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Serving God in a Largely Theocratic Society: Rivalry and Cooperation between Church and King

by

Pierre Salmon*

Université de Bourgogne
Laboratoire d'Economie et de Gestion (UMR CNRS)
2 boulevard Gabriel, F-21000 Dijon
pierre.salmon@u-bourgogne.fr

Abstract

A “largely theocratic society” (LTS) is defined as one in which the main purpose of government is religious and some coercion is used to serve it. Such societies exist at least in the imagination and discourse of some people. The focus is on LTS in which the major religious roles are assigned -- partly on the basis of theological interpretations -- to priesthood, kingship and community. In the small model presented, the influence of these interpretations on actual outcomes and their appeal to the main actors depend also on the expected configuration of religiously relevant capabilities, assumed to vary in part exogenously and in a part as a consequence of the reactions of the community. The illustrations are mostly sought in the relationship between the papacy and the Christian monarchs.

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You *do things* with models, you don't just contemplate them or put them in correspondence with reality (Francesco Guala, 212).

I. Introduction

Theocracy may be understood in different ways. The meaning mostly used is government by priesthood but we may call that 'ecclesiocracy' or 'hierocracy'. Here, theocracy will designate government according to God's prescriptions and wishes – with the specification that the implementation or satisfaction of these prescriptions and wishes should be a public or political rather than a private affair and should involve some degree of coercion. The two meanings are different notably because, in the second, priests need not be the ones, or the only ones, who rule on God's behalf.

Under the interpretation adopted here, theocracy may be conceived as a continuous variable. Some regimes or countries are very theocratic; others are so only to a degree or in some respects. To give an example, good reasons to deem a particular Islamic society very or largely theocratic are when many of its legal rules are dependent on the *Sharia*, when all or almost all the people living on its territory are governed by the *Sharia*-inspired rules, and when coercion plays a significant role in their implementation. As the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia illustrate, a theocratic ecclesiocracy or hierocracy may turn out to be less theocratic than a theocratic monarchy.¹

In the medieval West, according to distinguished historians, a Christian perspective on all matters dominated the minds and actions of most and was imposed on all. A particularly arresting formulation of that claim can be found in Southern (1970, pp. 21-22): "Whether in the hands of pope, emperor, king, or community, the purpose of human government was to direct men into a single Christian path"; and "everyone thought that coercion should be used as long as it was likely to succeed, and that it should be used to promote the doctrine and discipline of orthodox Christianity."²

¹ If the logic is pursued further, this also suggests (*pace* Amin 1999) that a regime may be democratic, in the sense of assigning authority to the majority of voters, and nonetheless theocratic as understood here. This requires only that the majority imposes on the minority God's wishes and prescriptions as it interprets them. If combining theocracy and democracy is denied as a matter of principle, there are alternatives. For instance, Florence under Savonarola is called an 'experiment in theocratic republicanism' by Duffy (1997, p. 196).

² With some adaptation, these assertions seem to be transposable to other settings -- for instance, Geneva and Scotland at the time of Calvin and Knox (Benedict 2002, Mottu-Weber *et al.* 2006).

Southern identifies here the two main characteristics of what I will call a “largely theocratic society” (LTS): the main purpose of government is religious and some coercion is used to serve it.³ The fact that we do not look for the criterion of theocracy in the distribution of power does not imply that this distribution is unimportant. Indeed, this paper is centred on the question of the assignment of responsibilities for implementing God’s precepts, or more generally satisfying his wishes, albeit under the assumption that the setting is that of a LTS. Under that perspective, Southern’s citation is interesting for an additional reason. In the context of a society of the type I call a LTS, it stresses the possibility that the major religious role be played not, or not only, by the priesthood or its leadership but also by a monarch (to be generalised so as to include magistrates, etc.) and by the community (implicitly of the believers or the faithful). This paper is concerned with those among LTS in which powers, responsibilities and tasks are distributed among these three poles. For convenience, the poles will be referred to as ‘Church’, ‘King’ and ‘Community’ (by ‘Church’ I mean not the whole membership of the church but its leadership – popes, pontiffs, patriarchs, hierarchs, etc.).

In the case of Christianity, it was generally agreed that there are some divine indications about how the responsibilities or powers should be set. As a consequence, at least until the 13th century, controversies about the distribution of power were framed mainly in theological terms. It is as if God had set and then revealed a number of constitutional principles and the object of controversies was their interpretation. The main focus was on how exactly the separation of powers or responsibilities between priesthood and kingship, or Church and King, should be understood in the light of a separation of the secular and the divine, or the temporal and the spiritual, which could be ascribed, it seemed, to the New Testament itself.⁴

This paper is focussed on Christianity but without precluding a more general relevance of the central part of the analysis. Its approach is distinctive in four ways. First, because I assume the society to be a LTS, it seems consistent to suppose also that the temporal power of the kings is also oriented toward the common religious objective.⁵ We may invoke Southern’s authority to support that second assumption. Yet, two objections must be dealt with. At the time of the New Testament the Roman emperors were not yet Christian. Therefore, it is only after the full Christianization of the Roman Empire and perhaps also of the Barbarian

³ For convenience, I will use the term ‘religion’, or ‘religious’, even when it is an anachronism.

⁴ See in particular Luke (20:25) and Romans (13:1).

⁵ The fact that a society is a LTS is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for monarchs to play a religious role. They may have no role and even hardly exist in some forms of LTS (when these are theocratic ecclesiocracies and democracies in particular) whereas they may claim a major religious role in societies that are not LTS, as, arguably, did emperors Asoka, Constantine and Akbar (Sen 2000, Veyne 2007). Similarly, arguments such as those developed in the wake of the French Revolution by Joseph de Maistre (1819) in favour of papal ascendancy have little to do with the LTS logic.

kingdoms that it became possible to interpret the question of the division of responsibilities under a perspective such as the one identified by Southern – a perspective under which ‘secular’ and ‘temporal’ cannot logically have the sense we give these words today. The second objection concerns the realism of the features ascribed to the LTS. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which Southern’s assertion is factually true with regard to the period he studies. Many episodes that he himself describes might inspire a degree of scepticism. Fortunately, I do not need to engage in a discussion of that matter. For our purpose, a LTS may approximate reality sometimes and in some places but it may also correspond to a tendency, a perception, an ideology, an objective, a utopia. As such, it may be shared by, or concern, most or only few people -- at the limit the imagination of a single individual. An illustration of a LTS in our time is the type of society that some Islamists dream of implementing. Moreover, even if the LTS lacked counterparts on all layers of reality, including that of ideologies, objectives and dreams, it could still be worth exploring – this time as a theoretical blueprint, system or ideal type -- without one being prematurely distracted by more mundane and inevitable features of actual governance.

