake visited Caroline daily and during the summer and autumn of 1715 even omitted his habitual stay in his Lincoln diocese in order to be close to the Princess. At the end of his January 1716 letter Leibniz added a postscript saying that he had just learned of the new Archbishop and urging Caroline to approach him on the issue of reunion. Leibniz was one of those who wrote a letter of congratulations to the new Archbishop.<sup>32</sup> Despite such good auspices, the plan did not

<sup>31</sup> Klopp, XI, 20 and 25. Sykes, *William Wake*, II, pp. 6 and 20.

<sup>32</sup> Sykes, *William Wake*, II, 3 and 106-7; Bennett, "Diary of Wake," 261-62. Wake's diary was unknown to Sykes. Newton and Clarke visited Caroline on 11 February 1716, just a few weeks after Wake's election.



develop in the way wished by Leibniz, but the issue was repeatedly raised in the correspondence with Caroline as the *grande affaire*.

Leibniz had been committed to church reunion for decades, and so any suggestion that he undertook this last project of his life as a ploy against the Newtonians must be rejected. Leibniz had excellent irenic credentials. At the same time, however, plans for church reunion invariably had a variety of implications. Thus it would be surprising if the project for the reunion of the Protestant Churches undertaken through Caroline in January 1716 had no links with the dispute with Clarke, especially because the very themes of the dispute would have been high on the agenda of the theologians drafting the fundamental points of doctrine of the new Panprotestant Church. Leibniz had considerable experience in this field because of his extensive exchanges with several theologians of different confessions over many decades, and he thought that his positions were fundamentally orthodox, whereas Clarke's and Newton's were not. Moreover, Leibniz's philosophy, notably his views on substance, gravity, space, and time, for example, evolved over several decades hand in hand with his theological concerns and were, unlike Newton's views, an eminently suitable ground for church reunion. An example from the Leibniz-Clarke dispute may serve to instantiate my claims. Notice especially Clarke's appeal to reason and Leibniz's appeal to the audience of divines:<sup>33</sup>

Clarke: *Natural* and *Supernatural* are nothing at all different with regard to *God*, but distinctions merely in *our* conceptions of things (II, 12).

Leibniz: *Divines* will not grant the Author's Position against me; *viz.*, that there is no difference, with respect to *God*, between *Natural* and *Supernatural*; and it will be still less approved by most *Philosophers* (III, 17).

Clarke: The question is not, *what* it is that *Divines* or *Philosophers* usually allow or not allow; but *what Reasons* men allege for their opinions (III, 17).

Leibniz: The Author seems to acknowledge here, that his notion of a Miracle is not the same with that which *Divines* and *Philosophers* usually have. It is therefore sufficient for my purpose, that my Adversaries are obliged to have recourse to what is *commonly called* a Miracle (IV, 42).

Clarke: This is appealing from *Reason* to *vulgar Opinion*; which *Philosophers* should not do, because it is not the *Rule of Truth* (IV, 42).

<sup>33</sup> Quotations from H. G. Alexander, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence* (Manchester, 1956).

Leibniz: The *common* opinion of *Divines* ought not to be looked upon merely as *vulgar Opinion* (V, 108).

Although the discussion on this topic involved deeper issues, this exchange captures a difference of intended audiences and perspectives between the two contenders. More generally, the selection of themes too appears interesting, with its emphasis on topics challenging Newton's views, while some of the most characteristic notions of Leibniz's mature philosophy, such as monads, are barely mentioned.

Within the framework of the quotations above, Leibniz argued that it would be miraculous for a body to move around a center without anything acting on it because the body would tend to escape along the tangent. Related arguments had been deployed in paragraph 19 of the Preliminary Dissertation of the *Théodicée* and in the 10 May 1715 letter to Caroline. Clarke replied that what we call "miracle" is merely unusual but that, since the motions referred to by Leibniz occur in the heavens and are usual, they are not miraculous.<sup>34</sup>

A notable issue lacking from the dispute is the doctrine of the eucharist. The absence of this topic would be less surprising had not Leibniz himself suggested it to Caroline in May 1715 as a way to embarrass the Newtonians. However, the doctrine of the eucharist, according to Leibniz, was the thorniest problem between the Lutherans and Calvinists. In the *Théodicée*, for example, Leibniz noticed: "The two Protestant parties are tolerably in agreement when it is a question to make war on the Socinians.... But the protestants themselves had dissensions on the matter of the Eucharistic Sacrament."<sup>35</sup> The contrasts were likely to be even greater with the Church of England, which on the whole held views difficult to reconcile with those of the two main Protestant Churches, and especially the Lutherans. Archbishop Wake, for example, defended a real and spiritual, not substantial, presence of the body of Christ: The substance received in the holy communion is nothing but bread and wine, in agreement with the Calvinist position which has been briefly outlined above. In *A Discourse of the Holy Eucharist, in the two great points of the Real Presence and the Adoration of the Host* (1687) William Wake stated: "We [Anglicans] do not dispute about Christ's *Real Presence*, which after a *Spiritual* and *Heavenly* manner, we acknowledge in this Holy Eucharist ... but only about this *Manner* of his *Presence*."<sup>36</sup> It is plausible that similar preoccupations were present in Leibniz's mind during his dispute with Clarke.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, 29 and 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Theodicy*, Preliminary Dissertation, par. 18; and see Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke*, ch. 2.

<sup>36</sup> William Wake (1657-1737) wrote several pieces on the Eucharist: *A Discourse of the Holy Eucharist, in the two great points of the Real Presence and the Adoration of the Host* (London, 1687), 10-11 (quotation from 10), and 14. Sykes, *William Wake*, I, 25-28, 34-36, and 351-54.

Leibniz's second letter to Clarke contained the accusation of Socinianism, that is, an area of consensus among the Protestants who, in his view, had succeeded in reducing that heresy to ruins. Socinianism was a doctrine rejecting the immortality of the soul, the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, and God's foreknowledge of future events. Leibniz's charge in his first letter that "Mr. Locke, and his followers, are uncertain at least, whether the soul be not material, and naturally perishable," together with his sustained charges that Newton's God lacked foreknowledge and had to intervene from time to time to repair his world, fit well with the accusation of Socinianism. Leibniz was fully aware of the controversy between Locke and Bishop Stillingfleet involving the doctrine of the Trinity, and in a letter of 1709, he went as far as to claim that Locke "inclined to the Socinians." In a letter of 13 September 1715 Caroline informed Leibniz that she had read and enjoyed the exchanges between Locke and Stillingfleet. Moreover, Leibniz was probably aware of Clarke's troubles with the doctrine of Trinity, thus that specific accusation was particularly significant and adroit. Therefore it appears that Leibniz was trying—not unreasonably, in the light of our present knowledge—to associate Locke, Newton, and Clarke in the charge of Socinianism, a serious accusation at the time, and one perfectly suited to win Caroline's support as well as to reduce one's adversary to the status of theological and intellectual pariah.<sup>37</sup>

In this investigation I have tried to show the importance of circumstances of composition in reading Leibniz and, more specifically, of his correspondence with Caroline alongside that with Clarke. I hope that this approach, bringing together a range of textual and contextual themes, will prove useful in recomposing the fragmented landscape of Leibniz's activities and the horizon of seventeenth-century intellectuals.

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<sup>37</sup> Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke*, 12-13; paragraph 19 of the Preliminary Discourse of the *Theodicy* mentions the Locke-Stillingfleet dispute; Klopp, XI, 47.

I would also like to express the wish that a new English edition of the papers exchanged between Leibniz and Clarke will include the correspondence with Caroline as an integral and important part of that exchange.