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# 14 Hobbes on religion

## I. HOBBES AND THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Thomas Hobbes's religious doctrines set a puzzle for his commentators. Among those who have addressed these questions, in increasing numbers in recent years,[1] opinion differs widely on the sincerity and consistency of Hobbes's views. By his own admission, as his faithful biographer John Aubrey recounts, "he liked the religion of the church of England best of all other," a confession made in France on "his (as he thought) deathbed" to Dr. John Cosin (Aub. 1.353). But Aubrey reports another witness to the same occasion, Elizabeth, viscountess Purbec, who claimed that Hobbes dispatched the ministering divines, Catholic, Anglican, and Genevan, with the threat "Let me alone, or els I will detect all your cheates from Aaron to yourselves" (Aub. I.357–8). These apparently contradictory reports are symptomatic of the confusion that surrounds Hobbes's religious beliefs. He himself, in the epistle dedicatory to Charles II of 1662 that prefaces his *Seven Philosophical Problems*, called upon the testimony of Cosin, now Bishop of Durham, "when [Hobbes] was at the point of death at St. Germain's," to bear witness that he was no atheist (*EW*, VII.v). If this claim is true, and Cosin was alive to deny it, the accompanying claim that in *Leviathan* "there is nothing . . . against the episcopacy" (*EW*, VII.v) is certainly false if we consider the spirit rather than the letter of the text. Aubrey reports an additional piece of evidence, supplied by Anthony à Wood, that Hobbes "used to take the sacrament, and acknowledge a supreme being" (Aub, I.353, note 'd' on Wood, folio 47).

In fact, Hobbes's somewhat different purported responses to religion in the face of death may both be true. His religious views,

which he stated over and over in various places, show a remarkable consistency – which is not to say that they are coherent, as we shall see. Hobbes both professed official conformity to the doctrines of the Anglican Church and a vehement anticlericalism throughout his long life. While some details of his views were later modified, as commentators have noted of the religious chapters of *De Cive* and *Leviathan*,[2] the grand structure of his arguments was not subject to change. There were times when Hobbes suppressed his views, or others suppressed them for him. So the 2,242 line Latin poem *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in which Hobbes carefully records for posterity his history of religion, although reported by Aubrey to have existed in some 500 lines as early as 1659 and probably completed in 1666, was held back from publication and was even feared lost, appearing only in 1688.[3] Concerning suppression by others, Aubrey (I.360–1) relates a frustrating incident:

> Mr. Hobbes wrote a letter to . . . (a colonell, as I remember) concerning Dr. Scargill's recantation sermon, preached at Cambridge, about 1670, which he putt into Sir John Birkenhead's hands to be licensed, which he refused (to collogue and flatter the bishops), and would not returne it, nor give a copie. Mr Hobbes kept no copie, for which he was sorry. He told me he liked it well enough himselfe.

This was an incident over which Hobbes continued to fuss, making several attempts to retrieve his letter. Birkenhead was not the only contemporary who feared to be associated with Hobbes's religious views, and for good reason. Henry Hammond declared that *Leviathan* was "a farrago of all the maddest divinity that ever was read."[4] Hammond was close to the Falkland family, the scion of whom, Viscount Lucius Carey, was said by Aubrey to be Hobbes's "great friend and admirer" (Aub, I.365) and a principal member of the Tew Circle, with which Hobbes was associated between 1630 and 1640. As early as 1662, Roger Coke, in *A Survey of the Politicks of Mr. Thomas White, Mr. Thomas Hobbs and Mr. Hugo Grotius*, concluded of *De Cive:* "It is not worth the examining, what he would have under the title of *Religion*, for men say, the man is of none himself, and complains (they say) he cannot walk the streets, but the Boys point at him saying, There goes HOBBS the Atheist!"[5] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Hobbes was typically smeared as an atheist, a charge thrown at those suspected of heresy, misread by twentieth-century

commentators to mean denial of the existence of God. In October 1666, for the first time since the Reformation, a bill had been introduced into the Commons to make Christian heresy a crime. The committee considering the bill was specifically empowered to investigate the views of *Leviathan,* which had earlier been reported to a parliamentary committee as "a most poisonous piece of atheism."[6] Although it failed, similar bills were reintroduced in 1674, 1675, and 1680. And in 1683 at Oxford, *Leviathan* and *De Cive* were burned, a fate Hobbes, fearlessly outspoken in his views, feared for himself. Hobbes's reflections on heresy, which he set out in various places, may therefore be read as a form of self-defense, and so may his rather unusual views on excommunication.

Hobbes's doctrinal anticlericalism and his personal experiences at the hands of the clergy were mutually reinforcing, as Aubrey suggests. He records Hobbes's attempt to endow a foundation at Malmesbury, his birthplace, but Queen Katherine's priests halted it (Aub I.343). Aubrey further records the dean of Christ Church's censorship of Anthony à Wood's life of Hobbes in the *History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford,* Hobbes's response in 1674, and his complaints to the king (Aub I.343–5). The king, Charles II, who was at one time displeased with Hobbes because he failed to understand that *Leviathan* was written not for the support of Cromwell, but for Charles's return (Aub 1.335), later came to have a good opinion of him, characterizing him rather aptly as "*the beare*" and declaring "Here comes the beare to be bayted" (Aub 1.340).

Hobbes had good reason to fear the clerics, although he maintained professional relations with, and even affection, for a few.[7] Aubrey gives an account of Hobbes's removal to Paris in late 1640 in these terms: "he told me that Bishop Manwaring (of St David's) preached his [Hobbes'] doctrine; for which, among other things, he was sent prisoner to the Tower". Then Hobbes bethought himself, "tis time now for me to shift for my selfe, and so withdrew into France, and resided at Paris" (Aub I.334). Roger Maynwaring had been impeached in 1628 for his support of the Forced Loan of 1627, which Hobbes had helped to collect.[8] In this case it was the political views of the clerics Sibthorpe and Maynwaring that placed them under continuing threat, views on the royal prerogative with which Hobbes became associated.

It is difficult to believe that someone as outspokenly frank in his

unpopular religious views, and who took such care that his position be entirely understood, stating and restating his doctrines, could be convicted of insincerity. There are different reasons for this. In the first place, modern commentators almost exclusively focus on the major political works, *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, with some attention to *Behemoth* and Hobbes's response to Bishop Bramhall. An English paraphrase of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, published under the title *A True Ecclesiastical History From Moses to the time of Martin Luther*, appeared in 1722. But Hobbes's major statement of his central views on religious and ecclesiastical history has still not been properly translated and rarely appears in the indices of commentaries (see Springborg-Stäblein retranslation, forthcoming 1998). His *Historical Narrative Concerning Heresy and the Punishment Thereof*, probably written in 1668 but first published in 1680, is similarly neglected.

