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LEVIATHAN AND THE PROBLEM OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

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THE RELATION OF HOBBS' theological doctrines set out in the third and fourth books of *Leviathan* to his political argument on the nature of authority is still a somewhat neglected subject.¹ It is frequently assumed either that Hobbes' religious views were idiosyncratic and of strictly antiquarian interest or that his personal religious beliefs were minimal and the arguments in the third and fourth books were a sop to contemporaries who took such matters seriously. Certain aspects of Hobbes' philosophy do suggest that his Christian beliefs were probably token: his ontology, so far as it is accounted for by the Laws of Natural Reason, leaves very little room for "faith" as traditionally understood and undermines attempts at a fundamentalist interpretation of the Scriptures. While taking considerable liberties himself in departing from doctrinal orthodoxy, he nevertheless succeeds in converting all questions of faith into questions of obedience, excluding privileged sources of religious knowledge, and invoking reason to authorize the sovereign as ultimate biblical interpreter.

To be skeptical of Hobbes' personal religious beliefs does not, however, imply that one should be skeptical of the relevance of his theological arguments to his political theory, for to accept that he considered a settlement of the question of ecclesiastical authority crucial to his civil

case does not presuppose any religious beliefs on his part at all.² The terms in which the problem was debated were not for Hobbes to decide: biblical exegesis, didactic history, and theological argument happened to be the currency in which authority was traded in the seventeenth-century contest between the king and Parliament. Indeed, all over Europe the struggle to establish the secular nation-state was being fought by rewriting religious doctrine. Theology belonged within the scope of the problem of authority, and Hobbes' theological arguments are to be judged, therefore, not on the basis of his private religious beliefs but on his public commitment to resolve this problem in the terms in which he understood it. To accept this distinction alters one's expectations of the way in which Hobbes would seek a justification for the civil exercise of ecclesiastical power. One would expect certain tensions to remain unresolved between Hobbes' requirements for religious practice in the Christian commonwealth and traditional religious beliefs.

Professor J.G.A. Pocock, in his recent essay, distinguishes Hobbes' theological from his philosophical justifications for the exercise of ecclesiastical power by the civil sovereign, arguing that, taken independently, the two sets of justifications are both autonomous and complementary.³ He bases his case on Hobbes' distinctions between science, history, and prophecy as sources of knowledge, to which correspond reason, prophecy, and faith, as instruments. Politics was a science, as Hobbes claimed to be the first to see, and drew on reason; but religion, whose chief instrument was faith, belonged both to history and prophecy. These latter two spheres were precisely the loci of theological justifications for theories of ecclesiastical power promulgated by Hobbes' contemporaries, and Professor Pocock relates Hobbes' account of the role of faith, prophecy, and sacred history to the millenarian eschatologies of his day.

To make a distinction between philosophical and theological justifications for the exercise of ecclesiastical power by the civil sovereign—or the “reunion of the two heads of the eagle,” as Rousseau put it—implies a number of things. To begin with, it means that ecclesiastical authority can no longer be assumed to be simply derivative from civil authority on the basis of the same sort of rationality that dictates the necessity of erecting a sovereign power in the first place, for while the role of “the Godly Prince” may *accord with* the laws of reason, it is *sanctioned by* the Scriptures. Although a cruder interpretation of Hobbes' argument has for long been accepted, it seems that Hobbes certainly wanted to make this distinction and that it lends support to the integrity of religion. This is not, however, the implication of the further consequences of the distinctions between

science, history, and prophecy as orders of knowledge—distinctions that have not been fully elucidated. By confining reason to science, the secular realm, Hobbes conceives of a God accessible only by experience and, as he elsewhere states, “experience concludeth nothing universally.” Universality may be ascribed to rational theorems, but God is accessible only through history, the record of his works, since the divine attribute of omnipotence is a concept of which human reason can have no grasp. History is a question of the veracity of accounts and the authority of historians, empirical matters which are not susceptible of the conclusive proofs of reason or science. Furthermore, to make God inaccessible to reason does not, as it might seem, strengthen the hand of faith, for faith according to Hobbes is again a question of the authenticity of the Scriptures. This position succeeds in reducing faith, as an active source of knowledge in the Protestant tradition, to trust, as the passive acceptance of moral directives suited to a theocracy. In fact, Hobbes’ notion of faith seems to be totally subsumed by his concept of obedience, and obedience is commanded by the civil sovereign alone, because he alone has the authority to command it.

