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Hobbes' Critique of Religion: A Necessary Byproduct of the Modern Project?

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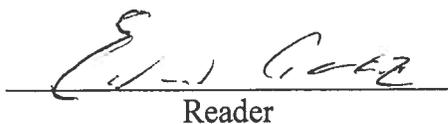
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Hobbes' Critique of Religion: A Necessary Byproduct of the Modern Project?

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Honors Thesis

Department of Political Science

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Abstract: Though Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* has been analyzed thoroughly by students of political theory, few scholars have examined his critique of religion and reinterpretation of scripture, which occurs in Part III of his work. Scholars who have attempted to analyze his critique do not agree about what he intended to accomplish with this reinterpretation. Some scholars claim that Hobbes' reinterpretation is merely subversive; others have noted that Hobbes did not deny completely the existence of a god; finally, many have noted that Hobbes merely critiqued religion in order to ensure that it would not damage his political and scientific projects. While there is evidence in the text to support all of these claims, this thesis will aid in closing a gap within the literature by offering a more thorough exegetical analysis of the Part III, chapter 42, entitled *Of Ecclesiastical Power*. Through a textual analysis of Hobbes' most substantive condemnation of religion and the Catholic Church, this thesis will examine the factors that led Hobbes to offer a radical reinterpretation of scripture.

Acknowledgements: I am not alone when I say that few have inspired me to the degree that Dr. Bill Parsons has. Dr. Parsons is an exceptional scholar, professor, and mentor. I cannot thank him enough for advising me during my time at Carroll and directing this thesis. Additionally, I would like to thank my readers, Dr. Ed Glowienka and Dr. John Ries. Dr. Glowienka and Dr. Ries read through my thesis with critical eyes and provided very valuable insight.

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Introduction

Thomas Hobbes was born in Wiltshire, England on April 5, 1588.¹ In the early 1600s, Hobbes left home to study at Magdalen Hall, Oxford and eventually became a secretary to Francis Bacon in 1620.² As a secretary to Bacon, Hobbes was exposed to “natural philosophy and scientific methodology.”³ In 1629, he published a “translation of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* into English.”⁴ Around this time, Hobbes also developed relationships with many prominent intellectual figures, including Galileo.⁵ With the knowledge that he gained from these experiences, Hobbes published his own works in the 1640s, including the *Elements of Law* and *De Cive*.⁶ In these works, Hobbes followed “his typical systematic pattern of starting with the workings of the mind and language, and developing the discussion towards political matters.”⁷

¹ “Thomas Hobbes,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, last modified February 4, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes/#1>.

² “Thomas Hobbes.”

³ “Francis Bacon,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed July 1, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/francis-bacon/>. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Francis Bacon was a lawyer and Member of Parliament during the “period of transition from the Renaissance to the early modern era.” Bacon wrote about topics such as “questions of law, state and religion,” “contemporary politics,” and the “possible conceptions of society.”

⁴ “Thomas Hobbes.”

⁵ “Thomas Hobbes.”

⁶ “Thomas Hobbes.”

⁷ “Thomas Hobbes,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

In 1651, Hobbes published his most notable work, the *Leviathan*.⁸ In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes addresses the workings of the mind and politics, but he also reinterprets scripture.⁹ Readers of the *Leviathan* remain perplexed by his goals and method, and especially what he intends to accomplish with his religious writing. Perhaps, as a result, much of the scholarship regarding Hobbes' *Leviathan* fails to consider the purpose of his religious inquiries. Further investigation into his religious writings is necessary. This thesis will analyze chapter 42 of the *Leviathan* in order to better explain how Hobbes' religious critique of the Church relates to the scientific, philosophical, and political elements of his project. This analysis will help readers to develop a fuller understanding of Hobbes' goals in writing the *Leviathan*.

While the *Leviathan* is quoted by many, his work is seldom regarded as a serious political project.¹⁰ According to Edwin Curley, Hobbes' message is not always clear; his *Leviathan* is very dense, with many components that do not clearly relate to his political project.¹¹ Hobbes considers "topics apparently far removed from the subject of political obedience: the nature of thought, language, and science."¹² In Part I, chapters one through five, Hobbes argues for a materialistic understanding of the universe that is grounded in radically relativistic sense perception.¹³ In latter portions of the text, he

⁸ "Thomas Hobbes."

⁹ "Thomas Hobbes."

¹⁰ Edwin Curley, introduction to *The Leviathan*, by Thomas Hobbes (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), viii.

¹¹ Curley 1994, viii.

¹² Curley 1994, viii-ix.

¹³ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*, edit. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), i.1-4.

offers a discussion of ghosts, hell, heaven, angels, and miracles that subjects those phenomena to Hobbes' scientific and political understanding of the universe. While these topics may not appear political, Hobbes addresses them because he seeks to create "new foundations for philosophy."¹⁴ Hobbes wants to make "the rules of life in society scientific for the first time."¹⁵ In order to accomplish this goal, Hobbes had to argue for a materialistic understanding of the world that is grounded in sense perception.¹⁶ His relativistic stance helps him to accomplish his political and philosophical goals.

The Structure of the *Leviathan*

Hobbes' book is divided into four very different sections: "Of Man," "Of Commonwealth," "Of a Christian Commonwealth," and "Of the Kingdom of Darkness." The first section includes many of Hobbes' scientific definitions and a discussion of human nature, the origins of political society, and the theoretical foundations of representative government. In Part I, Hobbes offers a relativistic account of human understanding, and he suggests that a man's thoughts are derived from physical sense.¹⁷ According to Hobbes, men know nothing that they cannot hear, see, taste, touch, or smell.¹⁸ Since men have different perceptions, there is no universal truth.¹⁹ Men are motivated by passions that manifest themselves as opinions of good and evil, but good

¹⁴ Curley 1994, ix.

¹⁵ Curley 1994, ix.

¹⁶ Curley 1994, ix.

¹⁷ *Leviathan* i.2-4.

¹⁸ *Leviathan* i.2-4.

¹⁹ *Leviathan* iv.6.

and evil are defined in purely relativistic and amoral terms.²⁰ Since men are motivated by passions, they desire more power than they need for personal security and tend to be violent.²¹

In Part I, chapters 14 and 15 Hobbes defines his laws of nature.²² Hobbes claims that these laws “forbid” men from engaging in acts that could destroy their own lives or the lives of others.²³ According to Hobbes, the first law of nature is “that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it, and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek and use all helps and advantages of war.”²⁴ According to the second law of nature, a man should “be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself.”²⁵ Hobbes offers 17 more laws of nature.²⁶ He begins the chapter by offering a definition of “justice.”²⁷ His definition is unconventional, as he suggests that “justice” is simply abiding by a covenant.²⁸ The final 16 laws concern maintenance of peace in the commonwealth.²⁹ With these laws, Hobbes establishes the importance maintaining peace through a covenant.