The analytical focus of *Leviathan* and the method by which it proceeds, that of proposition and demonstration, which Hobbes so much admired in Euclid, produce a universalist political theory and minimalist religious doctrine, purported to be true regardless of time and place, which belie the complexity of his thought. Commentators on Hobbes's religious doctrine have focused largely on the internal consistency of Hobbes's views in *Leviathan* and between *Leviathan* and *De Cive*, without consulting his more personal reflections. In this way Hobbes is rendered more congenial to the modern secular mind, but at considerable cost to the facts. Who would believe, for instance, that the Hobbes who so roundly dispatches demonology in all its forms in the fourth part of *Leviathan*, "Of the Kingdom of Darkness," in which he mocks at the kingdom of fairies and goblins conjured up by those who subscribed to "incorporeal substances," could still have reflected on the existence of witches? And yet a remark from *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, records Hobbes "admitt[ing] that 'though he could not rationally believe there were witches, yet he could not be fully satisfied to believe there were none, by reason that they would themselves confess it, if strictly examined.' "[9] Given Hobbes's propensity for deep irony, this remark may be on the order of the recantation of Daniel Scargill, his follower, who pointed out to his accusers the difficulty of believing the sincerity of one committed to professing whatever the state commanded of him. Scargill, as outspoken as his master, had problematized Hobbesian religious

beliefs for all time by pointing out they could never be found on the wrong side of the law, whatever their content might be, thus raising the specter of Hobbes and Hobbists as Nicodemists believing in systematic deception to avoid persecution on the grounds of freedom of belief, but not of speech.[10] The significance of witches in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought and the precise targets of Hobbes's attacks on demonology are not entirely transparent from the texts, therefore. Nor are they unrelated to the question of religion in general. We have a clue in Hobbes's remark in *Leviathan,* Chapter 2, that their trade "was nearer to a new religion than to a craft or science."[11]

There is a deep puzzle in Hobbes's religious doctrines, then, although it is not clear that there is any way to resolve it, given his commitment to publicly professing what the sovereign required of him. This puzzle chiefly concerns the doctrines' specific content in the face of his rationalist, materialist, Epicurean philosophical system. Hobbes claimed to profess the doctrines of the Church of England as adopted by Elizabeth's High Commission on religious doctrine, which subscribed to the decrees of the first four councils of the early church.[12] How do these elements sit together? How do they sit with, on the one hand, the explicit and systematic defense of the items of the Nicene Creed, which Hobbes sets out in his *Historical Narrative Concerning Heresy,* and, on the other, his highly critical account of the proceedings of the first four councils and indictment of Constantine for ever having admitted church doctors to an area of legitimate state power, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*?

Hobbes's lengthy deliberations in that work on the problem of one Divine substance and multiple persons of God, to which he provided different answers in the English and Latin *Leviathan*s, display a detailed knowledge of the reflections of the early church councils on the nature of the Trinity and the debate over the term *homoousion* (one substance).[13] They display, at the same time, a commitment to resolving a particular problem of religious doctrine that is rendered absurd in the context of his ontology and epistemology. The religious doctrines of the first four councils posed deep problems for Hobbes, whose metaphysics inclined him to materialism and Epicureanism, but whose religious commitments, however minimalist, committed him to the orthodox doctrines of the Church of England.

## II. HOBBES AND HERESY

The *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Hobbes's essay on heresy were written to absolve himself of the charge that his was a heresy to end all heresies. In *De Cive,* Chapter 15, Hobbes defines the principles of religious epistemology in "the three words of God": reason, science, and prophecy. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica,* he locates the origins of heresy in the departure of the early Christians from "the three words of God," seduced as they were by the philosophy of the Greeks. In *Leviathan* (1991 edn, ch. 42, 399) Hobbes's point is somewhat different: "*Haeresie is nothing else, but a private opinion, obstinately maintained, contrary to the opinion which the Publiique Person* (that is to say, the Representant of the Common-wealth) *hath commanded to bee taught.*" This no-nonsense view is targeted at the doctrine of the fourth Lateran Council, summarized by Pope Innocent III in *De Haereticis,* Chapter 3 (for which Hobbes refers us with a folio note to the collection of Decretals made by Pope Gregory IX), and which commands "*That if a King at the Pope's admonition, doe not purge his Kingdome of Haeresies, and being excommunicate for the same, doe not give satisfaction within a year, his Subjects are absolved of the bond of their obedience*" (*Lev.*, 420; Tuck, notes to 1991 ed, lvi, lviii). Hobbes both rejects the definition of heresy that the Roman Church adopts ("Where by Haeresies are understood all opinions which the Church of Rome hath forbidden to be maintained") and the claim that priests can excommunicate kings, which the church simultaneously stakes out. Priests cannot excommunicate at all, he says, but only the body of the church; and the body of the church is inoperative without its head. In effect then, the power to excommunicate (like the power to declare heresy) is arrogated to the sovereign (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 348–53). Hobbes thus more or less endorses the position of Thomas Erastus on excommunication, for which Erastus was appropriately excommunicated, a fate which Hobbes undoubtedly feared for himself.[14]

He begins "An Historical Narration Concerning Heresy and the Punishment Thereof" (*EW* IV, 387–408) by redefining heresy. Heresy is a Greek word meaning the taking of an opinion, and the chief opinionated philosophers were Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Zeno, and their disciples, "in love with great names, though by their impertinent discourse, sordid and rudiculous manners they

were generally dispised" (*EW* IV, 387). Hobbes's choice of an historical narrative that locates heresy squarely in the pagan era is a strategy to diffuse the contemporary debate and take the heat off himself. (It is the same strategy that he pursues in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, where his point was to show heresy to be an essentially historical problem and the creation of pagan philosophers.)

Hobbes followed the formula of the great theocracies in making behavior, and not belief, the test of fidelity. His follower Henry Stubbe correctly intuited that a religion of ritual was better suited to the state than a religion of belief, pondering whether Islam was not preferable; and Falkland declared himself "not only an anti-Trinitarian but a Turk, whensoever more reason appears to me for that, than for the contrary."[15] Christianity, and specifically the post-Reformation church, by making piety a test of the heart and catching the ear of the Christian by the voice within, created a dangerous innovation. It left the truth of ultimate things with the individual and the community of believers. The English Commonwealth, in endorsing such a view of the essential nature of the Anglican community, had vacated terrain essential to undivided sovereignty, which Hobbes strongly advised it to reoccupy. The strategy was to abandon emphasis on conscience, to withdraw from the individual the right to interpret Scriptures, to disempower priests, and to make conformity of morals and manners the test of Christian faith. As a corollary, Hobbes subscribed to a form of religious toleration that left citizens free in all but the most central beliefs of the state church. The "power of the Law," he says, "is the Rule of Actions onely" and should not be extended "to the very Thoughts and Consciences of men, by Examination, and *Inquisition* of what they Hold, notwithstanding the Conformity of their Speech and Actions" (*Lev.*, ch. 46, 471).

Free speech and the right to preach are a different matter, for they are the ground of public control. The Word is a weapon of such power that the sovereign relinquishes power over it at his peril; Hobbes, echoing Lucian, perhaps, in Chapter 5 of *De Cive* (*EW* II, 88) on Imperium, warns, "The tongue of man is a trumpet of warre, and sedition; and it is reported of *Pericles*, that he sometimes by his elegant speeches thundered and lightend, and confounded whole Greece t'selfe." In the same vein of grand classical allusion, this time drawn from Lucian's *Heracles*, Hobbes describes in *Leviathan*

the commonwealth's vulnerability to freedom of speech and how to deal with it.

> But as men, for the atteyning of peace, and conservation of themselves thereby, have made an Artificiall Man, which we call a Common-wealth; so also have they made Artificiall Chains, called *Civill Lawes*, which they themselves, by mutual covenants, have fastned at one end, to the lips of that Man, or Assembly, to whom they have given the Soveraigne Power; and at the other end to their own Ears. (*Lev.*, ch. 21, 147)

There is a sense in which Hobbes is an advocate of civic religion in the tradition of Machiavelli and Rousseau,[16] except that Hobbes's position is more complicated. In Chapter 6 of *Leviathan* (42) Hobbes defines religion: "*Feare* of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publiquely allowed, RELIGION; not allowed, SUPERSTITION. And when the power imagined, is truly such as we imagine, TRUE RELIGION." Willing to profess what is commanded of him because he defines religious belief as lying entirely within the realm of "faith," ambit of the sovereign as commander of the faithful, Hobbes nevertheless takes it upon himself to advise the sovereign what the content of these beliefs should be. He acknowledges an obligation to profess what is commanded, but a desire to believe what he thinks. He subscribes to the Epicurean view that scientific explanation will eventually replace the "Ignorance of naturall causes [which] disposeth a man to Credulity," well-spring of religion (*Lev.*, ch. 11, 74). While the Scriptures have divine approval, falling under the rubric of publicly allowable tales that are independently sanctioned, they do not represent the immediate word of God. Nor were they necessarily written by the authors to whom they are ascribed. His views, sophisticated in his day, on Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, which he denies, and the circumstances of the composition of the Septuagint – at the command of Ptolemy (*Lev.*, ch. 33, 261) – both affirm the independence of his belief and create the space for a sovereign interpreter.