The doctrinal constructions, purportedly traceable to the scriptures, whose purpose was to specify the powers of the Church or the pope, on one side, and those of the emperor and other monarchs, on the other, certainly had some influence on how responsibilities were actually distributed. They are similar in this respect to the formal assignments of powers included in constitutions. A case in point is the assignment of powers among levels of government in federal states. The positive analysis of federalism and decentralisation that has emerged recently in economics and public finance shows that the structure specified in constitutions explains only in part the actual distribution of responsibilities. Under the perspective of competitive federalism or governance pioneered by Breton (1996), at least as important as formal powers and assignments of tasks, or apparently neat divisions of policy and regulatory domains, what determines the actual division of responsibilities is competition among centres of power or governments (a competition which allows some forms of coordination and even cooperation). Whether individual governments do well or badly in such competition largely depends on their relative capabilities and access to resources, and the way they can or cannot benefit from economies of scope and scale (Breton and Salmon, forthcoming). Our ambition in this paper, and this is its second distinctive feature, is to explore in a LTS setting the interaction between theological-constitutional assignments of powers to Church and King and an element borrowed from the competitive governance approach, namely evolving capabilities and resources.

The third distinctive feature of our approach concerns the way we treat the third pole suggested by Southern's citation above: the 'Community'. Its presence and influence are often overlooked or left largely implicit in the historical accounts of the relationship between Church and King.⁶ I will treat the community of the believers or the faithful as an uncountable or holistic entity (of the same kind as 'public opinion', the 'people' or the 'nation') embodied or represented over time by varying subsets of the population (e.g., Frankish warriors, Carolingian 'magnates', members of urban guilds, lower clergy, Southern's 'influential people').⁷ For Church and King to be able to contribute to the implementation of divine prescriptions or satisfaction of God's wishes, involvement of Community is important and perhaps even indispensable. I will assume that the more support Church and King receive from it, the more God-serving services they can produce.

The fourth and last distinctive characteristic of the approach adopted here is methodological. For the exploration of the questions adumbrated above, I present a little two-sector/three-factor model with the help of a few simple equations and a lot of geometry (too little of the first, too much of the second, most economists will feel).⁸ This model cannot handle all the main relationships. In particular, it has nothing to say on the question of the hierarchy between the pope and the emperor, a matter often described as a conflict between two attempted theocracies (Powell 1963, Tierney 1964, Pacaut 1989). Given the meaning of theocracy adopted here, this does not really matter. The only 'constitutional' provisions important for our purpose are those that purport to assign tasks or domains.

The division of the argument between Sections 2 and 3 reflects the distinction between production possibilities and the determination of a product-mix. Divine preferences have no bearing on the derivation of the set of possibilities. They intervene only when we turn to the said determination-- that is, in Section 3, which is devoted to the interaction between production possibilities and the interpretation of divine preferences. Concluding remarks are formulated in Section 4. The whole is highly tentative.

⁶ For the role of various pious lay constituencies see e.g. Southern (1970), Lynch (1992), Le Goff (2004). We aggregate all of them into our 'Community'.

⁷ This holistic assumption may be related to a holistic character given by humans to their relationship with God prior to Christianity and for a long time afterwards (Dumont 1982). Under that perspective, God's demands are addressed to the whole group (tribe, people, nation) as such, and depending on how they are satisfied, God may punish or reward the group in this world (a possibility compatible, in the Christian case, with the purely individual character of out-worldly judgement). From the believers' perspective, this justifies that non-believers be also involved. But we may also follow a purely individualistic line. The fact that divine prescriptions are in part about collective features of society generates a public good situation as seen by believers. The latter may thus refuse to let non-believers undermine the collective effort necessary to please God.

⁸ The model is inspired by the specific factors model of Jones (1971), its geometrical presentation by Caves and Jones (1985).

II. Production possibilities

The first part of the section is devoted to the presentation of the basic reasoning regarding possibilities. In the second part, I try to give some flesh to the variables and processes introduced in the first part and to address at least some of the queries that come to mind.

2.1. The derivation of the production possibility frontier

Let us assume that Church and King each produces a good or service which is God-serving and one or many goods and services that are secular. We are concerned exclusively with the production of the two God-serving services and call them Q_C when produced by Church and Q_K when produced by King. Community may have secular interests or engage in activities that serve God independently of both Church and King but, in the model, we disregard such interests and activities. We pay attention only to one kind of activity: the cooperation, contribution, support and/or consent (hereafter ‘support’) that Community gives to Church and King for the production of Q_C and Q_K . More precisely, we assume that, to produce Q_C , Church combines two kinds of inputs: a Church-specific capability X_C and the support S_C it receives from Community. Similarly, to produce Q_K , King associates a King-specific capability X_K and the support S_K he receives from Community. The two (well-behaved) production functions are:

$$(1) \quad Q_C = Q_C(X_C, S_C)$$

$$(2) \quad Q_K = Q_K(X_K, S_K)$$

We call S_T the aggregate support given by Community to Church and King and we assume that it is the sum of the support given to each:

$$(3) \quad S_T = S_C + S_K$$

[Figure 1 about here]

Assuming S_T to be fixed and S_C and S_K to be variable, this relation is represented by line AB in the lower left quadrant of Figure 1. Each point on that line reflects a different distribution between the Community’s support awarded to Church and Community’s support given to King, their sum being fixed.⁹ The specific capabilities may vary over time. At any point in

⁹ Some of these assumptions could be changed in a way amenable to geometrical interpretation. If it were assumed that Church and/or King produce some quantity of God-serving services without any support from Community, curves OF and/or OV would start at some distance from the origin along the OQ axes. More importantly, Community’s total support S_T could be assumed to be variable rather than fixed. This could be specified in different ways. The ‘supporting capacity’ of Community could remain fully employed but be

time, however, they are also fixed. Curve OF in the upper left quadrant represents relation (1) when X_C is a fixed input. Similarly curve OV in the lower right quadrant represents relation (2) when input X_K is fixed. When the total quantities of the three inputs are fixed, the quantities of God-serving services that can be produced by Church and by King are indicated in the upper right quadrant by the production possibility curve GH, whose algebraic expression is:

$$(4) \quad H(Q_C, Q_K) = 0$$

There is a one-to-one correspondence between points on AB and points on GH, for instance between point y on AB and point Y on GH.

Suppose that, for some reason, Church becomes more capable whereas King's capability remains the same.¹⁰ In other words, X_C increases whereas X_K remains constant. In Figure 1, curve OF moves up and becomes OF', whereas curve OV does not move. The new production possibility curve is G'H. In view of future discussion, it will prove convenient to assume that it is everywhere steeper than GH.¹¹

2.2. Discussion

The variables involved so far in the development of the model need some elaboration. I address first the question of the interpretation of the outputs (the 'God-serving services') produced by Church and King with the support of Community. I turn afterwards to various problems related to the inputs.

1) There are several reasons to remain imprecise with regard to the goods represented by Q_C and Q_K . One reason, related to the way our discussion is organised, affects only the present section. As is clear from the diagrams, the two outputs are different in the sense that their production taps combinations of resources and employs techniques that are different. The degree to which they are also different from the perspective of their use is a matter which we will be able to address only in the next section, after we have introduced preferences. A second reason is also evident. The relative importance of all possible God-serving outputs is dependent on circumstances. For some periods, we may remain at the level of generality of

allowed to vary. Then, line AB would shift but equilibrium would still have to be sought on it. Alternatively, one could assume the 'supporting capacity' to remain constant but not necessarily fully employed – that is, one could interpret it now as the upper limit of support. S_T would then design actual support and it could be represented by any point in triangle OAB, sides included.