²⁰ *Leviathan* vi.7.

²¹ *Leviathan* xiii. 4-8.

²² *Leviathan* xiv.4-5, xv.1-33.

²³ *Leviathan* xiv.79.

²⁴ *Leviathan* xiv.4.

²⁵ *Leviathan* xiv.5.

²⁶ *Leviathan* xiv.1-33.

²⁷ *Leviathan* xv.1.

²⁸ *Leviathan* xv.16-33.

²⁹ *Leviathan* xv.1-33.

In Part II, Hobbes seeks to demonstrate that man needs a commonwealth to moderate his violent tendencies.³⁰ According to Hobbes, “the final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves in which we see them live in commonwealths is the foresight of their own preservation.”³¹ Hobbes’ commonwealth is an absolutist government, as he describes it as a “Mortal God.”³² When men voluntarily enter into a commonwealth, they give all their power and rights to it, and the commonwealth does whatever is necessary to keep peace.³³ If men do not enter into a commonwealth, they will be in a constant state of war.³⁴

Hobbes advocates for the creation of a sovereign that would act on behalf of all citizens of the commonwealth.³⁵ While many of Hobbes’ arguments may appear radical, Hobbes had many legitimate reasons to endorse an absolutist government. According to Vickie Sullivan, “having witnessed the Continent convulsed by the Thirty Years’ War and England torn by civil war, Hobbes believes that such conflict is the greatest threat to human beings and that the condition of war can and should be superseded.”³⁶ Hobbes’ philosophy and political goals were influenced by the violence that he observed.

³⁰ *Leviathan* xvii.1.

³¹ *Leviathan* xvii.1.

³² *Leviathan* xvii.13.

³³ *Leviathan* xvii.13.

³⁴ *Leviathan* xvii.2.

³⁵ Curley 1994, xxxiii.

³⁶ Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 81.

Additionally, Hobbes' project was influenced by his translation and study of Thucydides' *History*.³⁷ Due to his knowledge of the Peloponnesian War, Hobbes was aware that "power over others can be intoxicating."³⁸ Thus, Hobbes had many reasons to describe man as a violent creature.³⁹ Without government, Hobbes claims that men will engage in a "war of all against all."⁴⁰ In order to escape the violence of the state of nature, men must enter into a type of social contract that will allow for the creation of civil sovereign.⁴¹ According to Hobbes' arguments in Parts I and II, man is a violent and self-interested creature when he does not live under the control of a civil sovereign.

Parts III and IV are significantly different than the first two sections, as Hobbes cites scripture extensively in these portions of the text.⁴² Many of his claims are highly unorthodox.⁴³ Christopher McClure argues that there is a scholastic debate regarding what Hobbes was attempting to do with his reinterpretation of scripture.⁴⁴ Some scholars believe that Hobbes' account of religion and scripture in Parts III and IV is merely meant

³⁷ Curley 1994, xx.

³⁸ Curley 1994, xx.

³⁹ Curley 1994, xxi.

⁴⁰ Curley 1994, xxi.

⁴¹ Curley 1994, xxxiii.

⁴² *Leviathan* xiv.5. While Hobbes misappropriates scripture in Part I, chapter 14 when he changes the meaning of the Golden Rule, he does not reference scripture frequently in the first two parts of the text.

⁴³ Curley 1994, xii.

⁴⁴ Christopher McClure, "Hell and Anxiety in Hobbes's *Leviathan*," *The Review of Politics* 73 (2011): 3, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=015cb1ae-fe75-4faf-93a3-e5ff8284653b%40sessionmgr4004&vid=2&hid=4111>.

to be subversive.⁴⁵ Others argue that Hobbes may have been “a believer of some sort.”⁴⁶ Finally, others claim that he presents religion in an “idiosyncratic” fashion.⁴⁷

In these sections, Hobbes addresses topics such as doctrines necessary to salvation, the authority of the Church and priests, and beliefs common to Christianity such as heaven and hell, demons, miracles, ghosts, and purgatory. Why does Hobbes engage these diverse topics? Benjamin Milner claims that Hobbes spent significant time reinterpreting scripture because he wanted to decrease the power of the Catholic Church.⁴⁸ Milner references Part IV, in which Hobbes claims that the largest abuse is “the teaching, or presumption, that the Kingdom of God is to be found in the church, the clearest instance of which is the claim made by the Church of Rome for the papacy.”⁴⁹ Milner argues that Hobbes must diminish the authority of the Church because it poses a threat to political stability.⁵⁰ Paul Ulrich claims that Hobbes is “determined to show that

⁴⁵ McClure 2011, 3. See Edwin Curley, “Calvin and Hobbes, or, Hobbes as an Orthodox Christian,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (1996): 256–71; Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Leo Strauss, “On the Basis of Hobbes’s Political Philosophy,” in *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), chap. 7. This presentation of the scholarship was compiled by Christopher McClure.

⁴⁶ McClure 2011, 3. See Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes*; Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan*. This presentation of the scholarship was compiled by Christopher McClure.

⁴⁷ McClure 2011, 3. For example, Joshua Mitchell, *Not by Reason Alone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). This citation was provided by Christopher McClure.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Milner, “Hobbes: On Religion,” *Political Theory* 16 (August 1988): 416-417, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/191579>.

⁴⁹ Milner 1988, 416.

⁵⁰ Milner 1988, 417.

some of the Church's key teachings" are not supported by scripture.⁵¹ According to Ulrich, Hobbes references many passages that the Church cites as evidence of purgatory, but he "finds 'neither the world nor the thing of purgatory' in any of them."⁵² Hobbes makes this claim because the existence of purgatory suggests that "the soul is something separate from the body."⁵³ This teaching would damage Hobbes' goal of promoting a scientific understanding of the world and would diminish the authority of earthly judgments. Hobbes also chooses to address miracles. He does not deny that miracles exist, but nonetheless offers a famously subversive account of them.⁵⁴ He differentiates between "mediate" and "immediate" works of God.⁵⁵ "Immediate" miracles occur at the "hand of God," while "mediate" miracles occur "by way of nature."⁵⁶ These distinctions allow Hobbes to convince the subjects of the sovereign that only God or natural causes can be the source of miracles.⁵⁷ People who claim to speak to God cannot create a miracle, and subjects should not believe that anyone but God can cause a miracle.⁵⁸ By narrowing the definition of miracles, Hobbes seeks to convince men to listen to the

⁵¹ Paul Ulrich, "Secularism and Enlightenment in *Leviathan*," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 12-15, 2012, 16.

⁵² Ulrich 2012, 16.

