

**NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE
LEIBNIZ-ARNAULD CORRESPONDENCE:
Stephen Voss**

The present writer is preparing a new translation of the 1686-90 correspondence between Leibniz and Arnauld, to be sent to press by fall 1992. Its basis is the text as newly established by Reinhard Finster, with the help of other scholars. Work is supported by an NEH grant.

In February 1686 Leibniz sent Antoine Arnauld a summary of the *Discourse on Metaphysics* he'd just written. The correspondence flourished through October, 1687, thanks to Arnauld's incisive objections and Leibniz's agonizing reappraisals. Motivated theologically as well as philosophically, by questions about evil, the distribution of grace, and freedom both human and divine, it erects much of the scaffolding for Leibniz's distinctive conceptions of truth, necessary truth, corporeal substance, and causation. Since "the great Arnauld" extends the influence of Cartesian and Jansenist thought, and in the process that of Augustine, Pascal, and Malebranche, it is a primary text for the study of those currents of thought too. Leibniz saw this period as crucial for his maturation, and wanted the correspondence published. Thanks to Finster and his colleagues, the wish is finally being properly realized: his edition with facing German translation will be published by Felix Meiner Verlag early in 1992. As Leibniz told the landgrave who mediated the correspondence, "there are veins of gold in these sterile rocks."

It is the lack of a reliable French text that has stood in the way of a good scholarly English edition. Gerhardt and his scions omit about 20% of the text, and provide no reliable device for charting corrections, struck passages, and rewritten drafts. As Robert Sleigh demonstrates in *Leibniz and Arnauld: A Commentary on Their Correspondence* (Yale, 1990), much of the joy in studying these letters derives from the possibility of examining how Leibniz's mind shifts

even as he wrote a single letter. The idea is to make such joy possible to readers of English. In the style of this writer's earlier version of Descartes's *Les Passions de l'âme*, this translation aspires to maximal fidelity, so that a person without French will be brought as close as possible to the thought of the authors themselves -- the translator's analogue to chiseling away at "worlds apart."

The book will contain facing French text, with indications of insertions, struck passages, and the like. Sleigh will write an introduction, discussing what is to be learned from material that has not appeared in the earlier translations (by Montgomery and Mason). Sleigh and the present author will annotate the text, with the latter preparing the lexicon, bibliography, and so on.

The present writer invites those who know this text to correspond with him. He has the shoulders of Finster and Sleigh to stand on; he'd be glad for more. Please write to:

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