It would seem that Hobbes’ theology, his concept of God, and his eschatology whittle away at the autonomy of the realm of faith and that this is no accident. Not only did Hobbes abhor the threats which libertarianism and millenarianism posed for civil regimes, but he felt confident that he could demonstrate that the pentecostal spirit flew in the face of the divinely ordained laws of reason. The realm of logic was not, as he saw it, outside history: privileged access to God’s will, whether through the Scriptures or the mouths of prophets, entitled no man to waive the moral imperative to obey the dictates of reason. While Hobbes showed a fine appreciation for the subtleties of millenarian thought, his own scheme of sacred history represents an attempt to destroy the chiliasts’ source of legitimacy. It seems that here, at least, Hobbes reveals very deeply held convictions; that his philosophy of history and his logic interpenetrate, mutually informed by an ontological commitment to the Laws of Natural Reason, supported by a nominalist epistemology; and that his attempt to establish the supremacy of reason drives him into peculiar theological corners.

In following this argument through it is necessary to consider four different aspects of Hobbes’ theory: (1) his account of the authority of the Scriptures; (2) his account of the nature of the kingdom of God and his doctrine of ecclesiastical authority; (3) his theory of language—his systematic epistemology; (4) his account of the laws of Natural Reason—his ontology.

1. THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The first points Hobbes makes in his treatment of the question of ecclesiastical authority are that the Scriptures are not self-authenticating and that to treat them as a book of history or a book of law requires the settlement of epistemological problems of interpretation first of all. Despite a rhetorical announcement in the opening paragraph of book three that he was turning from an account of civil authority on the basis of the Laws of Natural Reason to an account of ecclesiastical authority on the basis of prophetic history, it becomes clear that this does not mean that reason is to be held in obedience.⁴ The question of knowledge is immediately converted by Hobbes into a question of authority: knowledge, he insisted—good nominalist that he was—depends on established conventions governing meaning. Infallibility can only mean that a sovereign interpreter has the power to permanently fix conventions governing meaning, thereby assuring definitive access to truth. Usage is sufficient to establish meaning for science or common conversation, but not for matters that touch on religion or authority; these sensitive matters must be legislated, and who it was that could rightfully legislate was a question settled by reason.⁵ Hobbes distinguishes access to knowledge of prophetic history—via faith—from access to knowledge of moral and political obligation—via reason—but then defines faith as obedience to authority, having already established that the specification of authority is dictated by the Laws of Natural Reason.

It would seem that the role of reason in Hobbes' argument is all-encompassing: belief in the Scriptures is commanded by faith, faith commands obedience, obedience is commanded by the sovereign, and the erection of a sovereign is commanded by the Laws of Natural Reason. If this were not enough, Hobbes argues that knowledge of the Scriptures is a question of obedience, not only on rational but also on legal grounds: for if, as the church claimed, the moral injunctions of Scripture constituted binding law, they could only do so by virtue of the sovereign's authority.⁶ The question fundamental to ecclesiastical authority does not then concern the *authenticity* of the Scriptures, since all Christians believe God authorized them, nor our knowledge of them, since this is a matter of belief, but who has the power to promulgate them as law. The interpretation of the Scriptures is not a matter of establishing who wrote them, but of what they command and on whose authority.⁷

Hobbes appreciated the chaotic influence in his time of self-appointed prophets, each purporting to issue authoritative directives to his followers on the basis of private revelations.⁸ The problem of false prophets had

bedevilled the church since its earliest days. The Scriptures indeed warned: "*There shall arise . . . false Christs, and false prophets, and shall do great wonders and miracles, even to the seducing, if it were possible, of the very elect*" (Matthew 24 : 24). Miracles were not a sufficient test of a prophet's authenticity. "How," Hobbes asked, "can he, to whom God hath never revealed his will immediately, saving by the way of natural reason, know when he is to obey, or not to obey his word, delivered by him that says he is a prophet?" Scripture itself specified the two qualifications of a true prophet, he finds: "One is the doing of miracles; the other is the not teaching of any other religion than that which is already established." A prophet must be authenticated by both tests.⁹