⁵³ Ulrich 2012, 17.

⁵⁴ John Whipple, "Hobbes on Miracles," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 89 (2008): 123, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=7a96c217-feb3-468a-80fa-a4dd1b193d67%40sessionmgr111&vid=1&hid=109&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=a fh&AN=30454975>.

⁵⁵ Whipple 2008, 123-124.

⁵⁶ Whipple 2008, 124.

⁵⁷ Whipple 2008, 124.

⁵⁸ Whipple 2008, 124

sovereign instead of men who claim to speak to God. As a result, this teaching helps Hobbes to promote political stability.

According to Christopher McClure, “Hobbes’s reinterpretation of hell is meant to redirect peoples’ anxiety about whether they will get into heaven or hell into anxiety about whether there is a hell.”⁵⁹ As humans contemplate whether or not there is a hell, they will eventually realize that they know nothing about hell.⁶⁰ According to McClure, “the impossibility of certain knowledge about the correct path to salvation is also the precondition to thinking about religion as a personal choice.”⁶¹ With this claim, McClure is implying that there is a theoretical connection between Hobbes’s thought and the ethics of toleration.

Hobbes’ description of hell allows for the scientific inquiry that he desires. However, he eventually claims that hell “will be on earth and the damned will live after the Resurrection in a state of ‘grief, and discontent of mind, from the sight of that Eternal felicity in others.’”⁶² Eventually, the damned will “die a second death.”⁶³ Hobbes describes hell in this way in order to demonstrate that “the damned will live much as those do in the present world who live under bad” or “non-Hobbesian government.”⁶⁴ Thus, his description of hell is also conducive to his political goals. Hobbes suggests that

⁵⁹ McClure 2011, 1.

⁶⁰ McClure 2011, 3.

⁶¹ McClure 2011, 4.

⁶² McClure 2011, 5.

⁶³ McClure 2011, 5.

⁶⁴ McClure 2011, 6.

his absolute sovereign is the only method of achieving peace, political stability, and happiness.

Hobbes' Religious Thought and the Catholic Church

Argument like these led “many of Hobbes’ contemporaries” to claim that he was an atheist.⁶⁵ However, “most twentieth-century interpreters have read him as a sincere, if somewhat unorthodox, theist.”⁶⁶ While Hobbes reinterprets scripture, readers who claim that he is an Atheist ignore Hobbes’ “affirmations that, however ignorant we may be of God’s nature, we can at least know by natural reason that God exists.”⁶⁷ Thus, while Hobbes reinterprets scripture, he does not deny that God exists, even though his conception of God appears to be in tension with the God of Christianity.

If Hobbes was not attempting to persuade people to abandon Christianity, he must have had another reason to reinterpret scripture. His religious writing is much more clearly an attack on the Church. This is not surprising. The Pope claims have authority from God, and he represents a challenge to civil authority.⁶⁸ According to Hobbes, the work of Aristotle, which is supported by the Church, cannot be regarded as science, but rather “vain philosophy.”⁶⁹ Clearly, Hobbes did not believe that the Church would allow for true scientific inquiry. When considering these factors, it is clear that Hobbes, regardless of judgment of the truth of Christianity, had to discourse on religion in order to accomplish his political and scientific goals.

⁶⁵ Curley 1994, xiii.

⁶⁶ Curley 1994, xiii.

⁶⁷ Curley 1994, xiii.

⁶⁸ Milner 1988, 416.

⁶⁹ *Leviathan* xlvi.14, 30.

Hobbes' reinterpretation can be confusing, as he significantly damages the original meaning of many Biblical passages and ignores other important passages. Furthermore, there is a tension in Hobbes' presentation of scripture. If Hobbes merely wanted to present religion in a way that would be more conducive to political stability, his radical reinterpretation of key passages would not have been necessary. This thesis seeks to clarify the reasons for his subversive reading by examining his critique of the Catholic Church in Part III, chapter 42, "Of Power Ecclesiastical." In this chapter, Hobbes offers some of his most severe attacks on the Church and its teachings. Through textual analysis of this chapter, I will advance a better understanding of the relationship between Hobbes' political project and his radical critique of the Catholic Church and its teachings.

Chapter I: Literature Review

Why Reinterpret Scripture?

In order to better understand the importance of a critique of religion to Hobbes' project, "one must recall the situation in which this science originated."⁷⁰ He wrote the *Leviathan* following the Protestant Reformation.⁷¹ The Reformation made many question "theological politics," as it was leading to the "horrors of the wars of religion," rather than "order and peace."⁷² By writing the *Leviathan*, Hobbes sought to create order and stability in society.⁷³ According to Leo Strauss, "if order and peace were finally to come about, what was required, as it seemed, was a politics resting solely on the self-sufficient reflection of man."⁷⁴ While Socrates and other thinkers of his time had discoursed on a type of politics that was based on "the self sufficient reflection of man," classical political philosophers were unable or unwilling to divorce theology from political life entirely.⁷⁵ In order to establish political stability, Hobbes needed to construct a new type of politics that would never "relapse" into theological politics. To accomplish this goal, Hobbes reinterprets some very important Christian teachings, such as miracles, hell, and prophecy.

⁷⁰ Strauss 2011, 28.

⁷¹ Strauss 2011, 28.

⁷² Strauss 2011, 28.

⁷³ Strauss 2011, 28.

⁷⁴ Strauss 2011, 28.

⁷⁵ Straus 2011, 28.

Hell, Miracles, and the Great Commission: Hobbes' Reinterpretation of Key Biblical Teachings

Christopher McClure seeks to determine why Hobbes reinterprets Hell.⁷⁶ McClure's contribution to the scholarship is narrow in scope, but nonetheless illuminating. He asserts that "Hobbes's interpretation of hell is meant to redirect individuals' anxiety about whether they are destined for heaven or hell into anxiety about whether there is a heaven or hell, and if so, how they could know anything certain about either."⁷⁷ McClure further notes that Hobbes realized that citizens of his commonwealth would probably not adhere to his theological beliefs.⁷⁸ However, he did believe that "that they would be left with an intermediate belief that they would be averse to examining."⁷⁹

When Hobbes initially discusses hell, he does not claim to know where it is.⁸⁰ However, he eventually argues that hell "will be on earth and the damned will live after the Resurrection in a state of 'grief, and discontent of mind, from the sight of that Eternal felicity in others' until they are cast into the everlasting fire and die a second death," which is quick.⁸¹ Unlike the Biblical description of hell, the "damned" in Hobbes' hell are not suffering from eternal burning and pain.⁸² There appears to be no "everlasting

⁷⁶ McClure 2011, 1.

⁷⁷ McClure 2011, 3.

⁷⁸ McClure 2011, 3-4.