¹⁰ Because of symmetry we could tell the same story inverting King and Church.

¹¹ This results from OF' being in turn everywhere steeper than OF. A sufficient but not necessary condition for that property is that the function (1) be homogeneous of degree one. In Figure 1, the way OF' is drawn precludes that this may be the case (with homogeneity, the slope of OF' would be the same as that of OF along any straight line passing through the origin).

Southern's phrase cited earlier and interpret the two outputs as means of "promoting the doctrine and discipline of orthodox Christianity". For other periods or for other purposes, we may want to be more specific and refer to the conversion of Arians and Barbarians, or to the crusades. Or we may want to stress material achievements such as the building of churches and monasteries. Some God-serving services are more or less permanent. Fighting heresy has certainly been one of them. But a divinely inspired regulation of human conduct may be even more universal.¹²

Less obvious but perhaps more important, a third reason is related to the competitive governance or federalism approach mentioned earlier. Under that perspective, strict divisions of tasks rarely prove fully sustainable. Centres of power or governments typically find ways to invade each other's policy domains, whatever the formal provisions enacted to prevent them to do so. There may be full de facto concurrency in the sense that the various governments or levels of government perform identical tasks and use for that purpose the same kind of means. More frequently, they may promote the same overall policy objectives with different means. One government or level uses regulations, whereas another uses financial inducements or persuasion, and so on. Returning to the example of the promotion of orthodoxy, the instrument used by Church, which is also its output in our model, may be mostly spiritual whereas King's instrument/output may be mostly coercive.¹³

2) *As it is constructed now, the model makes no room to direct relations between Community and God, bypassing Church and King.* An objection to this treatment which come to mind is the role ascribed to God in the implementation of his own precepts. Admittedly, it has been argued (Gauchet 1985) that, with Incarnation, Christianity introduced a more transcendental conception of God, making him more out-worldly, less prone to intervene in this world. But the effect was certainly not immediate in practice, reliance on providential protection in battles illustrating the continuing expectation of an intervention of the Christian God.¹⁴ And, even if, eventually, the perception of God as not involved in the affairs of this world became

¹² As noted by Gaudin (1995, p. 199), religions concentrate on *othopraxis* even more than they do on orthodoxy. Murdock (2004) devotes his chapter 4 to the strong concern of the reformed churches of the second half of the 16th century with 'moral discipline' (see also Benedict 2002).

¹³ I have made coercion a defining characteristic of a LTS. Although in reality many members of society may contribute to the implementation of God's precepts or satisfaction of God's wishes, these objectives should not be expected to be achievable by purely voluntary and continuous participation from all. Some people will have to be forced all the time and most people at least occasionally.

¹⁴ Divine protection was instrumental to the conversion, if not perhaps of emperor Constantine (see Veyne 2007), certainly of Clovis and many other 'Barbarian' kings (Brown 1996, Dumézil 2005). It was still welcomed, in the early 15th century, for the purpose of chasing the English out of France.

more widely shared, this was compensated in Christians' minds by an increased concern with the afterlife and out-worldly inducements.

In most religions, however, with the notable exception of some Protestant denominations and some versions of Islam, the relationship between God and believers is not direct but mediated by some priesthood and/or sacral kingship.¹⁵ This applies, in particular, to the role of God in the implementation of his prescriptions. The mediators are not simple believers. They are entitled to speak and act on the behalf of God. This often includes a privileged role in the interpretation of God's intentions and the power to distribute in God's name rewards and sanctions that have an out-worldly dimension. Our neglect of a direct relationship to God becomes less troublesome as a consequence. Moreover, as noted, we do not really assume the absence of the relationship, only that S_T is not affected by it.

3) *The importance of secular concerns* is obvious not only in the case of King but also with regard to Church. The existence of the Papal States gave the popes a temporal power which was generally regarded, at least until 1870, as "vitaly necessary to the proper functioning of the papacy as a spiritual authority" -- Pius IX using to "describe the Papal States as 'the robe of Jesus Christ'" (Vidler 1961, p. 146). One could see the defence and administration of these territories as instrumental to the religious objectives. In practice, the existence of the Papal States certainly distracted many popes from their religious functions (Duffy 1997).

In our LTS framework, a way to deal with secular concerns in general is to make them influence behaviour not as arguments in Church's or King's utility function but as constraints, opportunities and exogenous forces that affect the feasible set, that is here the possibilities of serving God. To illustrate, we may assume that the head of Church – the pope in the case of Western Christianity before the Reformation - treats his own greed or pride as a force that he cannot suppress completely for the purpose of pursuing the only objective ascribed to him, which is to serve God. The behaviour of the clergy and the lower tiers of royal administration are also to be treated as determinants of the feasible sets of Church and King respectively. Secular concerns tend to be detrimental to the pursuit of the religious objectives which characterise a LTS but, notably because of complementarities and economies of scope (a matter to which I shall return), they may occasionally be supportive of that pursuit. Variation in the success met in curbing these concerns, or occasionally exploiting them for religious purposes, is one source of variation in the capabilities X_C and X_K .

¹⁵ The historical importance of sacral kingship is documented by many authors (Fustel de Coulanges 1864, Bloch 1924, Kantorowicz 1957, Gauchet 1985, Oakley 2006, Kumar 2007).

4) *God-serving capabilities are related to resources that have the dimension of capital.* As such, they include not only various elements of tangible capital, but also immaterial assets like organisation, legal powers, customs, knowledge, integrity, reputation, etc. In the case of the medieval Church, more or less voluntary sources of increases in capabilities include the acquisition of territorial sovereignty, the expansion of land ownership, the entrenchment of tithes, the generalisation of the parish system, the development of literacy among the clergy, the enhanced consciousness of Christendom (notably that associated with the Crusades), new varieties of monasticism (Cluniac, Cistercian, Franciscan, Dominican, etc.), the building-up of an efficient central bureaucracy with hierarchical control and a capacity to adapt rules to local conditions, the edification of churches and cathedrals, the refinement of canon law and of the ecclesiastical judiciary system, theological advancement, liturgical improvements, the “birth” and institutionalisation of the purgatory (Le Goff 1981), the supply of indulgences, the strengthening of private confession requirements, the Inquisition. In the next period, the Counter-Reformation built up its success on new orders such as the Capuchins and the Jesuits, as well as on internal reorganisations, renewed discipline, changes in the liturgy, various inducements to piety, the development of charitable activities.