In many respects Hobbes's doctrine of the union of civil and ecclesiastical power does not depart much from Marsilius's, or from Luther and Hooker's formulations of "the Godly Prince," more or less canonical on the post-Reformation role of the sovereign as God's deputy in the kingdom of this world. Hobbes differed from earlier advocates of "the reunion of the two heads of the eagle"[17] only in his

relentless desire for consistency and his capacity to apply philosophic subtlety to each problematic religious doctrine in turn, driven by a greater commitment to Roman publicist theories of state.[18] His play on human fear and timorousness as motives to peace and the godlike qualities of Leviathan, the great governor, thundering his commands to the faithful, and his depiction of the sovereign in the imperial language of the Roman emperor, Roman law, and Bodin's King of France all serve to emphasize the awesome nature of state power. What provoked outrage was his disposition to accommodate the demands of state power as a first principle, thus submitting to the very Leviathan that Job demanded by faith we resist.[19] Insult was added to injury when Hobbes claimed this principle to be deduced by reason and supported by Scripture as a *religious* precept. It did not matter then, if his readers even took the trouble to discover it, that the central doctrines Hobbes recommended them to believe hardly differed from such respected thinkers as Marsilius, Hooker, Grotius, and Pufendorf. Or that he arrived at these beliefs by a similar route.

## III. *LEVIATHAN* AND ECCLESIASTICAL POWER

Hobbes's doctrine of ecclesiastical power follows from one central assertion: that the church is not the Kingdom of God. "The greatest and main abuse of Scripture . . . is the wresting of it, to prove that Kingdome of God, mentioned so often in the Scripture, is the present church" (*Lev.*, Ch. 44, 419). The church constitutes the organizational structure of neither the natural nor the prophetic spheres of God's twofold Kingdom.[20] The prophetic sphere has been in suspension since the Jews rejected the rule of God and elected Saul, and it will not be resumed until the Second Coming of Christ as God's lieutenant. The church, if it has any claims as a continuous organization at all, has no claim to being a covenanted body, a peculiar and holy people in the way Jews were. The Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom, but the church is at best an aspect of a kingdom. The church's mission is persuasive and nongovernmental, a time of preaching called the regeneration by Christ himself, "which is not properly a Kingdome, and thereby a warrant to deny obedience to the Magistrates" (*Lev.*, ch. 41, 335). When the Christian Kingdom of God comes at the Resurrection, it will be superior

to the Old Testament Jewish kingdom, which Hobbes describes in *De Cive* (XVII.7), more explicitly than in *Leviathan*, as "a *priestly* kingdom, a government most free, in which [God's people] were to be subject to no human power" – in other words, priest-ridden, like all the ancient theocracies. At least the citizen of *Leviathan* avoids this, although suffering subjection to "a mortall God," Leviathan himself. God's kingdom-to-come will both improve on the Jewish kingdom, by dispensing with priests, and on Leviathan, by dispensing with kings, because, "at the Resurrection . . . they that have lived justly, and beleeved that he was the Christ, shall (though they died *Naturall* bodies) rise *Spiritual* bodies," without desire, without fear, without passion, or the capacity to resist his rule. Whatever difficulties this might pose for Hobbes's wholesale demolition of the credentials of spirits and spiritual bodies in Part 4 of *Leviathan*, he points out that Scripture does say that when "our Saviour" shall come to "judge the world, and conquer his Adversaries," He will "make a Spirituall Common-wealth," but that "In the mean time, seeing there are no men on earth, whose bodies are Spirituall; there can be no Spirituall Common-wealth amongst men that are yet in the flesh" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 399).[21]

If the church does not belong to the prophetic sphere of the Kingdom of God, it is not the agency of divine government in the natural sphere either. In the natural sphere government is not by positive divine command but by natural law, and the form of government depends on the reasonableness with which men set about to secure themselves. Right reason, Hobbes argues, requires the erection of a sovereign who should be given full scope of operation, and all subjects should be susceptible to his will. God rules by proxy through kings. What then is the role of the church in the natural kingdom? "The time between the Ascension, and the generall Resurrecton, is called not a Reigning, but a Regeneration" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 341–2). Regeneration "is compared by our Saviour, to Fishing, that is, to winning men to obedience, not by Coercion and Punishing, but by Perswasion" (ibid., 342). Preparation for Christ's resumption of his kingdom requires conversion to faith in Jesus Christ. It is a battle for hearts and minds that can be waged with the king or without him. Where Christianity is propagated despite the king, the converted must outwardly conform in manners and customs to the demands of royal allegiance or expect to be persecuted; because Christ's King-

dom can establish no power structures of its own in this interim period, it must be advanced under established power structures. If government produces the equilibrium that citizens need to live their private Christian lives, it is serving its purpose. If the king promotes Christianity, the service that he does the cause requires that religion serve his cause in return. The king requires a civic religion, but if he is Christian it must be "the one true doctrine." His security is ultimately dependent not on coercion but on consent. Consent is fickle unless sustained by a theory of moral obligation, which the church rather than the state is competent to provide. For this reason, Hobbes argues that teaching and governing are mutually dependent functions of the sovereign power. The sovereign cannot allow the constitutions of a supreme pastor over him because "that were to deprive himself of the Civill Power; which depending on the opinion that men have of their Duty to him, and the fear they have of punishment in another world, would depend also on the skill, and loyalty of Doctors, who are no lesse subject, not only to Ambition, but also to Ignorance" (ibid., 373). Hobbes does not neglect the opportunity to point out that fear, the lever of kings, is also the power base of bishops, who are eager to "sliely slip off the Collar of their Civill Subjection, contrary to the unity and defence of the Commonwealth" (ibid., 374).

Hobbes's theory of the role of the church in the natural kingdom follows from his theory of sovereignty, and this is appropriate or not depending on the truth of his assertion that the erection and defense of a sovereign power is required by the laws of nature. His view of church–state relations is in the Marsilian–Lutheran tradition, according to which political order is artificial, power belongs to the human order, and all institutions are of human origin. Far from being natural, political order was seen to be a precarious feat of human engineering, sustained by the strength of the sovereign power. The Christian body politic had two aspects, then, church and state, the church concerned with redemption and the state concerned with government. "The Church's value lies as an aspect of civil society," Marsilius had declared, echoing the famous formula of the fourth-century bishops Eusebius of Caesarea and Optatus of Milevis, who had maintained that "the state is not in the Church, but the Church is in the State."[22] According to Luther, the two aspects of the *Corpus Christianum* are complementary:

The social corpus of Christendom includes secular government as one of its component functions. This government is spiritual in status although it discharges a secular duty. It should operate freely and unhindered upon all the members of the Christian corpus.[23]

That is to say, clerics as well. Marsilius, Luther, and Hobbes agree that the state has a monopoly of government. According to Marsilius (*Defensor Pacis,* bk 2), the church is no more than "a multitude," a common denomination of a number of men; the common invoking the name of Christ is their signification and not the power of superiors vested with apostolic authority. This raises the whole question of the clergy–laity distinction. All three thinkers maintained that hierarchy had no intrinsic merit and that the distinction was to be justified on functional grounds only. To Marsilius, the function of the clergy was the exercise of the powers conferred by Christ to administer the sacraments. The principle of their selection was an extension of the political principle of the division of labor. The formal cause of the diversification and unity of the city is the asymmetry of aptitudes citizens display, but the efficient cause is the will of the prince who appoints each individual to his function. Correspondingly, the fitness of the priest is the formal cause of his being chosen for ordination, but designation by the prince is the efficient cause (Marsilius, *Defensor Pacis,* bk 2). According to Luther's more democratic theology, the sacerdotal powers conferred by Christ do not require a clerical elite to exercise them; the priesthood of the laity is based upon the equality of all believers: "We all have the same authority in regard to the word and sacraments, although no one has a right to administer them without the consent of the members of his church by the call of the majority."[24]