⁷⁹ McClure 2011, 4.

⁸⁰ McClure 2011, 4.

⁸¹ McClure 2011, 5.

⁸² McClure 2011, 5.

fire” in Hobbes’ hell.⁸³ However, Hobbes eventually ensures that his account appears somewhat more consistent with the Biblical account.⁸⁴ In Hobbes’ hell, the damned must “marry, procreate, and raise children before they are killed as some unspecified time.”⁸⁵ The children of the damned must also procreate before they are killed as well.⁸⁶ This continuous process “will provide fuel” for the “eternal fire” that is supposed burn in hell, according to the Bible.⁸⁷

While Hobbes does include an “eternal fire” in his description, his account is not truly consistent with the Biblical account. However, his description of hell may help him to suggest to his readers that hell may not be nearly as miserable as they think it is.⁸⁸ Additionally, his novel description makes his readers realize that they do not actually possess knowledge about the afterlife.⁸⁹ McClure maintains that though his readers will probably not accept his theological reinterpretation, Hobbes has forced them to think of it as a “reasonable possibility.”⁹⁰ This account definitely serves as a critique of revealed religion. Hobbes forces his readers to reason about the afterlife, even if they conclude that they know very little about it.

⁸³ McClure 2011, 5.

⁸⁴ McClure 2011, 5.

⁸⁵ McClure 2011, 5.

⁸⁶ McClure 2011, 5.

⁸⁷ McClure 2011, 5. McClure is referencing the “eternal fire” that is described in Matthew 25:41.

⁸⁸ McClure 2011, 24.

⁸⁹ McClure 2011, 24.

⁹⁰ McClure 2011, 24.

In addition to his reinterpretation of hell, Hobbes also reinterprets miracles in a way that is very damaging to the Biblical account thereof.⁹¹ According to John Whipple, scholars have presented a variety of reasons as to why Hobbes reinterpreted miracles.⁹² Whipple notes that Edwin Curley “takes the discussion of miracles to confirm his general interpretation of Hobbes’s attitude towards religion; it needs to be undermined because it constitutes a great threat to the political order and the progress of science.”⁹³

A.P. Martinich, presents a different argument regarding Hobbes’ reinterpretation of miracles.⁹⁴ Martinich argues that Hobbes “circumscribed the concepts of revelation, prophets, and miracles in such a way that genuine religious phenomena would be preserved without conflicting with modern science and without destabilizing established political units.”⁹⁵ According to Martinich, Hobbes is “committed to the Bible” and “what the Bible says.”⁹⁶ Whipple rejects these arguments, as he claims that Hobbes has an exclusively political goal in mind when he reinterprets miracles.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Whipple 2008, 118.

⁹² Whipple 2008, 118.

⁹³ Whipple 2008, 118. Readers should reference the introduction for this critique

⁹⁴ A.P Martinich, *The Two Gods of the Leviathan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 246.

⁹⁵ Martinich 1991, 246.

⁹⁶ Martinich 1991, 244.

⁹⁷ Whipple 2008, 118.

According to Whipple, men who believe in miracles may pose a problem for political stability.⁹⁸ However, Hobbes realizes that people will continue to believe in miracles.⁹⁹ While he does not seek to eliminate belief in miracles all together, he must convince men that “one common frequent error comes in the form of a belief that many entities have the power to do things that are above the ordinary course of nature.”¹⁰⁰ Hobbes diminishes faith in many events that men assume to be a result of “divine interventions.”¹⁰¹

Much like his reinterpretation of hell, Hobbes’ definitions of miracles are intended to critique revealed religion. While scholars such as Curley and Martinich may not argue that Hobbes’s goal with miracles is primarily political, all of these scholars see the reinterpretation of miracles as somewhat necessary to his political project.

Many readers of the *Leviathan* assume that Hobbes’ most significant arguments are placed in Parts I and II of the *Leviathan*.¹⁰² However, according to Paul Ulrich, Hobbes believed that his critique of religion was far more important than the scientific and political project he sets forth in earlier portions of the text.¹⁰³ While Hobbes critiques religion and reinterprets scripture, he does not try to eliminate religion from society, as he

⁹⁸ Whipple 2008, 132.

⁹⁹ Whipple 2008, 132.

¹⁰⁰ Whipple 2008, 132.

¹⁰¹ Whipple 2008, 133.

¹⁰² Paul Ulrich, “Making Religion Rational and Reconciling Justice in *Leviathan*,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Pacific Northwest Political Science Association, Vancouver, British, Columbia, October 17-19, 2013, 1.

¹⁰³ Ulrich 2013, 1.

knows that “human nature makes men religious.”¹⁰⁴ Humans want to know the “causes of things.”¹⁰⁵ Despite the fact that he does not seek to eliminate religion, Hobbes does attack the Church in three ways.¹⁰⁶ Hobbes claims that “the Church profits in very earthly ways from its teachings; that some of the Church’s teachings are not found in scripture; and that a number of the Church’s key teachings depend on Aristotelian terminology and are literally incomprehensible.”¹⁰⁷ Ulrich notes that Hobbes mainly focuses on the second attack in Part III.¹⁰⁸

While Hobbes reinterprets several Biblical passages in Part III, he offers his longest discussion in chapter 42, “Of Power Ecclesiastical.”¹⁰⁹ In this chapter, Hobbes argues that the apostles were given the power to “preach the gospel,” but Jesus did not grant them any “civil authority.”¹¹⁰ Hobbes ignores the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 in order to make this claim, and much of Acts, which describes the early Church’s often acrimonious relations with civil authority.¹¹¹ With this interpretation, Hobbes attempts to demonstrate that the Church’s political power is not grounded in Biblical teachings and the power of Peter.¹¹² What does Hobbes seek to accomplish with

¹⁰⁴ Ulrich 2013, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Ulrich 2013, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Ulrich 2013, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Ulrich 2013, 14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Ulrich 2013, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ulrich 2013, 17.

¹¹⁰ Ulrich 2013, 17.

¹¹¹ Matthew 28: 16-20.

¹¹² Ulrich 2013, 18.

a claim like this? According to Ulrich, “the whole purpose of the *Leviathan* is to have domination as the God of the Book of Job does.”¹¹³ Hobbes wants to demonstrate that the power of the sovereign is “absolute,” much like God’s power.¹¹⁴ Much like the God in the Book of Job, Hobbes’ commonwealth is “all-powerful,” or rather, not required to answer human claims of justice.¹¹⁵ In Hobbes’ commonwealth, “there is no cosmic or divine support for the ordinary human notion of justice as ‘what I deserve.’”¹¹⁶ Since he provides no support for claims of justice, Hobbes is able to eliminate the “pride” of men who live in the commonwealth.¹¹⁷

Ulrich suggests that Hobbes sought to make men of the commonwealth more humble. Men should answer to the sovereign and never question whether or not they are receiving fair treatment. With his reinterpretation of scripture in chapter 42, Hobbes takes civil power away from the apostles and those who claim to have inherited power in Rome and gives it to the sovereign. Ulrich’s article also suggests that Hobbes’ reinterpretation of scripture is primarily a critique of the power of revealed religion. Hobbes wanted to ensure that prideful men who claim to speak to God will not take civil authority away from the commonwealth.