In the case of kings, conversions to Christianity -- as those of Constantine in the 4th century and of the Frankish king Clovis around 500 -- were of course decisive steps. They allowed the use for God-serving purposes of Kings’ previously held capacity to coerce. Kings’ use of force for religious purposes played a major role in the extension and unification (against “northern Barbarians” and Arianism in particular) of Christianity during its first thousand years (Brown 1996, Dumézil 2005), later in the Crusades, and later still in the religious conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries. Key intangible assets were the ‘healing power of the royal touch’, experimented by the Merovingian dynasty in the 6th century and officially established in England and France in the 11th century (Bloch 1924, Oakley 2006); sacral coronation, perhaps initiated in 672 to the benefit of the Visigoth king Wamba (Bloch 1924, p. 461) but particularly significant with the coronation of Charlemagne; anointment, introduced by Pope Stephen II to the benefit of the nascent Carolingian dynasty (Charlemagne, his father and brother were anointed together in 754, see Lynch 1992). This contributed to the tendency of kings to compare themselves to the kings of the Old Testament, David and Salomon in particular (Lynch 1992), and sometimes their kingdom to “a latter-day Israel” (Brown 1996, p. 139). Belief in the priestly and sacral dimensions of kingship decreased sharply in the 14th and 15th centuries (Southern 1970) but it recovered under the

doctrine of absolute monarchy which developed in the 16th and 17th centuries, to evaporate more or less totally afterwards (Oakley 2006).

As is often the case with capital goods, the variation in God-serving capabilities mentioned above was not always voluntary. The logic of the model implies that Church and King will invest in capabilities so as to make them as large as possible, but capabilities will also vary as an effect of forces which Church and King can hardly influence. A related remark is (as alluded to before) that capabilities for the pursuit of religious objectives can be related, through various complementarities and economies of scope, to capabilities dedicated principally to secular purposes or tasks. With Kings pursuing religious objectives, an exogenous increase in their ascendancy over aristocrats whose concerns are mainly secular increases Kings' God-serving capability. Similarly when Church is or becomes the main provider of education in general, complementarities or economies of scope between the religious and the secular dimensions of education may be such that the net effect is an increase in Church's God-serving capability – the net effect being possibly negative if involvement in education distracts Church too much from other God-serving pursuits.

5) The development of some capabilities may be detrimental to others. Indulgences provided Church with resources and enhanced its means to influence the behaviour of laymen, but it also led to some loss of moral or reputation capital. In the course of time, the second effect became dominant and towards the end of the Middle Ages indulgences had become a major liability. The remarkable progress achieved in canon law led to an increased influence and a more encompassing role of Church in many sectors of society. It was a crucial factor in the formation of the Western legal system. But the focus put by Church on legal, and to a lesser extent theological, matters became increasingly perceived as a distraction from its main religious mission and thus an erosion of a major element of its capital.¹⁶

There is, however, some consensus among historians on the fluctuations over time (and, to a lesser extent, variation in space) of Church's and King's overall religious capabilities. Church's religious capacity increased clearly in the second half of the 11th century and in the 12th century, only somewhat less clearly (because less uniformly) in the 13th century (Tierney 1964, Southern 1970, Lynch 1992). Arguably, it decreased in the 14th and 15th centuries and recovered in the 16th and especially 17th centuries. With regard to King's capacity, spatial differences should be taken into account together with fluctuations over time. For instance, in the 13th century, the capacity to act in the religious domain of the

¹⁶ An early warning was given in 1150 by St Bernard to Pope Eugenius III (Southern 1970 p. 111).

English and French kings was not challenged by the popes to the same degree as that of the German emperors. Because of spatial differences of that kind, one might want to apply our model to each kingdom separately, the Roman Catholic Church being an actor common to all. With the Reformation, the Church in turn became divided and the model should then be applied to each kingdom or principality with its own Church as well as its own King, or at even more disaggregated levels if need be.¹⁷ But this should not prevent some generalisation across kingdoms and religious denominations. For instance, in the wake of the Council of Trento, Church and King were affected by deep-seated trends common to all Europe, including the Protestant part of it (Chadwick 1964).

III. Divine preferences

Differences in the interpretation of divine preferences are discussed in a first subsection. We turn then to the interaction between production possibilities and interpretations of preferences, under various assumptions about the role of Church, King and Community.

3.1. *Interpretations of God's preferences*

What are divine preferences, in particular with regard to the division of tasks between Church and King? We may write the general form of God's preferences or utility function as:

$$(5) \quad U_G = U_G(Q_C, Q_K)$$

Then, we distinguish five historical interpretations of these preferences and make them correspond to different mathematical assumptions about the shape of the utility or preference function. Let us start with the interpretation of Islam in which no privileged role is given to the priesthood or to sovereigns.¹⁸ What counts for God is efficiency. God-serving services Q_C and Q_K are perfect substitutes from his viewpoint, even though their mode of production is different, and even though, as a rule, they are equally productive only at the margin. To reflect these assumptions, God's utility function may be represented by a family of indifference curves taking the form of straight lines (see the curves denoted U_{IS} in Figure 2).

In the case of Christianity, as noted, the separation of powers or functions between King and Church is a precept formulated in the New Testament. By itself this creates a difference between Q_C and Q_K which excludes perfect substitutability. Who produces a service becomes part of its characteristics. In addition, there are specific God-inspired precepts about what services King and Church may produce. For instance, as recalled by various Councils, priests

¹⁷ See Hervieu-Léger (2002) for an exploration of some of the problems raised by fragmentation.

¹⁸ In spite of the nostalgia expressed about the Caliphate, the interpretation seems at least close to the views of the young Islamists, described by Roy (2002), who interact mainly on the Web.

should not bear arms. Inasmuch as bearing arms may be necessary for serving God, this suggests assigning the responsibility of some services to King. Conversely, Church can reasonably find in the scriptures some ground to claim a privileged role in their interpretation. This again suggests a specific assignment, this time to the benefit of Church. These constraints are far from absolute and their relevance varies over time, over space, and across denominations (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, etc). At any point in time and for a given denomination, they contribute to making substitutability between Q_C and Q_K imperfect. This feature of the preferences is reflected in the assumption that -- with the exception of the particular Islamist interpretation just mentioned -- indifference curves are strictly convex.

The rivalry between Church and King has led to two extreme interpretations of divine preferences. One may be called ‘Gelasian’ by reference to a famous opposition between the spiritual and the temporal formulated at the end of the 5th century by Pope Gelasius I and used to promote papal ascendancy in the 11th and 12th centuries. There always was and still is considerable disagreement about what Gelasius exactly claimed (see Tierney 1964, pp. 10-15). But, in a LTS (in which Church and King pursue differently the same religious goal) the fact that Gelasius associates kingship with temporal or secular responsibilities and priesthood with spiritual – that is, religious -- ones, clearly gives priesthood a leading and kingship a secondary role *with regard to this (religious) goal*.

To find a completely opposite view we may turn to an enigmatic author of year 1100 circa referred to as the Anonymous of York or, perhaps preferably, the Norman Anonymous (see Kantorowicz 1957, pp. 42-61; Tierney 1964, pp. 74-78; Oakley 2006, pp. 101-110). According to him, the sacrament of coronation transfers Christ’s kingship and priesthood to kings, who become then the priests of their people, and as such can perform sacraments and forgive sins. Some room is left for bishops but hardly any for the papacy. Few defences of sacral kingship have been so extreme but “the belief in the supernatural authority of kings remained widespread throughout Europe for centuries after 1100” (Tierney 1964, p. 75). Later, some of the arguments offered in favour of the royal supremacy by the Tudor lawyers were quite similar to arguments used by the Norman Anonymous (Kantorowicz 1957, p. 46). Although this second stance is close to ‘Caesaropapism’, I prefer calling it the ‘Norman’ interpretation.