Hobbes maintains, with Marsilius, that the clergy have a function in the exercise of sacerdotal powers and that their selection depends on fitness confirmed by the prince, if the prince is Christian. And he maintains with Luther that previous to the conversion of kings, pastors were appointed by the majority of the congregation. Whereas Christ appointed the twelve apostles, their colleagues and successors, having been called by the Holy Spirit, were chosen and authorized by the assembly of Christians in each city. Of the ecclesiastical officers elected in this way, some were of magisterial and some of ministerial status. The magisterial, called variously bishops, pas-

tors, elders, or doctors, carry on Christ's commission to the apostles to teach, preach, baptize, forgive, and retain sins. And as an extension of this teaching power, they convened councils "to agree upon what Doctrine should be taught, both for Faith and Manners" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 362). These, the first four church councils, whose teachings were ratified by Elizabeth's ecclesiastical commission and to whose proceedings Hobbes devoted so much space in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, were binding only by the power of civil sovereigns. Otherwise the counsels they issued obliged just so far as "the Apostles and Elders of that Councell, were obliged even by their entrance into it, to teach the doctrine therein concluded and decreed to be taught, so far forth as no precedent Law, to which they were obliged to yeeld obedience, was to the contrary; but not that all other Christians should be obliged to observe what they taught" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, ibid., 362). If magisterial power (from *magister*, teacher, rather than magistrate) were restricted to the early church councils, unless the sovereign took it upon himself to preach, ministerial powers were confined to officers, known as deacons, chosen by the congregation to attend to its needs.

Hobbes's emphasis on teaching and governing as distinguishable functions would seem to perpetuate a distinction long recognized in medieval Catholic theory and Reformation practice between *potestas ordinis*, the spiritual powers of the clergy, and *potestas jurisdictionis*, the governmental powers to command and coerce. This separation of function, culled from Marsilius by Henry VIII's apologists, reserves governmental power to the king. Hobbes merely restated a familiar doctrine, then, when he maintained that ecclesiastical power was an attribute not of the church, but of the king. The problem was that Hobbes was not consistent, for he went on to claim for the sovereign sacerdotal powers that violated the very functional demarcation he was concerned to establish. The sovereign takes over the role of supreme pastor as both priest and governor. In his hands ecclesiastical authority is power absolute, and by virtue of his headship the organizational structure of the church is an extension of his sovereign domain. Hobbes's anticlericalism shows: the democratic election of pastors in the apostolic church was deemed to represent no more than the election of a functionary by the members of a secret society. But "when an assembly of Christians choose their Pastor in a Christian-Commonwealth, it is the

sovereign that electeth him" because it is done by his authority; "in the same manner, as when a Town choose their Maior, it is the act of him that hath the Soveraign Power" (ibid., 373).

Publicist theory, it seems, drives Hobbes into his peculiar definition of the church (*ecclesia*) in the New Testament era as a quasi-parliamentary institution convened in the person of the king. This is paradoxical given that he has consistently maintained the mission of the church to be nongovernmental. He marshals biblical support for his contention, however, choosing this definition from a number of alternatives offered in the Scriptures: The Church, "(when not taken for a house), signifieth the same that *Ecclesia* signified in the Grecian Commonwealths, that is to say, a Congregation or an Assembly of Citizens, called forth, to hear the magistrate speak unto them" (*Lev.*, ch. 39, 320). Covering classical publicist practice and neo-publicist – and specifically Marsilian – theory, this definition makes the powers of the church proportionate to those of the convening authority. As convened by the apostles and their successors, the teaching church could morally oblige those who recognized its claims. As a lawful congregation constituted by the appropriate political authority, the church can act as a corporation: "And in this last sense only it is that the *Church* can be taken for one Person; that is to say, that it can be said to have power to will, to pronounce, to command, to be obeyed, to make laws" (ibid., 321).

The reemployment by Hobbes of the concept *persona* to produce this notion of an ecclesiastical legislative body, the king–in-church, parallel with the secular king-in-parliament, provides the institution through which the sovereign may exercise his power to make the Scriptures law. The effectiveness of spiritual directives does not depend on their being made law, however. Can the national church, narrowly defined as a legislative institution, be successor to the nongovernmental apostolic church? The synod of the teaching church, which for Hobbes metonymizes the church as a whole, was, it is true, even in the time of the apostles, a rule-making body. Is the Christian commonwealth, besides being a rule-making body, still a church? Since Henry VIII, the teaching church as a legislative assembly, presided over by the king, had been king-in-parliament in another capacity. Presuming this to be Hobbes's model, the business, and not the membership of the sovereign legislative assembly, marked the distinction between church and state. If Hobbes's con-

cept of the apostolic church as an assembly of the citizens for the election of officers and the definition of doctrines, was Presbyterian, this concept of the High Church governed by parliament verged on Erastian.[25]

## IV. ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

The chief problems for Hobbes's theory arise in integrating a royal church into the scheme of prophetic history of three worlds – past, present, and to come; of two spheres – natural and prophetic, two literal kingdoms – of the Jews and of Christ yet to come, and the three-phase representation of God in the Trinity. The question at issue is whether the national churches as successors to the apostolic church do, in their multiplicity, constitute the third person of the Trinity. In the Holy Spirit "we have the person of God born now the third time," Hobbes says.

> For as Moses, and the High Priests, were Gods Representative in the Old Testament; and our Saviour himselfe, as man, during his abode on earth: So the Holy Ghost, that is to say, the Apostles and their successors, in the Office of Preaching and Teaching, that had received the Holy Spirit, have Represented him ever since. (*Lev.*, Ch. 42, 339)

Hobbes's eccentric doctrine of the Trinity is a further employment of the *persona* fiction. More than that, it is an ingenious solution to the problematic concept *homoousion*, that "God has no parts" (*EW* IV, 302, 392, 398), on which he dwelt at length in the "Answer to Bishop Bramhall," in the "Narration Concerning Heresy," and in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (lines 670–80), as the central concept around which the doctrinal disputes of the early church councils turned. "Constantine took notice of it for a hard word," Hobbes pointed out (*EW* IV, 392), but it was necessary to cull the Arians from the Catholics. The Nicene Creed put the attributes of God "*metonymically*" as in Scripture, but seventeen or eighteen of the bishops present at the council, including Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, "refused to subscribe until the doctrine of *homoousion* should be better explained," the problem being, as Hobbes darkly notes, that they now had a canon by which to establish heresy (ibid., 397–8). In saying that "God who has been Represented (that is, Personated) thrice, may properly enough be said to be three persons" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 339),

Hobbes is able to retain the central doctrine of the Nicene Creed, that the persons of God are consubstantial, "though neither the word *Person*, nor *Trinity* be ascribed to him in the Bible" (ibid.). In fact, Hobbes declares, it is precisely to the fact that the Greeks lacked a word for *persona* that post-Nicene heresies about the nature of Christ and the Holy Ghost are due (*EW* IV, 400). But Hobbes's doctrine of the Trinity is by no means orthodox either, for he takes the *persons* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost to mean that God is personated by three orders of representatives: Moses and the high priests belong to the first order, Christ defines and is the only member of the second order, and the Apostles and their successors constitute the third.