It is interesting to see that Hobbes' explanation allows for the equation of doctrinal with political orthodoxy by virtue of the fact that the Jewish kingdom was theocratic, and Moses exercised the dual role of high priest and sovereign. The analogy, in view of the distinction he draws elsewhere, between the "peculiar" kingdom of God constituted by the Jewish theocracy of direct divine rule and the "natural" kingdom of God constituted by the era of secular nation-states, is illegitimate; but he nevertheless tries to argue that revolt against the king is tantamount to revolt against God, for kings, like Moses, are God's lieutenants.¹⁰ The contemporary seventeenth-century problem was not of authenticating first-order prophets but rather of authenticating second-order interpreters. The age of prophets had passed, Hobbes believed, and the church was left the prophecies as a corpus of historical artifacts collected in the Scriptures and requiring interpretation.¹¹

2. ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

Although Hobbes may have claimed that biblical exegesis was a simple matter of reasoning from the texts, it was precisely because speculation on the nature of the kingdom of God provided the framework for the debate on civil authority that he was prompted to argue that religious doctrine is too influential in the kingdom of man to be settled by anyone but the sovereign. Apocalyptic argument was invoked in the power struggle between the king and commons, debated in terms of the validity of covenants and the nature of the royal mandate established at the Conquest.¹² The very distinctions Hobbes was concerned to make—between the natural and prophetic spheres of God's two-fold kingdom, between the nature of moral and political obligation, between man's natural condition of conflict and the artificial harmony arising from legal

contract—provided the basic constituents of the Parliamentary case. Hobbes, in order to defend his assertion that commonwealths could not be dismembered on the authority of prophets, Popes, puritan exegetes, or parliaments, had to provide his own scheme of sacred history, specifying the role of the present Christian commonwealth in the kingdom of God extended over time.

His theory constitutes a periodization of sacred history as an elaborate structure of two spheres, three worlds, and three-phase time.¹³ The kingdom of God is dispensed in the world past, the present world, and the world to come,¹⁴ across three phases of sacred history represented by the rule of Moses and the priests, by Christ, and by the Apostles and their successors as three personifications of the God-head.¹⁵ Hobbes understands the kingdom of God literally as a territorial unit under a system of authority; it is properly instated when history ends with the Second Coming. In the tradition of the covenant theologians, he considers notions of covenant and consent integral to the literal meaning of a kingdom.¹⁶ From the Creation, God not only ruled men “naturally” by reason and the dictates of conscience, but had “peculiar subjects” whom He ruled by covenant. Adam, by disobeying divine command, forfeited “the estate of eternal life” and was punished with a deluge from which only eight persons survived—“and in these eight did consist the then *kingdom of God*.”¹⁷ Hobbes goes on to record the covenant made between God and Abraham, by which Abraham obliged himself and his people to obedience in return for the guaranteed security of a territorial kingdom, a divine title to rule which Moses renewed at the foot of Mount Sinai.¹⁸

The covenant renewed by Moses continued to the time of Saul, when the Israelites in rebellion revoked the sacred covenant and instituted a civil regime, provoking the wrath of God and causing the prophetic kingdom to be suspended and the natural kingdom of God to be inaugurated. The restitution of the prophetic kingdom awaits the Second Coming of Christ—Hobbes is emphatic that the Son at his first coming did not reestablish it—and this restitution will restore the eternal, although terrestrial, theocratic kingdom which Adam forfeited. Hobbes’ conception of the kingdom of God has an almost geometrical symmetry: the Kingdom of Glory restores the paradisaical kingdom which man enjoyed before the Fall, while Hell is a prolongation of the evils of the state of fallen nature. Heaven and Hell are both terrestrial, but neither is temporal for mortality was the punishment for Adam’s sin and, once his “forfeiture” has been “cancelled,” the elect will be restored to the deathless and sexless life of angels.¹⁹ The damned, like the elect, will also rise again at the Last

Judgement, but to a life of corruption and a second death, and whereas the elect will take glorified bodies, the reprobate will take gross and corruptible ones.²⁰ The turn of the screw is that Hobbes should depict Hell as an eternal state of nature, analogous to the state of permanent civil war, in which the damned will persecute and be persecuted.²¹ He does not discuss the expected timing of the Second Coming. The dating of the Millennium had at best been a matter of inspired speculation, and speculation which was politically dangerous. Hobbes, by virtue of his distinction between the rational and the prophetic word of God, called into question the right of citizens to endanger the state in the natural sphere of God's kingdom, in the name of prophecy.