[Figure 2 about here]

Both interpretations may be given a mathematical expression in the form of quasi-linear preferences. In the ‘Gelasian’ case, the linearity will be in Q_C :

$$(6) \quad U_G = Q_C + V(Q_K)$$

The indifference curves corresponding to this function have the same slope when Q_K is held constant (see the curves denoted U_{GE} in Figure 2). The quasi-linearity here suggests a role for King which is both relatively stable and secondary, variations in Church’s production being the dynamic determinant of God’s satisfaction. It is the other way around under the ‘Norman’ interpretation. Then the quasi-linearity is in Q_K . The formulation is:

$$(7) \quad U_G = W(Q_C) + Q_K$$

The ‘Norman’ indifference curves (denoted U_{NO} in Figure 4) have the same slope when Q_C is kept constant.

A moderate view according to which priesthood and kingship must collaborate on a more or less equal footing to implement divine precepts may take two forms. One stresses complementarity. It is best reflected in a concrete episode, the Papal-Frankish alliance concluded in 751 between Pope Zacharias and the founder of the Carolingian dynasty, Pepin the Short, the father of Charlemagne (see Lynch 1992, pp. 63-64, and, for a dissenting view, Oakley 2006, pp. 95-96). Although the original symmetry gave way over time to an ascendancy of King, the idea underlying the original alliance may be referred to as the ‘Carolingian’ interpretation. Its mathematical counterpart is complementarity between Q_C and Q_K which can be represented by rectangular indifference curves (see curves U_{CA} in Figure 3).

The second form is driven by an ideal of intimate cooperation or harmony between Church and King, who should form a kind of team or diarchy. This ideal is generally referred to as ‘Symphonia’ (Oakley 2006, p. 80). It was advocated, but not implemented, by emperor Justinian. Later, it was formulated by Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, as follows: “As the constitution of the state consists, like man, of parts and members, the greatest and most necessary parts are the emperor and the patriarch. Wherefore the peace and felicity of subjects in body and soul depend upon the agreement and concord of the kingship and the priesthood in all things”. (Nicol 1988, p. 69).¹⁹ We may express the ‘Symphonia’ interpretation as a homothetic utility function. Indifference curves have the same slope when the ratio Q_C / Q_K is held constant (curves U_{SY} in Figure 4).

3.2. Effects of changing capabilities under different interpretations of divine preferences

¹⁹ See also Dagron (1996, especially pp. 232-242).

If we suppose that the interpretation of God's preferences is given and generally accepted, that Church, King and Community have the maximisation of God's utility as their sole objective, and that capabilities X_C and X_K are fixed, equilibrium may be derived from the maximisation of God's utility function under the production constraints represented by relation (4) and, underlying that, by relations (1), (2) and (3). Geometrically, the output equilibrium is at the tangency point between the production possibility curve and an indifference curve -- that is, at a point at which the marginal rates of substitution and transformation of the two goods are equal.²⁰ Geometrically also, the equilibrium value of the distribution of support by Community is derived from that point in the way illustrated by the broken lines in Figure 1.

[Figure 3 about here]

Suppose that, for some reason, Church becomes more capable whereas King's capability remains the same (X_C increases whereas X_K remains constant). In Figures 2, 3 and 4, the new production possibility curve is $G'H$. As assumed previously, for any value of Q_K $G'H$ is always steeper than GH . Whatever the interpretation of God's preferences, the equilibrium (tangency) point will always move upwards. In other words, increased Church's capability, King's capability remaining constant, has always the effect of increasing Church's output. The question is whether this is associated with a reduction or an increase in King's output and, related to that, whether the distribution of Community support shifts in favour of Church or of King. If the equilibrium (tangency) point moves to the left (in addition to moving upwards), there is a shift in the distribution of Community support in favour of Church and an absolute decrease in King's output. If that point moves to the right, this is the other way around.

Can we predict whether it will be the one or the other of these two possibilities? The five interpretations fall into three categories. The 'Islamist' and the 'Gelasian' interpretations are represented in Figure 2 in the form of sets of indifference curves U_{IS} and U_{GE} respectively. In both cases, the equilibrium point just mentioned moves to the left. By itself this increases further Church's output, and it reduces in absolute terms King's. Community support shifts in favour of Church. One may ascribe these results to something akin to a substitution effect. Under the 'Carolingian' interpretation, which is the object of Figure 3, the equilibrium point

²⁰ A tangency point may not exist and equilibrium may be found on one of the output axes. In that case, despite the fact that divine preferences favour a division of power, their maximisation entails a complete ecclesiocracy or a complete religious (sacral) monarchy.

is displaced to the right. The increase in Church's capabilities entails a shift in Community support unfavourable to Church and an increase in both King's output and King's share of Community support. The effects are exactly the opposite of those obtained in the 'Islamist' and 'Gelasian' cases. One reason is that under the complementarity assumed in the 'Carolingian' interpretation, the results are driven by the income effect alone.

[Figure 4 about here]

The 'Symphonia' and 'Norman' interpretations fall into a third category because in both cases the configuration of the indifference curves is such that one cannot say with certainty whether the equilibrium point moves to the left or to the right. The way the curves are drawn, the 'Norman' equilibrium point T in Figure 4 remains on the same vertical whereas the 'Symphonia' equilibrium point P moves to the right. But this could be otherwise. What one may say is only that movements to the right or to the left are relatively limited because they are the results of forces that have opposite effects along that dimension.

3.3. Preferences over interpretations of divine preferences

The effects of changes in capabilities under different interpretations of divine preferences are unlikely to be indifferent to Church and King (nor to Community, but I'll discuss that possibility in the next subsection). Having preferences or feelings about the effects of the interpretations is fully compatible with the LTS logic if this has no consequence on behaviour. Admittedly, the compatibility with the LTS logic becomes somewhat more problematic when Church or King does not only prefer some interpretation because of its effects but advocates that interpretation as a consequence. Advocacy in that case smacks of self-delusion or wishful thinking at best. Still, I will consider it as remaining broadly compatible with the LTS logic. Given some uncertainty about divine preferences it seems natural that even in a context in which serving God is the essential aim of society, both King and God will often attempt to make a case in favour of an interpretation of divine preferences whose effects suit them.

To be more precise, we may assume that Church and King are concerned with the level of their production of God-serving services Q_C and Q_K . Because the context is that of a LTS, it is natural for them to wish their own production of these services to be as large as possible. In addition both Church and King may be assumed to be concerned with the support they receive from Community, and this not only because the more support they receive the more

services they can produce but also because of some utility of support *per se*. Then Church's utility, instead of the function $U_C [U(G)]$ assumed so far, becomes

$$(8) \quad U_C [U(G), Q_C, S_C]$$

For the LTS logic to be respected, one might assume that Church persuades itself that (in our language) maximising the two functions would yield the same result with regard to $U(G)$, King reasoning in a similar way.