That God is thereby said to be three persons is true only in Hobbes's peculiar sense of person, as one "*whose words and actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man*" (*Lev.*, ch. 16, 111). The principle of accumulation of "personalities" was contained in the original definition of a person. Men own their natural personalities, but may assume the artificial personalities of those they act for. It is a small step from this to the assertion that God may own more than one natural personality, and that each of these may in some way be assumed by a number of people acting for him. In the behavioral sense, personality is recognized by function; ordinarily, to know a person is to know the individual whose actions constitute a natural personality – in this way Christ the second person of the God-head was known. But it is also possible to know a person by his works, even if as an individual he is not accessible, and in this way the Holy Spirit "which is the Deity itself" – like the Father – is known to men by his operations. His presence "is not to be understood for *Infusion* of the substance of God," but is to be inferred from the "accumulation of his gifts, such as . . . the gifts of sanctity of life, of tongues, and the like" (*Lev.*, ch. 34, 279). But how the Nicene doctrine of the consubstantiality of the persons of God could be retained on this understanding of "persons" is difficult to see, and Hobbes later retracted the opinion in the appendix to the Latin *Leviathan* (ch. 3, *OL* III, 563) because John Cosin, "now Bishop of Durham," told him "it was not applicable enough to the doctrine of the Trinity" (Hobbes, "Answer to Bishop Bramhall's *Catching of the Leviathan*," *EW* IV, 317).[26]

Hobbes's Trinitarian problems are not so easily resolved, then.

According to his doctrine, ministers of the national churches could be said to share in the third representation of God as successor to the apostles. But this is not the argument he makes, instead turning arbitrarily to the office of Moses for his model: "whosoever in a Christian Commonwealth holdeth the place of Moses, is the sole messenger of God and interpreter of his Commandements" (*Lev.*, ch. 40, 327). He attempts, paradoxically, to secure the king's ecclesiastical supremacy as God's lieutenant, after Moses and Christ, when he has already established that the peculiar kingdom of God is in suspension. Christian kings are clearly not lieutenants in the sense in which Moses and Christ were as the mouthpiece of God. For kings have no personal pact with God, nor do they have the power to personate him; they are divinely sanctioned only to the extent that they are required by the laws of natural reason. Hobbes bases his case for the analogy on two peripheral arguments. The first is that God's lieutenants in the kingdom of the Jews, although partners to a Divine covenant, derived their civil authority from a social covenant; the second is that moral directives under the Divine covenant were legally binding only when promulgated as positive law on the strength of the sovereign's secular authority (*Lev.*, ch. 40).

Hobbes is well within exegetical tradition in taking as an archetype the relations between church and state as outlined by Scripture. But to turn to the Old Testament rather than the New was inappropriate in view of his scheme of prophetic history. He had no wish to argue literally that Christian kings as supreme pastors succeed Moses and his line as representatives of God the Father. And by arguing analogically he prejudiced the case for kings as successors to the apostles through the powers of the Holy Spirit, which consistency required him to establish. This, it seems, is a symptom of the fundamental incoherence of Hobbes's doctrine of religious authority. To be consistent he had to accommodate kings to that order of representatives constituted by the apostles and their successors, who after Moses and the high priests and Christ "have Represented him ever since" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 339). In fact, Hobbes takes care not to argue the ecclesiastical authority of the king with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity at all, confining himself to a defense in natural law and an analogical argument from the position of Solomon in the peculiar Kingdom of God. Christian kings, like pagan, have the right of ecclesiastical supremacy necessary to peace and the perpetuation of the

national interest, which faith in Christ cannot deprive them of: "and therefore Christian Kings are still the Supreme Pastors of their people and have power to ordain what Pastors they please, to teach the Church" (ibid., 372). Like Solomon, Christian kings have "not only the right of ecclesiastical government but also of exercising ecclesiastical functions" (ibid., 377). The ritual imposition of hands that signified the transfer of apostolic power is not required to authorize the sovereign; his sacerdotal powers are founded in natural law:

> every Soveraign, before Christianity, had the power of Teaching and Ordaining Teachers; and therefore Christianity gave them no new Right, but only directed them in the way of teaching Truth and consequently they needed no Imposition of Hands (besides that which is done in Baptism) to authorise them to exercise any part of the Pastoral Function, as namely, to Baptise and Consecrate. (ibid.)

Does this constitute a breach in the derivation of ecclesiastical power? It would seem that it does. At the opening of Chapter 42, the transmission of ecclesiastical power in the apostolic church entails some notion of apostolic succession, signified by the imposition of hands; and the doctrine of the Trinity accounted for this theologically. In the course of the chapter, Hobbes establishes that this ecclesiastical power is not power properly speaking, modifying away the imposition of hands as a power-conferring rite, denaturalizing the apostolic succession and, it seems, bringing about the collapse of his doctrine of the Trinity – or, at least, ensuring its practical irrelevance. Thus, if the apostolic church represented God in the person of the Holy Spirit, the national church represents God in the person of the king. The discrepancy between the apostolic church and the national churches is quite apparent. Hobbes says, "that God who is alwaies One and the same, was the Person Represented by Moses; the Person Represented by his Son Incarnate; and the Person Represented by the Apostles. As represented by the Apostles, the Holy Spirit by which they spake, is God" (ibid., 340). But the national church, he says in another place, is "a company of men professing Christian Religion united in the person of one Soveraign" (*Lev.*, ch. 39, 321).

Not the least problem is in making any sense of what Hobbes means by "representation in the person of the Holy Spirit," and then of conceiving of how it could be transferred. This is a peculiar prob-

lem for the author of *Leviathan*, who devotes the fourth part to showing that ghosts, spirits, and demons are a nonsense: "those Idols of the brain, which represent Bodies to us, where they are not, as in a Looking-glasse, in a Dream, or to a Distempered brain waking, they are (as the Apostle saith generally of all Idols) nothing; Nothing at all" (ch. 34, 270). But while he can reject angels except as messengers (and here he shows etymological correctness), or in the form of thin or aerial bodies, because "there is no text in that part of the Old Testament, which the church of England holdeth for Canonicall; from which we can conclude, there is, or hath been created, any permanent thing (understood by the name of *Spirit* or *Angel*,) that hath not quantity" (ibid., 277), the Nicene Creed requires him to believe in the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, he affirms that the Holy Spirit is the Deity in two places (ibid., 279; ch. 42, 340); this must be on scriptural evidence, since men have had no knowledge of the Holy Ghost in person – as they have of Christ – nor directly by his works, because the Holy Spirit always operates through the church (*Lev.*, ch. 44, 435). Hobbes does maintain, quite consistently, that the imposition of hands in one sense signifies the transfer of the person, that is to say the function, of the Holy Spirit. Early in Chapter 42 it seems that the relation is causal and that the Holy Ghost is by this ritual act transmitted: "this was done by the Imposition of hands upon such as were ordained; by which was signified the giving of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God" (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 339).

Later in the chapter this assertion is modified by the distinction that the imposition of hands did not give the candidates the Holy Ghost, "for they were full of the Holy Ghost before they were chosen", but merely designated them to the office of Christ's ministry (ibid., 376). In another place it is suggested that their ordination not only did not cause them to receive the Holy Ghost, but did not even cause them to be authorized, and "though, they were called by the Holy Ghost, their Calling was declared unto them, and their Mission authorised by the particular Church" of the area (ibid., 364). These modifications are consistent with Hobbes's purpose in reducing apostolic powers to the vanishing point: the power of ordination deemed no more than the power to elect suitable candidates to a functional office. If he can establish this, he can remove the chief objection to the exercise of sacerdotal powers by the king. To the

extent that he succeeds in insulating his doctrine of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the king he is destroying his doctrine of the Trinity, or at least seriously undermining its relevance. But Hobbes does not completely succeed in doing either, and instead produces a sacramental theology that is fundamentally incoherent.