¹¹³ Ulrich 2013, 26.

¹¹⁴ Ulrich 2013, 25.

¹¹⁵ Ulrich 2013, 33.

¹¹⁶ Ulrich 2013, 33.

¹¹⁷ Ulrich 2013, 33.

Reactions to Hobbes' Critique of Religion

According to Jon Parkin, “by the late 1650s Hobbes’s paradoxical approach to religion and philosophy had earned him a variety of public images, some of which had taken on greater importance than others.”¹¹⁸ Surprisingly, many of Hobbes opponents did not offer harsh critiques of his work, even though they suspected he might be an atheist.¹¹⁹ Since many of his critics, such as Robert Filmer, were beginning to suspect that he was not a devout Christian, Hobbes “attempted to portray himself as an orthodox Protestant thinker.”¹²⁰ Hobbes’ political views were not embraced either.¹²¹ Parkin claims that “in terms of politics, there were essentially two typical public accounts of *Leviathan* that emerged from the internal tensions of the book: *Leviathan* as a primer of arbitrary absolutism, and *Leviathan* as rebel’s catechism.”¹²² By the end of the 1600s, critical discussion regarding Hobbes’ project occurred not only among scholars, but also in society in general.¹²³ Many of his critics began to produce scholarship that “exposed the heterodoxy of his project.”¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, edit. Quentin Skinner and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 201.

¹¹⁹ Parkin 2007, 201.

¹²⁰ Parkin 2007, 201.

¹²¹ Parkin 2007, 202.

¹²² Parkin 2007, 202.

¹²³ Parkin 2007, 202.

¹²⁴ Parkin 2007, 204.

While many scholars openly expressed their disagreement with Hobbes in their writing, many young people found Hobbes' work to be "appealing."¹²⁵ Much like Hobbes, young people had experienced "civil war and political uncertainty."¹²⁶ When these grew older and wrote for themselves, many of them included Hobbesian ideas in their work.¹²⁷ One of these men was John Locke.¹²⁸ According to Parkin, Locke was "deeply affected by the political and religious disruption that had marked his coming to maturity," and he believed that "Christian liberty" would not allow for stability.¹²⁹

Many religious authorities of the time were very critical of Hobbes' critique of religion. With their writing, they tried to stop the influence of Hobbesian thought on society. However, many young readers of Hobbes were drawn to the arguments and began to embrace many of his ideas. Clearly, Hobbes had an immediate impact on society. Considering his influence on political thought of the time, readers of the *Leviathan* must contemplate what Hobbes intended to accomplish with his critique of religion. Did Hobbes know that thinkers of the time would immediately embrace his ideals? Was Hobbes attempting to launch the modern project, or was he responding to immediate political concerns? Perhaps he believed that his work would immediately impact the political system.

¹²⁵ Parkin 2007, 204-205.

¹²⁶ Parkin 2007, 205.

¹²⁷ Parkin 2007, 205.

¹²⁸ Parkin 2007, 205.

¹²⁹ Parkin 2007, 209.

Main Critical Approaches to Hobbes

Scholars generally agree that Hobbes reinterprets scripture in part because he thought that Christianity and the Church posed problems to political stability. However, many scholars present different reasons as to why Hobbes thought that a reinterpretation of scripture would be so valuable. If Hobbes was responding to immediate political concerns, it is possible that Hobbes thought that his political project would be implemented. If Hobbes wanted his political project to be successfully implemented, he would have to ensure that Christianity did not pose a threat to the state. While he may not have needed to engage in such a radical reinterpretation of scripture, Hobbes had to address religion to some extent in order to accomplish his political goals.

However, Hobbes may have harbored greater ambitions. Hobbes may have engaged in this radical reinterpretation because he thought it was necessary in order to launch the modern project and especially the scientific project. Hobbes's project is predicated on an individual's ability to reason. In order to make reason and Christianity compatible, he needed to reinterpret key Biblical teachings. Both of these arguments seem plausible. However, much of the scholarship fails to provide an explanation regarding what Hobbes sought to accomplish with his reinterpretation of scripture in chapter 42. Clearly, the scholarship establishes that Hobbes thought that Christianity and the Church posed problems for his project and modernity in general. However, this fact alone is not a sufficient analysis of Hobbes' religious project. Further examination of the literature can help explain what Hobbes sought to accomplish with his reinterpretation.

Vickie Sullivan provides fruitful analysis regarding the goals of Hobbes' entire project. In her book, *Machiavelli, Hobbes and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England*, Sullivan compares and contrasts the intentions of Machiavelli and Hobbes.¹³⁰ She notes that Hobbes believed that "peace and improvement in human life" were of the utmost importance.¹³¹ While Machiavelli rejoiced in the tumults of Rome, Hobbes was repulsed by them.¹³² Republicanism results in "strife," and Hobbes sees monarchy as the necessary alternative to this violence.¹³³ Sullivan further notes that Hobbes advocates for equality in his commonwealth as a way of discouraging ambition among men, as these men will not allow for political stability.¹³⁴ For Hobbes, "the very purpose of the creation of government," is "to overcome war."¹³⁵ Sullivan asserts that Hobbes had these goals in mind partially because he had been exposed to the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War.¹³⁶ With Sullivan's claims in mind, it seems unlikely that Hobbes was not responding to immediate political concerns. Hobbes had seen the damages of war, and he wanted to find a lasting solution to the problem. This is why Hobbes was so concerned with peace. Sullivan's literature suggests that Hobbes' political project was not merely rhetorical. His project was meant to create stability.

¹³⁰ Sullivan 2004, 81.

¹³¹ Sullivan 2004, 81.

¹³² Sullivan 2004, 82.

¹³³ Sullivan 2004, 82.

¹³⁴ Sullivan 2004, 82.

¹³⁵ Sullivan 2004, 83.

¹³⁶ Sullivan 2004, 81.