Hobbes' doctrine of ecclesiastical power is presented within the framework of his interpretation of sacred history and follows from one central assertion that the organizational structure of the kingdom of God, whether in the natural or the prophetic sphere, does not take the form of a church. The prophetic sphere, which went into suspension at the time of Saul, will be reinstated as a theocracy under God's Lieutenant the Risen Christ. Meanwhile, in the natural sphere, authority is concentrated in the hands of the civil sovereign according to the dictates of the divinely constituted Laws of Natural Reason. The mission of the church, which Christ set up before his death, is persuasive and nongovernmental—a time of preparation and evangelization.²²

It is in the context of his theory of the role of the church in the present natural kingdom that the tensions between his account of the revelation of God's will in history and his account of the manifestations of divine rule in law are most evident. To define the role of the church in the Christian commonwealth as consistent with what the requirements of sovereignty would demand was appropriate or not according to the truth or falsity of Hobbes' primary assertion that the erection and defenses of sovereign power is morally required by the laws of nature.

Hobbes defines a church in terms similar to Marsilius: "I define a church to be *a company of men professing Christian religion united in the person of one sovereign, at whose command they ought to assemble, and without whose authority they ought not to assemble.*"²³ That is to say, considered as an organization, the church was no more than a congregation of citizens assembling periodically under a convening authority. According to the logic of Hobbes' theory of sovereignty, a multitude, when convened in the person of sovereign, becomes a commonwealth; and, by the same token, a congregation, when convened in the person of a Christian king, becomes a church.

The Christian sovereign takes over the dual roles of supreme pastor and governor, and in his hands the power to teach becomes the power to command. The various councils, assemblies, or *ecclesia* which priests had convened to decide doctrine in the days of pagan rule had no legitimate authority to issue binding decrees, and their recommendations on "faith and manners" were only as effective as the personal commitment of the congregation to redemption. But under the Godly Prince, ecclesiastical authority is power and, by virtue of his headship, clerical positions are institutionalized as offices and priestly admonitions promulgated as laws. The democratic election of pastors in the apostolic church, as a political act, represented no more than the election of a functionary by 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 mayor, it is the act of him that hath the sovereign power . . ." ²⁴

The paradox of Hobbes' argument is that he should have laid such emphasis on the legal status that a Christian king brings to the church, when all along he stressed that the ecclesiastical mission is nongovernmental. The national church is heir to the apostolic church's mission but not its organizational form. As convened by the apostles and their successors, the early teaching church had the power to morally oblige those who recognized its claims, but the national church, as a lawful congregation called together by a Christian sovereign, enjoys all the legal powers and immunities of a corporation. ²⁵

Hobbes reemployed the concept of *persona* ²⁶ to produce a definition of the church as an ecclesiastical legislative body, constituted in the person of the king and corresponding to the secular notion of the king-in-parliament, with power to make the Scriptures law. As Hobbes acknowledged, however, the effectiveness of spiritual directives does not depend on their being made law. In what sense then can the national church, narrowly defined as a legislative institution, be defended as successor to the nongovernmental apostolic church? His definition covers the *de facto* status of the English reformed church whose government since Henry VIII was the king-in-parliament in another capacity. The difficulties he encounters in integrating his definition of the royal church into his scheme of prophetic history—of three worlds (past, present, and to come), 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—suggest that he was committed to defending this *de facto* status at any cost. That he went so far in his repudiation of clerical powers is an

indication of the threats that the Roman sacerdotal hierarchy and the puritan theocracy presented to his system. In his attempt to rationalize his defenses, it would seem that he overworked the Roman publicist fiction persona and that as a result it was his theology, rather than his theory of sovereignty, that suffered.