Hobbes wished to salvage something of his doctrine of the Trinity, even if this is almost theoretically impossible, and, in the Protestant tradition of his time, he saw the Holy Spirit as the guardian of the ministry of the Word. In defining a person by powers to act and the personal identity that accumulated actions create, Hobbes approximated twentieth-century behavioral theory and its understanding of roles. But to define the Trinity in these terms came perilously close to heresy by anybody's reckoning, as he must have realized, since he revised his doctrine in the appendix to the Latin *Leviathan* (*OL* III, 563).[27] Bramhall, in his "Catching of the Leviathan," certainly noted it; and Hobbes, in his "Answer to Bishop Bramhall," published together with "An Historical Narration Concerning Heresy," conceded some ground, although not the charges Bramhall made.

> I confess there is a fault in the ratiocination, which nevertheless his Lordship hath not discovered, but no impiety. All that he objecteth is, that it followeth hereupon, that there be as many persons of a king, as there be petty constables in his kingdom. And so there are, or else he cannot be obeyed. But I never said that a king, and every one of his persons, are the same substance. The fault I here made, and saw not, was this; I was to prove that it is no contradiction, as Lucian and heathen scoffers would have it, to say of God, he was one and three. I saw the true definition of the word *person* would serve my turn in this manner; God, in his own person, both created the world, and instituted a church in Israel, using therein the ministry of Moses: the same God, in the person of his Son God and man, redeemed the same world, and the same church; the same God, in the person of the Holy Ghost, sanctified the same church, and all the faithful men in the world. Is this not a clear proof that it is no contradiciton to say that God is three persons and one substance? And doth not the church distinguish the persons in the same manner? . . . His Lordship all this while hath catched nothing. It is I that catched myself, for saying, instead of *by the ministry of Moses,* in the person of Moses. But this error I no sooner saw, than I no less publicly corrected than I had committed it, in my *Leviathan* converted into Latin. (*EW,* IV 4.315–17)

Hobbes has got himself off one hook, only to impale himself on another. He has retracted the claim that "the person of Moses" constituted the model for kings as personifications of the Holy Spirit by substituting the "ministry of Moses." It is certainly difficult to imagine Charles II as a member of the Trinity, which Hobbes strictly might be required to maintain.[28] But has he now given away too much? The meaning of "church" seems to have shifted back to its typical use to refer to "the community of the faithful." Whatever the case, Hobbes refuses to deny the utility of his notion of "personification" in resolving technical problems of Trinitarian doctrine, devoting the bulk of his "Answer to Bramhall," as of its sequel, the "Narration Concerning Heresy," to just these issues.

## V. THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

The final chapter of *Leviathan*, "On the Kingdom of Darkness," is an elaborate satire on the claims of different churches to divine light. *Historia Ecclesiastica*, line 9 (*OL* V, 350), fulminates against "fanatics, the new lights of our age," a theme echoed by his contemporary John Ferriby, who, in *The Lawfull Preacher: or short discourse: proving that they only ought to preach who are ordained ministers*,[29] declared, "most of our new lights are but old darknesses." In the Dedication of *Leviathan* to Sidney Godolphin's brother Francis, Hobbes speaks of the plight of England as that of a country "beset with those that contend, on the side for too great liberty, and so on the other side for too much authority." Those who claim too much liberty are easily identifiable as the Independents and the Antinomians, further to the Protestant left, who believe they are free but unto the Word of God. Those who claim too much authority are the Papists and the Laudians, who defend *jure divino* powers. Both sides, left and right, are said to share the kingdom of darkness: for though "The Darkest part of the Kingdom of Satan is that which without the Church of God; that is to say, amongst them that beleeve not in Jesus Christ . . . we cannot say, that therefore the Church enjoyeth . . . all the light (*L*, ch. 44, 418).

It was because the Presbyterians and Papists had denied the authority of the prince as God's lieutenant that England had been plunged into civil war, a jostling in the dark (ibid.). Puritans had denied the principle *cuius regio eius religio* with arguments as vitriolic as those

of the Papists.[30] It was for this reason that Milton had declared with anticlerical fervor that "New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large,"[31] and that James I had maintained that "Jesuits are nothing but Puritan-Papists."[32] Hobbes mobilizes his heaviest artillery against the Papists. This is because the authority of the church of Rome represented a direct, and in fact established, threat to the system of authority Hobbes advocated in *Leviathan*. The papacy presented the dual challenge of an international sovereign power and a comprehensive religion legitimized by an entrenched philosophical system. Hobbes's indictment of the Roman Catholic church is three-pronged. He accuses Papists of scriptural misinterpretation, of the propagation of Greek philosophy and heathen demonology, and of the perpetuation of profane traditions and practices. Having shown that Bellarmine and papal apologists had misconstrued the Scriptures to support their claim for the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, Hobbes then set about to demonstrate that their misconstruction was due to philosophical misconception. The case the theologians put up, although ostensibly scriptural, was really a product of Aristotelian bewitchment based on the doctrine of essences.

Hobbes exploits the seventeenth-century tradition of referring to the pope as antichrist, although in fact he does not concur with it (*Lev.*, ch. 42, 382). He makes two pointed charges, the first that medieval theology underpinning papal political theories is (in light of Hobbesian science) no more than demonology, the second that the organizational structure of the Roman church constitutes a ghost kingdom headed by the pope, who sits crowned upon the grave of the deceased Roman Empire (*Lev.*, ch. 47, 480). Hobbes considers philosophy to be concerned with things caused. It is not therefore competent to deal with the nature of God, the uncaused Cause, or with mysteries of faith – such as miracles or immortality of the elect – for which no human cause can be postulated. Christians, therefore, can know for certain no more about the nature of God than that He exists, and about the Christian mysteries no more than what they are persuaded in the Scriptures to believe. In his debate with Descartes, Hobbes claims that we know God "not by means of an idea but by reasoning (*AT* VII 185; *CSM* II 130); there is, however, in the *Meditations*, no proof for the existence of a creator (*AT* VII, 187; *CSM* II 132). Such a theistic position was consistent with Hobbes's hostility to Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism, expressed in his refu-

tation of the doctrine of essences in the debate with Descartes and in the fourth book of Leviathan, *The Kingdom of Darkness,* in the chapter entitled "Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions."

There were matters on which Hobbes supported the Romish-leaning Laudians over the puritanical Presbyterians, as for instance on the matter of ceremonial (*EW* IV.67).[33] But there are also indications that he opposed the whole Neoplatonist movement popular with a certain cast of Anglicans, some of whom, including his friend Selden, were infatuated with the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians and the oriental religions. It seems that Hobbes's attack on the doctrine of essences and demonology of the dark kingdom may have had other than Romish targets. He himself displays a surprising interest in what he terms the "absurd opinion of Gentilisme," or pagan beliefs (*Lev.*, ch. 12, 79). Establishing that fear is the main ground of religion, like the state, Hobbes paints a picture of primitive religions and their ability to exploit fear. His principal sources are Herodotus, unacknowledged, and Diodorus Siculus, whom, in the opening lines of *De Homine* (*OL* II, 1), he eulogizes as the wisest and most deservingly celebrated ancient historian on the origins of the human race.[34] Drawing most probably on Diodorus, Hobbes (in *Leviathan* chap. 12) gives an account of the Egyptian creation, beginning with the great god of chaos and replete with astral and solar gods, crocodile and bird gods, deified calves, dogs, snakes, onions, and leeks (*Lev.*, ch. 12, 79). Although characteristically mocking, and interspersing counterparts from Greek and Roman mythology – Greek "daemon," Roman "genius," and "lares" – this account, like others in various of his works,[35] displays a detailed knowledge of the sources. Bearing in mind Hobbes's definition of heresy as private opinion based on philosophizing, we note that he presents "gentilism" here as a form of heresy (ibid.).