What interpretations are likely to be preferred by Church and King? The arguments, mainly theological, developed by Church and King (and the theologians who support them) in favour of their preferred interpretation cannot be explicitly dependent on the particular state of the production possibilities. They must be expressed in general terms and refer to stable divine preferences. In mathematical language, this means that they must refer to structural properties of God's utility function, represented here by sets of indifference curves.

If Church and King reason in terms of fixed capabilities, we may expect them to prefer the interpretation of divine preferences which leads to an equilibrium (tangency) point as close as possible to G and H respectively. Suppose that the two interpretations giving these results are the 'Gelasian' and the 'Norman' ones (a possibility, not a necessity). Then, under our liberal interpretation of the LTS logic, we may predict that Church and King will claim God's preferences to be 'Gelasian' and 'Norman' respectively, and try to make their position accepted by all, in particular Community.

These claims might not be wise on the part of Church and King if they take into account the likelihood of changes in capacities. As noted, under the 'Gelasian' interpretation of God's preferences, when Church's capability and output increase, the share of Church in Community support also increases. But when Church's capability and output decrease (in Figure 2, the variation is from OF' to OF and from $G'H$ to GH), support received from Community also decreases. In other words, the welfare of Church is positively and unambiguously associated with its own capability. Under the 'Carolingian' interpretation (Figure 3), Church's capability and output, on the one hand, and support from the Community, on the other, change in opposite directions. Even if a 'Carolingian' interpretation gives Church less Community support than does a 'Gelasian' one on average (which is possible but not necessary), Church may consider this to be compensated by the fact that it will gain rather than lose Community support in case of a decrease in its own capacity.

We must also compare the interpretations -- still from Church's perspective -- when there is no change in its own capability but a change in King's. Suppose an increase in the latter. Under the 'Carolingian' interpretation -- as Figure 3 shows when one permutes the two

axes -- there will be an increase in the two outputs and an increase in Community support to Church. A decrease in King's capability will entail, under the same interpretation, a decrease in the two outputs and a decrease in Community support to Church. Under the 'Carolingian' interpretation, the welfare of Church is positively and unambiguously associated with the capability of King. It is easy to see (using symmetry) that the welfare of Church is correlated negatively with the capability of King under a 'Norman interpretation', and weakly and ambiguously correlated with it under a 'Gelasian' interpretation. In most circumstances, under the 'Symphonia' interpretation changes in capabilities will have little effect on the distribution of Community support. This may make the 'Symphonia' interpretation attractive to Church and King if they are strongly risk averse.

Can we relate these considerations to the way Church and King behaved in fact? No detailed study of the positions expressed on both sides will be attempted. Two things seem in agreement with our model. First, concentration of the literature on the disputes between the papacy and the emperor and other sovereigns should not hide the fact that, in our language, interpretations lying somewhere between the 'Carolingian' and the 'Symphonia' ones dominated over long period of time. Then, Church and Kings did collaborate on most issues and that on a more or less equal footing. The doctrines expressed on both sides or by independent theologians largely agreed with that reality. Second, the strong 'Gelasian' interpretation defended by Church – especially by popes Gregory VII and Innocent III (Powell 1963, Tierney 1964, Pacaut 1989) - coincided with its growing capability and with a relatively weak capability of King. The model suggests that kings should have defended in that period not a 'Norman' but a 'Carolingian' interpretation. I think that there is some evidence that this was more or less the case, especially on the part of the kings of England and France. Church turned to something like the 'Carolingian' interpretation when its capability ceased to grow or started to decline.

Because of the diversity introduced by the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and the co-existence of different varieties of Protestantism (and, for that matter, of Catholicism), a similar profile can be observed only dimly in the case of the revival of the 'Norman' interpretation in the 16th and especially 17th centuries (Chadwick 1964, Oakley 2006). To account for the tumultuous events that succeeded one another in some countries, a different configuration is worth exploring.

3.4. *Recalcitrant believers*

I present the idea in the form of a scenario. On a given territory, King, Church and Community agree on the interpretation of God's preferences and have done so for some time,

so that the interpretation is well entrenched. For instance, the interpretation is ‘Gelasian’. The capability of Church is high, which is reflected in Figure 5 by the production possibility curve being G’H and equilibrium at D. Now, the capability of Church falls down. The new production possibility curve is GH. Then, Church and King agree on a new, this time ‘Carolingian’, interpretation of divine preferences, represented by the rectangular curves U_{CK} . The main instance of such change of interpretation is a shift in the 16th century toward an increase in the responsibilities assumed by King with the approval of Church (most denominations). Then, perhaps as a consequence of its alliance with King, Church recovers its capability and the production possibility curve is again G’H.

[Figure 5 about here]

Will Community change its views and also adopt the new interpretation? In the 16th and 17th centuries, believers sometimes followed the injunctions of Church and King and shifted as asked some of their support from Church to King, and sometimes did not and kept their loyalties as they were. To complicate matters, evidence about what people thought is often sketchy and interpreted in different ways by historians. Still, in the 16th and 17th centuries, England, Scotland, Sweden and Bearn in particular offer examples of alliances between the sovereign and a Church, -- the denomination of which could vary -- attempting to impose in religious matters the royal authority on a population of tradition-inclined believers who did not really accept it in depth (see the complicated stories in Chadwick 1964 and, perhaps more controversially, in Duffy 1992).²¹ And this happened despite the fact that, in the new setting, the Church (whatever the denomination) often increased its capabilities.

If Community could be persuaded to accept the ‘Carolingian’ interpretation, the new equilibrium would be at point T. Compared to point P, this would represent an increase in the outputs of both Church and King. The distribution of Community support would have shifted to point **t** on line AB. However, if Community cannot be forced to change its views and the distribution of its support cannot be separated from these views, the distribution of support is again at point **d** on line AB – that is, even more biased against King than it was before Church and King agreeing on a ‘Carolingian’ interpretation (it was at point **p** then). Production is again at point D on G’H, Church producing the bulk of God-serving services and King very little. We may assume that Church cannot renege on its conversion to the ‘Carolingian’

²¹ Other historical instances may be found at the end of the 18th century in the Italian possessions of the Hapsburg and, somewhat later, under and just after Napoleon (see Duffy 1997).

interpretation, for instance because the cooperation of King in a time of religious strife is absolutely indispensable. This means that Community imposes a suboptimal arrangement from the perspective of both Church and King. Both gauge the satisfaction of God's preferences at the level represented by the U_{CK} curve which passes through point D whereas God's preferences could have been in their view satisfied at the higher level represented by the U_{CK} curve passing through point T. From their perspective, the situation is even worse than it had become before the recovery of Church's capability (D is on a lower 'Carolingian' indifference curve than P).