3. HOBBS' THEORY OF LANGUAGE

In considering the idiosyncracies of Hobbes' theory of ecclesiastical authority, it is important to stress the degree to which these are incurred as a corollary of his systematic attempt to resolve epistemological and ontological problems raised by the Scriptures in Christian theological debate, and account at the same time for the force of the Laws of Natural Reason, which represented an ontological commitment for him. It is worth considering briefly how Hobbes saw these problems fitting together.

Hobbes' mechanistic account of human psychology, together with his account of the Laws of Natural Reason, constitute an argument that human motivation is fully determined by rational laws and that these laws, ordained by God and manifested in the dictates of conscience, require men to authorize a civil sovereign as public trustee to a political contract to establish peace. That the contract is *necessary* is a function of the singular form which the creation of civil trust must take according to Hobbes, for, in order that the dictates of conscience—as moral obligations determined by the laws of reason—may bind in practice as well as in principle, a set of permanent legal conditions must be inaugurated such that coercive sanctions can be brought to bear to forestall any temptation on the part of the wicked to cheat the meek. The role of sovereign as guarantor involves even more than the promise of "sufficient security" for the dictates of conscience to be binding, however. The impossibility of trust has effects so radical as to undermine the stability of the most primary social conventions—those concerning terminology and meaning—upon which the specification of a substantive political covenant is logically dependent. The sovereign is public trustor to the stability of knowledge, as well as to the legal terms of a political compact.

It was his insistence on remaining committed to the Laws of Natural Reason, while maintaining a radically nominalist epistemology, that marked Hobbes' significant departure from Hooker and the orthodox medieval tradition, where doctrines of natural law were firmly wedded to philosophical realism. But then it was precisely this tradition which he set

out to deny, arguing that medieval doctrine constituted not theology, but demonology, and that better proof could not be found than that its logical extension should entail doctrines of papal hegemony. Hobbes indicted the Roman church as the arch fiend of the "Kingdom of Darkness . . . Vain Philosophy and Fabulous Traditions," going so far as to suggest that "if a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive that the Papacy is no other than the *ghost* of the deceased *Roman empire*, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did the papacy start up on a sudden out of the ruins of that heathen power."²⁷ He was concerned to rid the Christian commonwealth of the tyranny of scholastic universals, and in the tradition of fourteenth-century nominalists and anti-papists, of whom William of Ockham was surely the most famous, he made the attempt on epistemological grounds.

Philosophy, Hobbes asserted, is concerned with things caused. It is not, therefore, competent to deal with the nature of God, the uncaused Cause, or with the mysteries of faith, such as miracles or the immortality of the elect, for which no natural cause can be postulated. Christians can know for certain no more about the nature of God than that He exists, and no more about the Christian mysteries than what they are persuaded in the Scriptures to believe. In his debate with Descartes, Hobbes categorically asserted that only an ontological concept of God is possible, and that we have no sensible or innate idea of him.²⁸ This was consistent with his refutation of the doctrine of essences clearly advanced in that debate, and raised again in the fourth book of *Leviathan*, "The Kingdom of Darkness," in the chapter entitled, "Of Darkness from Vain Philosophy, and Fabulous Traditions."²⁹ To summarize his argument briefly, Hobbes believed that medieval realists had erred in following Plato and Aristotle in their assertion that for every noun, simple, collective or abstract, there must exist some corresponding thing. Words were not irrevocably tied to things, he insisted, for names were no more than convenient symbols used by men to identify or refer to conceptions of things—the name does not refer to the object of perception directly, but to our characterization of it. Understanding, memory, communication, and all language-dependent social activity logically follow on the initial settlement of linguistic conventions, and may be subsequently jeopardized by disputation concerning the meaning of words—particularly of those abstract and collective terms around which philosophy and theology revolve.³⁰