Chapter 12 of *Leviathan,* "Of Religion," is devoted to "gentilism," a term that we associate more with John Selden, a friend who remained faithful and left Hobbes a small bequest on his death (Aub. I.337, 369), John Toland (1696), to whom Aubrey showed his own work on this subject, and Aubrey himself.[36] Here Hobbes gives quite an accurate account of certain features of the pagan religions, which Catholicism had carried over: statue cults and certain beliefs in the powers of divine embodiment, such that people, "thinking the gods

for whose representation they were made, were really included, and as it were housed within them, might so much the more stand in feare of them" (*Lev.*, ch. 12, 80–1). Not only is he interested in primitive religions, but he expresses a preference for the "Independency of the Primitive Christians" as well, precisely because of the freedom of private belief that it permitted. Clerics had assailed this liberty that tied knots in their freedom that had to be systematically untied (*Lev.*, ch. 47, 478–9).

Why would someone concerned with heresy, who defined it as private opinion that flew in the face of doctrine sanctioned by the public person, harbor such a detailed interest in heterodoxy? Hobbes's religious beliefs ultimately remain a mystery, as perhaps they were meant to: the private views of someone concerned to conform outwardly to what his church required of him, and thereby avoid to heresy, while maintaining intellectual autonomy. The hazard of Hobbes's particular catechism is that he and his supporters could never avoid the suspicion of insincerity. His preparedness to believe whatever the prince demanded of him smacked of heresy in the more usual sense, despite elaborate biblical exegesis designed to prove his orthdoxy. Undoubtedly he realized it even as he wrote the last lines of *Leviathan*, expressing the hope that "I cannot think it will be condemned at this time, either by the Publique Judge of Doctrine, or by any that desires the continuance of Publique Peace." Indicating an intention to return to science, he continued, "I hope the Novelty will as much please, as in the Doctrine of this Artificiall Body it useth to offend" (*Lev.*, Rev. and conc., 491).

NOTES

1 Discussions of Hobbes as a Christian thinker include Hood (1964); Glover (1965); Pocock (1973); Schneider (1974); Letwin (1976); Halliday, Kenyon, and Reeve (1983); Lloyd (1992); and Martinich (1992). Among the treatments of his religious views, those I have found most useful include Ryan (1983); Farr (1990); Schwartz (1985); Skinner (1990a and 1990b); Tuck (1990); Sommerville (1992); and Strong (1993). Thanks to Johann Sommerville and Alan Cromartie for advice and to the Folger Institute and the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, D.C., for support.
2 Schwartz (1985); Sommerville (1992), pp. 120–1.
3 The early date Aubrey gives for the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, on which he reports at some length (Aub., 1898, I.338–9, 382), is interesting, given

the focus of the work, to establish that Hobbes was not heretical, an issue that became burning, so to speak, only around 1666 when the work is believed to have been completed. But the wealth of detail on ancient religion and primitive Christianity that it contains could well reflect Hobbes's antiquarian religious interests, material that he reshaped under the heat of the heresy charge. Such an explanation might answer Tuck (1990, p. 159), who believes that the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was written later, around 1666, and was directed very specifically to this charge. He notes that according to the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic* for 1667–8, Hobbes sent Lord Arlington, a cabal minister who defended him when he was summoned before the Lords, and to whom *Behemoth* was dedicated, his "Narration Concerning Heresy" for comment. The probable date of about 1666 for the *Dialogue of the Common Laws*, about half of which concerns the English law of heresy, strongly relates it to this group of works.

4 See Packer (1969), p. 179.

5 Cited in Sommerville (1992), p. 317.

6 Tuck (1989), p. 33; Sommerville (1992), p. xiv.

7 Hobbes seems to have distinguished between personal friendships and professional disagreements. His objections to Catholicism did not stand in the way of his friendship with Mersenne, a Catholic priest, who together with Pierre Gassendi wrote a letter strongly defending *De Cive*, which is published with the 1647 edition. And he seems to have had interests in common with the Laudians.

8 Sommerville (1992), pp. 80–81.

9 Thomas (1971), pp. 518–19, citing Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle's, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, ed. C. H. Firth (1886), p. 198.

10 On Hobbes and Nicodemism, see Zagorin 1990; for Hobbes's peculiar doctrine of religious toleration, see Ryan 1983; Tuck 1990.

11 Cited in Thomas (1971), p. 441.

12 Martinich, in a recent book that considers Hobbes a serious religious thinker, observes that Hobbes's definition of religious orthodoxy is that of Elizabeth I's High Commission on Christian Doctrine, which endorsed the religious decrees of the first four councils of the early church (Martinich 1992, 2). He further considers Hobbes's deep pessimism about human nature to be a product of his Calvinist education at Magdelan Hall in Oxford, and his rejection of Platonic Augustinianism and Aristotelian Thomism in favor of the new science to be a secular account of human nature and theism (ibid., pp. 4, 7). But whatever residues of a Calvinist education remained in Hobbes's general orientation to human nature did not carry over sufficiently in his religious doctrines to impress

the Calvinist synods of the Low Countries, as Johann Sommerville has pointed out to me. G. Cocquius, an Hebraist and one of Hobbes's most percipient critics, who systematically examines Hobbes's biblical exegesis (Cocquius 1680, chs. 3–7), fundamental articles of faith, and his doctrine of the Trinity (ibid., chs. 8–15), notes in his dedication that *Leviathan* was banned by the Synod of Utrecht (ibid., iv).

13 The term *homoousion* (one substance) was used by the Council of Nicaea, A.D. 325, to define the doctrine of the Trinity, as opposed to the term *homoiousion* (like substance) favored by the Arians. It is interesting that the *OED*, overlooking Hobbes's contribution to the debate, gives the first English users of the term as Ralph Cudworth (1678), *Intell. Syst.* I.iv. para 36, 597: "the Genuine Platonists would doubtless acknowledge also, all the Three Hypostases of their Trinity to be Homoousian, Co-Essential or Con-Substantial"; and Gibbon (1781), *Decline and Fall*, II.xxi, 251, 252: "Their [*sc.* the Arians'] patron, Eusebius of Nicodemia, . . . confessed, that the admission of the *Homoousion*, or Consubstantial . . . was incompatible with the principles of their theological system"; "The mysterious *Homoousion*, which either party was free to interpret according to their peculiar tenets."

14 Hobbes's views on excommunication did not differ much from the fourteenth-century Marsilius of Padua or the sixteenth-century Thomas Cranmer, as Sommerville in his excellent discussion (1992, pp. 127–34) and Marshall (1985, p. 414) point out.

15 Tuck (1989), p. 89; Sommerville (1992), p. 142.

16 Tuck (1989, p. 79) maintains this, going on to endorse the opinion of one of Hobbes's critics who, in 1669, charged "if once it be taken for granted that the Scriptures have no Authority but what the Civil Power gave them, they will soon come, upon a divine account, to have none at all" (cited in Tuck 1989, p. 89).

17 J.-J. Rousseau (*The Social Contract*, bk 4, ch. 8, 1978 ed, 96), characterizes *Leviathan*'s union of ecclesiastical and civil power thus.

18 By "publicist" I mean in the Roman Law tradition, a more accurate characterization of the provenance of Hobbes's particular type of sovereignty than the term "absolutism." I note with interest that the *OED* (1989, 12.782) list of usages for the term *publicist*, which it defines more narrowly as "one who is learned in 'public' or international law . . . a writer on the law of nations," includes Hobbes in the nicely illustrative quotation from the *New British Review* of May 1861, p. 173: "Plato was a publicist when he wrote the Laws and the Republic; Aristotle was a publicist when he wrote the Politics; . . . Machiavel was a publicist in the *Prince*, Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, Montesquieu in the 'Esprit des Lois'."