Another scholar, Leo Strauss, claims that Hobbes sought to allow for scientific inquiry by eliminating the authority of “theological politics.”¹³⁷ Strauss asserts that “Hobbes founded his political science in opposition to two frequently but not always allied traditions: the tradition of philosophic politics, whose originator was for him Socrates, and the tradition of theological politics, which appeals to revelation.”¹³⁸ He further notes that revelation was more of a concern for Hobbes, since it had more “authority than classical politics” at this time.¹³⁹ Thus, Hobbes’ “attack is directed principally against the tradition of theological politics.”¹⁴⁰ While some of the connections between Hobbes’ political project and his reinterpretation of scripture are not obvious, it is clear that religion poses a large problem for his political project.¹⁴¹ According to Strauss, Hobbes’ politics is based on the axiom that violent death is the greatest evil; religion by contrast, teaches that there is a greater evil even than violent death,” which is “eternal punishment after death in hell.”¹⁴² While Hobbes seeks to ensure that all members of the civil sovereign fear violent death, he is even more concerned with this teaching because it depends not on reason, but on revelation.¹⁴³ In order to conclude that a life after death exists, one must believe in revelation.¹⁴⁴ One

¹³⁷ Leo Strauss, *Hobbes’s Critique of Religion and Related Writings*, trans. and edit. Gabriel Bartlett and Svetozar Minkov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 26.

¹³⁸ Strauss 2011, 26.

¹³⁹ Strauss 2011, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Strauss 2011, 26.

¹⁴¹ Strauss 2011, 26.

¹⁴² Strauss 2011, 26.

¹⁴³ Strauss 2011, 27.

¹⁴⁴ Strauss 2011, 27.

cannot make this conclusion with reason alone, which makes this teaching very damaging to Hobbes' project.¹⁴⁵ Revealed religion poses a legitimate threat to Hobbes' science, which based upon a materialistic understanding of the world.¹⁴⁶

Ronald Beiner also claims that Hobbes understood revealed religion to be a problem for his project.¹⁴⁷ Beiner suggests that with his reinterpretation of scripture, Hobbes creates a civil religion that was "political," but could "claim the sanction of Christianity by emphasizing the continuity between the New Testament and the Old Testament."¹⁴⁸ Like many other scholars who have inquired into the subject, Beiner asserts that Hobbes believed Christianity to be a threat to "temporal power."¹⁴⁹ According to Beiner, Hobbes attempts to "judaicize" Christianity in Part III to ensure that it will not endanger his political project.¹⁵⁰ In Part III, Hobbes claims that "Moses founds a theocracy" in which men "claim to rule in the name of God."¹⁵¹ According to Hobbes, the Israelites recognize that his regime, in which men claim to have "prophetic powers," does not allow for political stability.¹⁵² The Israelites know that they need a single "civil

¹⁴⁵ Strauss 2011, 27.

¹⁴⁶ Strauss 2011, 27.

¹⁴⁷ Ronald Beiner, "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion," *The Review of Politics* 55 (1993): 628-629, accessed November 22, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407609>.

¹⁴⁸ Beiner 1993, 635.

¹⁴⁹ Beiner 1993, 625.

¹⁵⁰ Beiner 1993, 628.

¹⁵¹ Beiner 1993, 627.

¹⁵² Beiner 1993, 627.

authority,” and they “demand ‘a King, after the manner of their neighbour nations.’”¹⁵³ Finally, Hobbes claims that this “nontheocratic regime endures” until “Christ ‘restores’ the Kingdom of God.”¹⁵⁴ With this discussion, Hobbes suggests that “Christian states” could function properly as long as “the religion founded by Christ is interpreted as if it were the religion of the Old Testament, and Christ himself is interpreted as if he was Moses.”¹⁵⁵ According to Beiner, Hobbes “judaicizes” Christianity in order to limit the religion to “this-worldly claims,” and eliminate the possibility of “other-worldly claims.”¹⁵⁶ Beiner asserts that Hobbes radically reinterprets scripture in an effort to make it compatible with his political project.¹⁵⁷ Beiner’s work suggests that Hobbes was mostly concerned with a critique of revealed religion, as opposed to natural religion. Hobbes realizes that prophets will harm his political project. He wants his sovereign to be Christian, because “only through (nominally Christian) theocratic politics can the sovereign claim sufficient authority to strip Christianity of the otherworldly teachings.”¹⁵⁸ However, Hobbes’ sovereign must have the power that Moses had to ensure that no one will challenge his authority.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Beiner 1993, 627-628.

¹⁵⁴ Beiner 1993, 628.

¹⁵⁵ Beiner 1993, 628.

¹⁵⁶ Beiner 1993, 628.

¹⁵⁷ Beiner 1993, 630.

¹⁵⁸ Beiner 1993, 629.

¹⁵⁹ Beiner 1993, 629.

Devin Stauffer also offers insight into the question of Hobbes' intentions with his critique of religion. According to Stauffer, Hobbes has a "two-sided strategy."¹⁶⁰ Hobbes wants to offer a "rationalistic and humanistic interpretation of the Bible," while also demonstrating "just how much one must distort the surface message of the Bible in order to bring it into accordance with reason."¹⁶¹ While Stauffer does not address arguments that occur in Part III, he does provide a lengthy discussion of chapter 12, "Of Religion," which provides insight into Hobbes' goals regarding religion in general.

In chapter 12, Hobbes claims that "the 'seed' of religion must lie in some quality peculiar to human beings."¹⁶² Hobbes later identifies this quality as "anxiety," which is a result of man's "concern for security in the future."¹⁶³ According to Hobbes, anxiety is the cause of religion.¹⁶⁴ Hobbes further notes that anxiety and fear led to the creation of the "gods of the Gentiles."¹⁶⁵ Realizing the radical implications of this line of argumentation, Hobbes quickly draws a distinction between the pagan gods and the "one God, eternal, infinite, and omnipotent," though he does not explicitly claim that this God is Christian.¹⁶⁶ This God results not from anxiety, but from a "desire 'to know the causes of the natural bodies.'"¹⁶⁷ Hobbes later claims that this God is a "first mover," who is

¹⁶⁰ Devin Stauffer, "Of Religion in Hobbes's *Leviathan*," *The Journal of Politics* 72 (2010): 879, accessed November 22, 2013, doi: 10.1017/S0022381610000228.

¹⁶¹ Stauffer 2010, 870.

¹⁶² Stauffer 2010, 872.

¹⁶³ Stauffer 2010, 872.

¹⁶⁴ Stauffer 2010, 872.

¹⁶⁵ Stauffer 2010, 872.

¹⁶⁶ Stauffer 2010, 872.

¹⁶⁷ Stauffer 2010, 872.