If, more realistically perhaps, Community, without changing its interpretation of God's preferences, can be constrained to adjust its support to the distribution required by the new interpretation Church and King agreed on, support is at point t on line AB, to which corresponds point T on the new possibility frontier. Church and King consider the solution optimal from God's perspective but this view is not shared by Community, which does not consider curve U_{COM} passing through T as the highest reachable. We may expect Community to make its views heard as soon as it recovers the possibility of doing so if this happens relatively quickly. On the other hand, if the constraints on its behaviour are long-lasting, we may expect a progressive harmonisation between Community's interpretation of God's preferences and the distribution of its support to Church and King.

IV. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion is obviously exploratory. The questions mentioned have been studied in depth and in detail by historians, and to a lesser extent by sociologists and philosophers, especially in the context of Christianity. What can be added to all the accumulated knowledge? Largely theocratic societies are not things of the past only. They belong also to the world of ideas relevant currently and possibly in the future. It is important to understand how these societies may work under different circumstances. For that purpose some abstraction is required. Economics is a discipline specialised, so to say, in abstract mechanisms. The main ambition of the paper has been to use some approaches developed in economics to study the LTS logic in one of its aspects, namely the division of responsibilities between 'king' and 'church' – a division largely determined by the interaction between theological considerations and actual capabilities.

The results presented in the paper are definitely not very striking, whereas the model which inspires them may seem simplistic and distorting. However, as explained elsewhere

(Salmon 2007), I do not think that a model should be conceived as a simplified description or representation of reality, or even of a single aspect of it. Not to be confused with its mathematical characterisation, it is a non-linguistic construct, which cannot be true or false but becomes useful if something *in* it (a process, mechanism or relation) and something *in* reality can be claimed to be similar. In addition, as Guala (2005) notes in the citation put as an epigraph, models are to be manipulated, and also (I would add) to be explored. We may do that by varying the value of exogenous variables, by changing some assumptions about motivations or by combining these different kinds of change and imagining scenarios and stories (Morgan 2002).

In fact, even if its mathematical characterisation is sketchy and intuitive, the model itself, as an idealised or constructed world, equipped with some of the furniture of reality, seems to me relatively promising. I feel that much more can be done with it than I have been able to achieve so far. It suggests developing or pursuing various implications or extensions. I have indicated some variants in footnote 9 but they concern only the production possibilities and even then only what is compatible with the existing geometry. Other variants could be imagined implying greater analytical changes and regarding also this time theological interpretations and the way they are treated by the main actors. Much more of course should be done to relate ‘things’ in the model and ‘things’ in the real world -- not only the historical world but also the more currently relevant universe of politico-religious ideologies.

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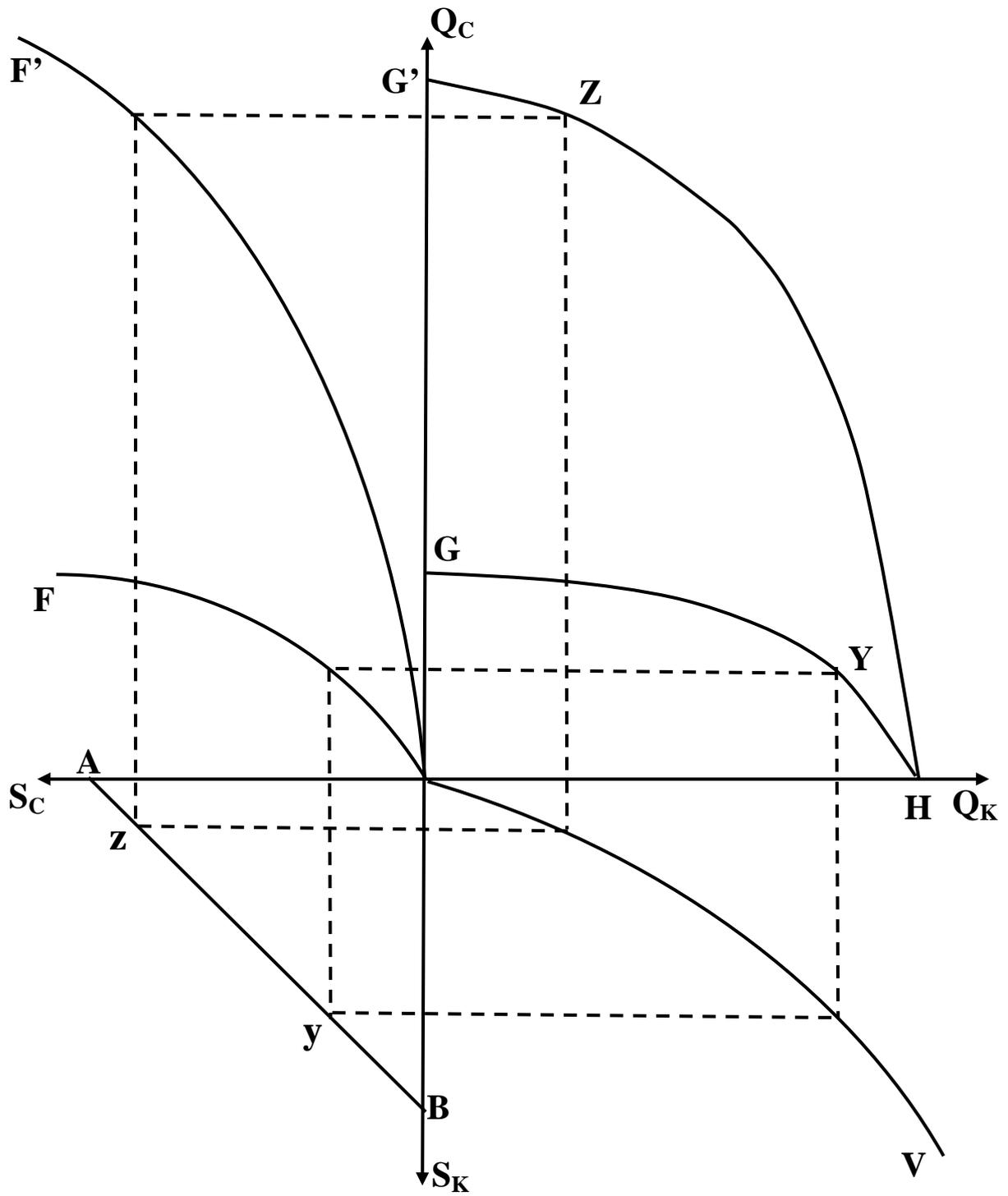