The papists had been led into idolatry by taking fictions for things according to the realist doctrine of universals. Moreover, Hobbes maintained that papal doctrines about the immortality of the soul, the

significance of the Lord's Supper, the after-world, the properties of angels and spirits, and the nature of sacraments, were not only false but seditious. For the church used the doctrine of essences as a scarecrow to frighten citizens "from obeying the laws of their country, with empty names," invoking supernatural powers and encouraging superstition to arrogate for priests the powers rightfully belonging to sovereigns.³¹ Defining the attributes of God for the purposes of worship was an activity quite distinguishable from philosophical speculation about God's nature, and was indeed a royal right and duty, Hobbes believed.³² The church of Rome committed the double enormity of denying this sovereign prerogative, creating a caste of clergy to exercise ecclesiastical functions, and of propagating idolatrous doctrines concerning the nature and attributes of God as a means of bolstering an independent ecclesiastical power structure. Marginal Prynne's remark concerning bishops that "their Hierarchy . . . not their Popery was the ground work of their treachery," might have been made by Hobbes.³³

The question of hierarchy and the notion of intrinsic powers attaching to authorities by virtue of their position in a divinely ordained chain of command was a separate issue, but was also defended by the church in realist terms. A secularized version of the problem had reentered politics with the *merum imperium* debate among Roman lawyers, which centered on the question of whether subordinate magistrates had their powers by virtue of rank or in the gift of the king as a property.³⁴ This question became inextricably involved in the historical debate about the royal mandate established with the Norman Conquest, vociferously argued in seventeenth-century England. Hobbes, by attempting to undermine the realist foundations of medieval order theory, struck with one blow at religious and secular versions of the claim that powers adhered intrinsically to institutionalized hierarchical positions.

4. THE LAWS OF NATURAL REASON

Disentangling natural law from realist philosophy and traditional notions of hierarchical power was clearly no easy matter, and meant threading a path between the conservatism of the Laudians on the Protestant right, who defended clerical powers in *jure divino* terms, and the libertarianism of the Antinomians, far to the Protestant left, who believed themselves bound only to the will of an unpredictable God. The demonstration of how a philosophy could be salvaged in which divinely

ordained laws of natural reason still figured despite a nominalist epistemology involved Hobbes in a shift from synchronic to diachronic argument and in a detailed exposition of his own scheme of sacred history "deduced" from the Scriptures. For, he asserted, the derivation of theological terms, unlike the derivation of terms of common speech or of the technical languages of the sciences, cannot be left to usage to determine, but depends on "the sense they carry in the Scripture," bringing the philosophical problems of ecclesiastical authority full circle.³⁵

The Laws of Natural Reason constituted an a priori for Hobbes, and it is in history that the force of divinely generated rational laws is demonstrated. The Scriptures represented artifacts in terms of which access to sacred history was given; according to the Scriptures, most Christians agreed, history represented the extended "Kingdom of God in Time." It is here that Hobbes' theological and philosophical accounts converge: for the Scriptures delineate the natural sphere of the kingdom of God, marked by the election of Saul, as the sphere in which civil sovereigns mediate the divine will to which men are susceptible through obedience to command, independently sanctioned by reason. Moreover, access to the truths which the Scriptures teach is itself dependent on the solution of epistemological problems which dictate the authorization of a sovereign interpreter. Hobbes claims that the age of unmediated divine teaching is past and that the prophecies and the doctrines of Christ are immortalized only in the Scriptures. Until an order of interpreters has been authorized, the Bible remains a closed book; who then can make the Scriptures speak? The sacred books are believed to contain normative utterances, social and moral directives; yet the truths of Scripture are not self-evident, but mysteries, known by faith—which is the capturing of the obedient will. Since the Laws of Natural Reason as moral imperatives enjoin obedience to the sovereign in the present phase of sacred history, there is an immediate appropriateness in assigning the office of interpreter to him. Furthermore, if the teachings of Scripture are to be effective recommendations, they must be promulgated as laws, and because there exists in each state only one person capable of promulgating law, the sovereign is again obviously eligible for the office. Hobbes, like Hooker, enlisted reason to argue that commonwealths could not be dismembered on the authority of the revealed word of God, or in the name of a prophet, or on the authority of the Pope. His argument does not depend, however, on the truth or falsity of the empirical assertion that Christians of the realm are united in essential beliefs, or that church and commonwealth are

continuous in time and contiguous in space; by his time, Hooker's claims could be empirically refuted. Hobbes based his case rather on the assertion that the problems of the authenticity of prophets, the interpretations of the Scriptures, and the promulgation of divine teaching as law all converged as aspects of the problem of authority. The solution to this problem was a question of reason, to which only one answer could be given: the sovereign was deemed to be God's lieutenant.