19 Hobbes's use of the term "Leviathan" involves a strange set of inversions.

To begin with, as the beast of Isaiah 1.27, and the Book of Job, clearly personifying the state, generally ancient Egypt (as opposed to Behemoth, which personifies ancient Assyria) in the Old Testament, and Satan incarnate on some interpretations (see Calvin 1609, p. 260b), Leviathan is a strange choice to name a Christian commonwealth. Not much light is shed on the matter by Hobbes's curt challenge to Bramhall to entitle his critique "*Behemoth against Leviathan.*" Hobbes's challenge is issued in his "Animadversons upon the Bishop's Epistle to the Reader" (*E.W.* 5.25–6), prefacing *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity and Chance, clearly stated and debated between Dr. Bramhall, Bishop of Derby and Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (1654). It is interesting to speculate at what point Hobbes decided to use the title *Behemoth* himself, the work that was completed in 1668 and not published until 1679. Hobbes is mute on the significance of its title, at which we can only guess. Did the Long Parliament in any way resemble Behemoth as a figure for the Assyrians, land of Nebuchadnezzar and the Tower of Babel? Once Hobbes used Leviathan to mean the state in its early modern sense, the term was forever transformed, as the *OED* suggests, which blunts the provocation that this innovation must have offered to his contemporaries. After all, it is the papacy, characterized for a millennium as the dragon, or Antichrist (Hill, 1971), that most closely resembled the Old Testament Leviathan, about which the Reformation commentators were willing to say very little (see Oecolompadius 1562; Calvin 1584; Beza 1589?; Broughton 1610; and Abbott 1640). The Christian commonwealth of Hobbes should, by rights, have been an *anti*leviathan. (For further discussion of Hobbes's biblical beasts, Leviathan and Behemoth, see Springborg 1995.)

20 Compare H. Warrender (1957, 224ff.), who thinks that Hobbes believed Christian monarchies to be prophetic kingdoms like the Jewish one. But this interpretation runs counter to many unequivocal statements by Hobbes. In *Review and Conclusion* he declared: "in the Commonwealth of the Jewes, God himself was made the sovereign by pact with the people, who were therefore called his *Peculiar People* to distinguish them from the rest of the world' (*Leviathan*, 1991 ed., 487).

21 See Schwartz's (1985) discussion of Hobbes's views of the superiority of the Christian to the Jewish kingdom of God, in the context of Hobbes's criticisms of "Gentilism" due to the contamination of Judaism by false Greek and Latin notions of God. In the famous passage of *Leviathan* (1991 ed., 149–50), in which Hobbes levies this charge, he is able to deal a deadly blow both to the ancient ideal of liberty, its Israelite, Greek, and Roman advocates, and to contemporary classical republican theorists, declaring perversely that there is no more liberty in Lucca, where it is inscribed on the rooftops, than in Constantinople.

And by reading of these Greek, and Latine Authors, men from their childhood have gotten a habit (under a false shew of Liberty,) of favouring tumults, and of licentious controlling the actions of their Soveraigns; and again of controlling those controllers, with the effusion of so much blood; as I think I may truly say, there was never any thing so deerly bought, as these Western parts have bought the learning of the Greek and Latine tongues.

22 Lagarde (1956), 2.241.

23 Luther (1956 ed.), I.117.

24 Luther (1956 ed.), I.114.

25 Although the efforts of Erastus in the sixteenth century had been specifically aimed at the draconian powers of excommunication claimed by the Calvinist churches, as we have noted, his name became synonymous with the subordination of ecclesiastical to secular power.

26 John Cosin (1594–1672) did not become bishop of Durham until December 1660, and Hobbes's wording suggests that he made his criticism before that, perhaps in Paris, where Cosins acted as chaplain for the Anglicans at the court of Henrietta Maria between 1644 and the Restoration and ministered to Hobbes on, as he thought, his deathbed. Cosin's influence with Hobbes would seem to put paid to Martinich's (1992) general view of Hobbes as a closet Calvinist. A high church Anglican and Arminian, friend of Archbishop Laud, and like his mentor fond of elaborate ritual, Cosin was (unfairly) convicted of being a Romanist. Hobbes seems to have followed Laud and Cosins in his high regard for religious ceremonial, as we know from *Elements of the Law,* where he claims that "to adorn [God's] worship with magnificence and cost" is a natural sign of our honoring him, and "to adorn the place of his worship worse than our own houses [is a manifest sign of] contempt of the Divine Majesty" (*E.W.* 4.67).

27 It is worth noting that the extensive appendix to the Latin *Leviathan* (*L.W.* 3.511–69) is almost wholly devoted to the Nicene Creed (Chap. 1); to rebuttal of claims of heresy and atheism made against Hobbes by (mostly) unnamed sources, to points of biblical exegesis, and to corrections to his doctrine of the Trinity (Chaps. 2 and 3).

28 In fact, of course, the third person of the Trinity had always been problematic, because the Holy Ghost hardly seems to be a person by any stretch of the imagination, and because the debate over the term *homoousion* more strictly concerned the first two persons of the Trinity than the third. Hobbes takes his escape with the model of Moses.

29 1653, sig. B3b, cited in Sommerville (1992), p. 199.

30 One of the most colorful attacks on the principle *cuius regio eius religio,* in the name of which Henry VIII's royal supremacy in matters

ecclesiastical had been declared, was that made by Anthony Gilby, a Calvinist. He expostulated on the revolution that made Henry the godly prince:

> Thus there was no reformation, but a deformation, in the tyme of that tyrant and lecherous monster. The bore I grant was busy rooting and dragging up the earth, and all his pigges that followed him . . . This monstrous bore for all this must need be called the head of the Church in paine of treason, displacing Christ our onlie Head, who ought alone to have the title. Wherefore in this point, O England, ye be no better than the Popish antichrist. (quoted by C. McIlwain [1918], pp. xvii–xviii).

31 Milton, *On the New Forces of Conscience under the Long Parliament.*

32 Quoted by McIlwain (1918), p. xxvii.

33 As Johann Sommerville has suggested to me, however, perhaps too much should not be read into Hobbes remarks in the *Elements* (1640), a work dedicated to Newcastle and intended "to insinuate itself with those whom the matter it containeth most nearly concerneth" (*E.W.* 4.ii), namely Charles I, a High Churchman who also loved ceremonial. In Chapter 31 of *Leviathan*, for instance, where the same distinctions are made between internal and external signs of worship, reference to elaborate ceremonial other than well-composed verse and music is absent.

34 Praise that he repeats elsewhere, for instance in *Behemoth*, (*E.W.* 6.278–81), *Decameron Physiologicum* (*E.W.* 7.73–4), and the *Examinatio et Emendatio Mathematicae Hodiernae I. Wallisius* (*L.W.* 4.3–4).

35 Further accounts of the religions of the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Iranians, and Indians are to be found in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lines 50–350, and in *Behemoth* (*E.W.* 4.277–82).

36 The "gentilism" that Hobbes discusses here and in the "Narration on Heresy" as the ancient legacy with which the Greek philosophers infected Christianity, is spelled out in 500 lines of Latin verse in the *Ecclesiastical History.* Referring in *Leviathan* (1991 ed., p. 79) to the "absurd opinion of Gentilisme," or pagan beliefs, precisely in the context of his discussion of the primitive religions of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Hobbes is not the first to address this question. The *OED* (1989 ed., 6.449) gives early sources for the term, meaning "Heathenism, paganism, a heathen belief or practice" and occasionally "in opposition to *Judaism.*" John Selden (1617 ed.), Gerard Vossius (1668 ed.) and Edward Herbert (1663) all wrote works on gentilism, and even Aubrey's shopping list of pagan religious practices, "old customes, and old wives-

fables," published under the title *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (Aub., 1972 ed., Preface, p. 132 and pp. 133–304), qualifies.

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