Figure 1. Production possibilities

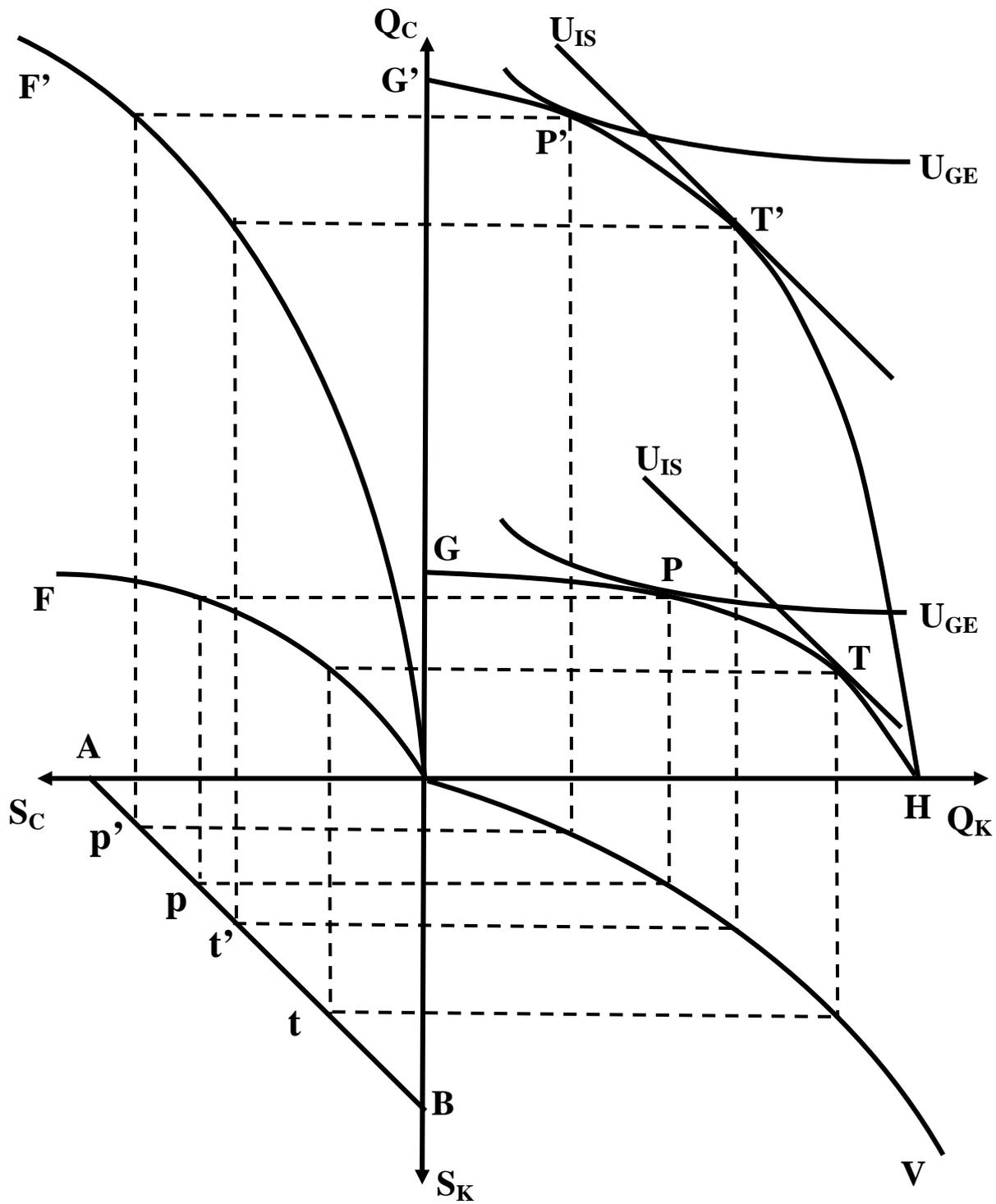


Figure 2. Effects of change in Church's capability under the 'Islamist' and 'Gelasian' interpretations

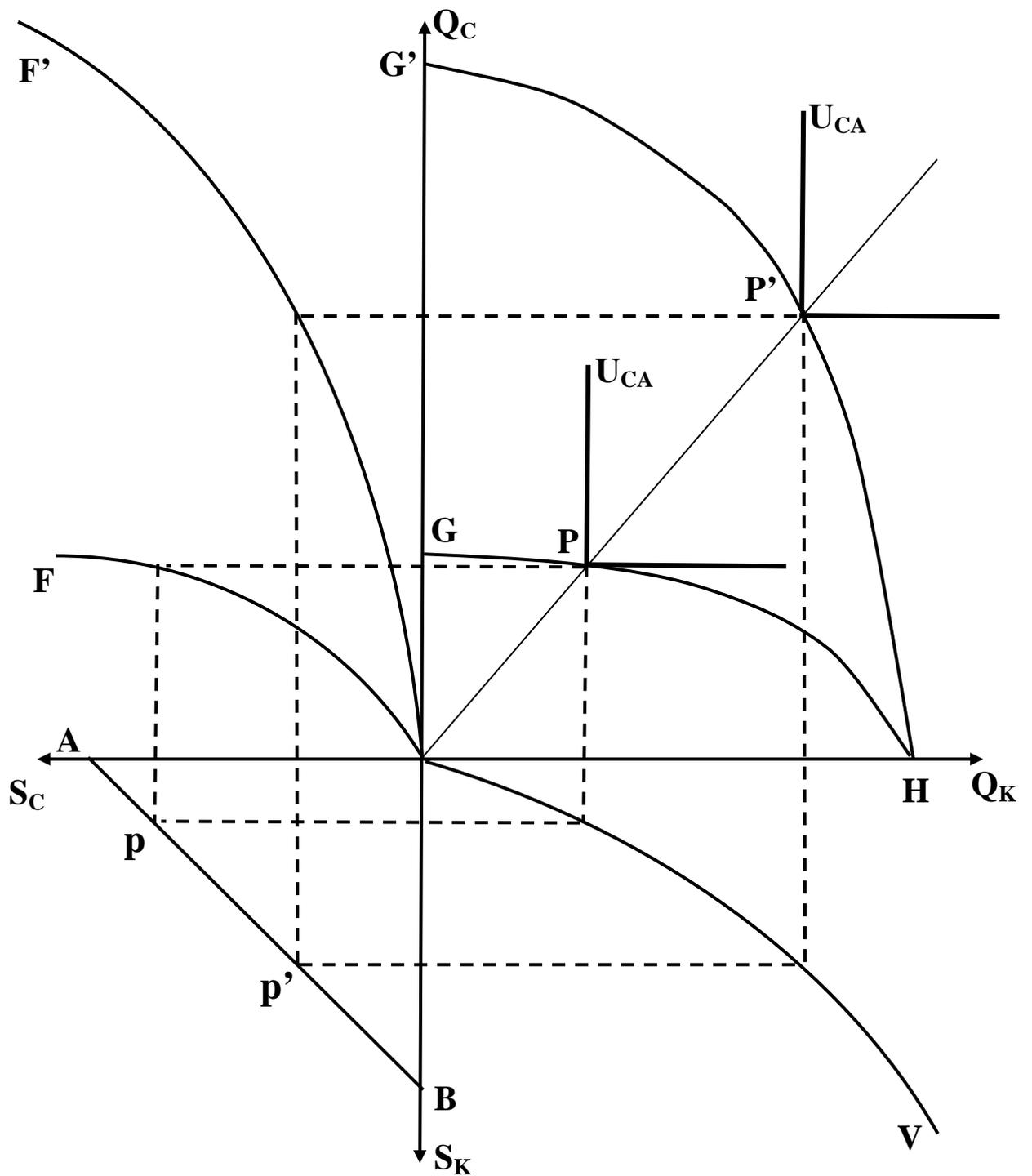


Figure 3: Effects of change in Church's capability under the 'Carolingian' interpretation