“incomprehensible” to humans.¹⁶⁸ His discussion of the causes of pagan religion and the Christian religion are problematic, as he seems to suggest that both are rooted in “superstition.”¹⁶⁹ However, he eventually suggests that Biblical religion is “cultivated by ‘God’s commandment and direction,’” not just superstition.¹⁷⁰ While he insists that Christianity is superior, this comparison demonstrates that Christianity, like the pagan religion, grows out of “fear and ignorance.”¹⁷¹ Eventually, Hobbes even suggests that the pagan religion was more conducive to political stability than the Christian religion.¹⁷²

Stauffer’s analysis of chapter twelve provides critical insight into what he seeks to accomplish in Part III. He suggests that Hobbes was mostly concerned with launching the modern project, rather than responding to immediate political concerns. If Hobbes employed the “two-sided strategy” that Stauffer claims he used, he reinterpreted scripture in an effort to bring religion into accordance with his scientific project and demonstrate the difficulty of doing so. However, Stauffer does note that Hobbes addressed concerns of political stability in chapter 12. Though Stauffer’s analysis suggests that Hobbes’ religious critique is primarily a result of his scientific project, he does not deny that Hobbes was deeply concerned about political stability.

¹⁶⁸ Stauffer 2010, 873.

¹⁶⁹ Stauffer 2010, 874.

¹⁷⁰ Stauffer 2010, 874.

¹⁷¹ Stauffer 2010, 875.

¹⁷² Stauffer 2010, 875.

Many readers of the *Leviathan* assume that Hobbes' commonwealth did not allow for any individual liberties, as Hobbes was a "supporter of absolutism."¹⁷³ However, J. Judd Owen asserts that "Hobbes sought to secure the greatest possible scope for private liberty, or as we would now call it, toleration."¹⁷⁴ However, this toleration is "qualified."¹⁷⁵ According to Hobbes, the state of nature allows for "absolute individual liberty," as men can do whatever they wish to do.¹⁷⁶ However, the state of nature does not allow men to "satisfy" their desire for "mere life."¹⁷⁷ While a "subjects freedom is limited by the law," a subject's "freedom 'to do what he has a will to do' is far greater in civil society than in the state of nature."¹⁷⁸

Another scholar, Gary Remer, presents a similar argument. Remer attempts to determine whether or not Hobbes abandoned the humanist thought that he was influenced by in the early 1600s.¹⁷⁹ According to Remer, "Hobbes did break with his humanist past," because his "experience with civil war led him to conclude that, if chaos was to be avoided, knowledge had to be based on unequivocal foundations."¹⁸⁰ Hobbes believes

¹⁷³ J. Judd Owen, "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism," *Polity* 37 (2005): 131, accessed November 22, 2013, doi: 10.1057/palgrave.polity.2300004.

¹⁷⁴ Owen 2005, 131.

¹⁷⁵ Owen 2005, 131.

¹⁷⁶ Owen 2005, 134.

¹⁷⁷ Owen 2005, 134.

¹⁷⁸ Owen 2005, 135. While Owen does not analyze Hobbes' reinterpretation of scripture in Part III, his analysis suggests that Hobbes allows for toleration because he wants to encourage an individual to think freely, as long as his or her thought's do not pose problems for political stability.

¹⁷⁹ Gary Remer, "Hobbes, the Rhetorical Tradition, and Toleration," *The Review of Politics* 54 (1992): 6-7, accessed November 22, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407925>.

¹⁸⁰ Remer 1992, 7.

that “religious rhetoric” is particularly prone to civil discord.¹⁸¹ If Remer’s assertions are correct, one could easily conclude that Hobbes’ commonwealth was not tolerant. However, Remer argues that “Hobbesian political theory is, in principle, neutral on the question of toleration; since toleration is a prerogative of the ruler, the Hobbesian commonwealth can be either tolerant or intolerant.”¹⁸² Though he knows that “religious rhetoric” can be dangerous, he also acknowledges that men are “naturally drawn to religion out of fear of the unknown.”¹⁸³ While the state must regulate “public worship,” the commonwealth has no legitimate interest in regulating private beliefs, as private beliefs are not harmful to the commonwealth.¹⁸⁴ Remer’s analysis, much like Owen’s, suggests that Hobbes was very concerned with launching the modern project. Hobbes could have chosen to restrict religious thought all together, as he believed it to be dangerous. However, he does not restrict the private thoughts of men. Hobbes was willing to allow men to reason for themselves, as this was an essential component of the modern project.

While some of the scholarship suggests that Hobbes was primarily concerned with launching the modern project, analysis from other scholars makes a reader wonder if Hobbes wanted his political project to be implemented immediately. Perhaps he was responding to political concerns of his time that needed an immediate remedy. Benjamin Milner argues that Hobbes’ reinterpretations in Part III are not absolutely necessary in

¹⁸¹ Remer 1992, 9.

¹⁸² Remer 1992, 8.

¹⁸³ Remer 1992, 18.

¹⁸⁴ Remer 1992, 32.

order to “fashion a marriage of convenience between sovereignty and religion.”¹⁸⁵ Hobbes’ reinterpretation could have been more “orthodox.”¹⁸⁶ According to Milner, Hobbes addresses the “three great abuses of scripture” in Part IV.¹⁸⁷ Hobbes claims that the “the greatest of these abuses is the teaching, or presumption, that the Kingdom of God is to be found the church.”¹⁸⁸ Hobbes makes this claim because he believes that “self-serving men” who claim to have the authority of God pose the “greatest threat to civil society.”¹⁸⁹ If Milner is correct, it seems likely that Hobbes was responding to immediate political concerns rather than simply trying to launch the modern project. In order to reconcile religion with his political and scientific projects, Hobbes would not have needed to engage in such a radical reinterpretation. With Milner’s claims in mind, it seems probable that Hobbes also reinterpreted scripture in order to respond to the immediate political concerns that the Church was causing.

Methodology

In order to better examine and understand Hobbes’ critique of religion, this thesis will examine Hobbes’ critique of ecclesiastical power in chapter 42. Before proceeding to that chapter, however, it is necessary to establish a better understanding of Hobbes’ preliminary arguments concerning religion and its power in civil society.

¹⁸⁵ Milner 1988, 416.

¹⁸⁶ Milner 1988, 416.

¹⁸⁷ Milner 1988, 416.

¹⁸⁸ Milner 1988, 416.

¹⁸⁹ Milner 1988, 417.

Chapter II: An Introduction to Hobbes' Critique of Religion

Though the focus of this paper will primarily be Part III, Chapter 42, it is necessary to provide an introduction to Hobbes' treatment of religion. In chapter 11, Hobbes defines natural religion.¹⁹⁰ He notes that "curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect to seek the cause."¹⁹¹ This consideration leads men to believe that there is one God who is the initial cause of all events, though they can know nothing about him. However, Hobbes also notes in this chapter that "ignorance of natural causes disposeth a man to credulity, so as to believe many times impossibilities."¹⁹² He further notes that "credulity, because men love to be hearkened unto company, disposeth them to lying; so that ignorance itself without malice is able to make a man both to believe lies and tell them."¹⁹³ According to Hobbes, many men lie in order to be heard by others.