It seems then that Hobbes' theological and philosophical arguments interpenetrate, and that any attempt to see them as autonomous must raise many questions. If, indeed, it is true that Hobbes "cannot be shown to have substituted either prudence or philosophy for belief" and that the "distinction he had formally drawn between these three modes of knowledge remained as sharp as ever,"³⁶ the claim is difficult to reconcile with Hobbes' assertions that (1) all questions of knowledge—and not just knowledge of the Scriptures—depended on convention and the institutionalization of authority as rationally dictated by the Laws of Nature, and (2) that the convention which guaranteed knowledge was no other than that which created the political system. It is very difficult to see how on Hobbes' account the sphere of sacred history could subsist independently of the Christian commonwealth, which is its logical corollary. If it did we would have no access to it for while, as Professor Pocock points out, history is not "reabsorbed" by logic³⁷—the two dimensions by Hobbes' reckoning interpenetrate. If, indeed, "The God of prophecy and history was the only God of whom Hobbes would speak; the God of faith was the only God compatible with his political system,"³⁸ what are we to make of the force of the divinely generated Laws of Natural Reason and their appeal to conscience? It seems that Hobbes did attempt to integrate his theology with his philosophy and that he ran into difficulties in doing so.

NOTES

1. All references are to the edition of *Leviathan* edited by Michael Oakeshott (Oxford, 1960). Of those works which do treat Hobbes' ecclesiastical theory, the most comprehensive are F. C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes*, (Oxford, 1964), and David P. Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan, the Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, (Oxford, 1969).

2. I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Quentin Skinner of Christ's College, Cambridge, for his detailed criticism of this essay. His comments were very helpful in clarifying my ideas on Hobbes' personal belief system.

3. J.G.A. Pocock, "Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes," first published in J. H. Elliott and H. G. Koenigsberger, eds., *The Diversity of History: Essays in Honour of Sir Herbert Butterfield* (London, 1970); reprinted in J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time*, (London, 1972). Citations here refer to the latter work. I wish to express a special debt of gratitude to Professor Pocock, my long-standing academic adviser and friend.

4. *Leviathan*, p. 242.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-256, 240, 296.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

12. E. L. Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia*, (New York, 1964); William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, (New York, 1955); William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*, (London, 1963); Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God*, (London, 1964); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind, The Seventeenth Century*, (New York, 1939); Gertrude Huehns, *Antinomianism in English History, with Special Reference to the Period 1640-1660*, (London, 1951); Frank E. Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History*, (London, 1965); C. A. Patrides, *The Phoenix and the Ladder. The Rise of the Christian View of History*, (California, 1964).

13. *Leviathan*, pp. 233-234.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 266.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 296-299.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 411-412.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 325.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 355.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

26. For elaborations of the concept of persona in medieval Trinitarian doctrine and medieval corporation theory see Ernest H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies, A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, (Princeton, 1957); J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, (London, 1958); F. W. Maitland, "Moral Personality and Legal Personality," and "The King as Corporation," *Selected Essays*, (Cambridge, 1936); Otto von Guericke, *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. W. Maitland, (Cambridge, 1900); Otto von Guericke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society 1500-1800*, trans. E. Barker, (Cambridge, 1934); Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, (London, 1912).

27. *Leviathan*, p. 457.

28. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol. 2, trans. E. S. Haldane, (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 60-78. In section 10, Hobbes asserts that "only an ontological

conception of God is possible,” and in section 15, that there is, however, “no proof for the existence of God.”

29. *Leviathan*, Ch. 46, pp. 435-450.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 440-441.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
33. Quoted by William M. Lamont, *Marginal Prynne 1600-1669*, (London, 1963), p. 78.
34. M. P. Gilmore, *Argument from Roman Law in Political Thought, 1200-1600*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1961).
35. *Leviathan*, pp. 255-256.
36. Pocock, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 201.