At the beginning of chapter 12, Hobbes asserts that the "seed of religion" is "only in man."¹⁹⁴ This is a result of the fact that men, unlike other animals, have a desire to know the causes of the "events they see."¹⁹⁵ According to Hobbes, men try to determine the causes of events they experience, but they often have to "suppose" them.¹⁹⁶ Man may suppose these causes on his own, or he may rely on the "authority of other men" in order

¹⁹⁰ *Leviathan* xi.25.

¹⁹¹ *Leviathan* xi.25.

¹⁹² *Leviathan* xi.23.

¹⁹³ *Leviathan* xi.23.

¹⁹⁴ *Leviathan* xii.1.

¹⁹⁵ *Leviathan* xii.2.

¹⁹⁶ *Leviathan* xii.4.

to suppose them.¹⁹⁷ Hobbes claims that causes are most often “invisible.”¹⁹⁸ However, he acknowledges that causes can be observed through indirect phenomena.¹⁹⁹

Hobbes asserts that “the acknowledging of one God, eternal, infinite, and omnipotent, may more easily be derived from the desire men have to know the causes of natural bodies, and their several virtues and operations than from the fear of what was to befall them in time to come.”²⁰⁰ With this discussion, Hobbes suggests that a philosophic belief in God results from curiosity, rather than fear. However, few men fit into this category.

Instead, most religions, however, are a result of anxiety and fear.²⁰¹ Men who are “ignorant” of the causes of an event are plagued by “perpetual fear.”²⁰² These men want to protect themselves from “evil,” but they do not know how to do so, as they possess no knowledge of causes.²⁰³ They believe that they should fear the “power” that causes events, even though they cannot see this power.²⁰⁴ For these reasons, they turn to religion.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ *Leviathan* xii.4.

¹⁹⁸ *Leviathan* xii.4.

¹⁹⁹ *Leviathan* xii.8.

²⁰⁰ *Leviathan* xii.6.

²⁰¹ *Leviathan* xii.5-xii.6.

²⁰² *Leviathan* xii.6.

²⁰³ *Leviathan* xii.5-xii.6.

²⁰⁴ *Leviathan* xii.6.

²⁰⁵ *Leviathan* xii.6.

Hobbes presents the philosophic belief in god in a more positive fashion than religion. This is not surprising, as Hobbes would not be able to dismiss the philosophic inquiry that natural religion produces without abandoning his scientific goals. However, he is highly critical of the Christian religion, which appears to result from fear and anxiety. At this point in the text, Hobbes emerges as possibly atheistic.

According to Hobbes, “men that by their own mediation arrive to the acknowledgment of one infinite, omnipotent, and eternal God, choose rather to confess he is incomprehensible, and above their understanding, than to define his nature by spirit incorporeal, and then confess their definition to be unintelligible.”²⁰⁶ In Part IV, Hobbes offers further discussion regarding the errors some men make, though they claim that God is incomprehensible.²⁰⁷ Philosophers such as Aristotle discourse on a “doctrine concerning essences and separate substantial forms.”²⁰⁸ This discourse led to “opinion concerning incorporeal substances,” and men began to believe that God is not comprehensible.²⁰⁹ Hobbes claims that these men are not reasonable.²¹⁰

Since men cannot comprehend God, they must “guess” the immediate causes of an event.²¹¹ Men look at previous causes of events and falsely assume that the same things will continue in the future, even though they do not understand the initial cause of

²⁰⁶ *Leviathan* xii.7.

²⁰⁷ *Leviathan* xlvi.18.

²⁰⁸ *Leviathan* xlvi.18.

²⁰⁹ *Leviathan* xlvi.18.

²¹⁰ *Leviathan* xlvi.19.

²¹¹ *Leviathan* xii.8.

an event.²¹² These men hope for “good or evil luck superstitiously.”²¹³ Hobbes claims that men cannot comprehend God. Neither can they understand the immediate causes of an event. Since men are unable to draw a connection between the immediate cause and the mediate causes, they cannot fully understand the mediate causes either. Men can only hope that good events will continue to occur and evil ones will not. Religion is not based upon knowledge of God, but superstition.

Even though religious beliefs are based on superstition, men worship “powers invisible” in the same ways they worship other men.²¹⁴ Hobbes claims that men offer “gifts, petitions, thanks, submission of body, considerate addresses, sober behavior, premeditated words,” and “swearing” to invisible powers.²¹⁵ Men also “take causal things, after one or two encounters, for prognostics of the like encounter ever after.”²¹⁶ They will even believe prognostics from men who seem to be credible.²¹⁷

According to Hobbes, religion makes men “more apt to obedience, laws, peace, charity, and civil society.”²¹⁸ He notes that some men created religion out of their own invention.²¹⁹ These men believe that citizens must obey “earthly kings.”²²⁰ However,

²¹² *Leviathan* xii.8.

²¹³ *Leviathan* xii.8.

²¹⁴ *Leviathan* xii.9.

²¹⁵ *Leviathan* xii.9.

²¹⁶ *Leviathan* xii.10.

²¹⁷ *Leviathan* xii.10.

²¹⁸ *Leviathan* xii.12.

²¹⁹ *Leviathan* xii.12.

²²⁰ *Leviathan* xii.12.

men who claim to speak to God also instituted religion because of the political benefits it provides.²²¹ With this commentary, Hobbes claims that all men, even prophets, have turned to religion as a means of ensuring peace and stability in a commonwealth.

Hobbes further suggests that “for the part of religion which consisteth in opinions concerning nature of powers invisible, there is almost nothing that has a name that has not been esteemed amongst the Gentiles, in one place or another, a god or devil, or by their poets feigned to be inanimated, inhabited, or possessed by some spirit or other.”²²²

Hobbes notes that “the heaven, the ocean, the planets, the fire, the earth,” and “the winds” were also gods.²²³ However, the Gentiles also attributed divine qualities to “men, women, a crocodile, a calf, a dog, a snake, an onion,” and “a leek.”²²⁴ The Gentiles began to assume that demons inhabited certain areas of the earth.²²⁵ According to Hobbes, “authors of the religion of the Gentiles” were aware that men were unable to understand the causes of natural events, but they still desired to know this information.²²⁶ The authors capitalized on the “ignorance” of men and attributed their good fortune to “ministerial gods” such as Venus, Apollo, Mercury, and Aeolus.²²⁷ Gentile authors even built sculptures and other artistic pieces that were meant to represent the gods.²²⁸ Men

²²¹ *Leviathan* xii.12.

²²² *Leviathan* xii.13.

²²³ *Leviathan* xii.15.

²²⁴ *Leviathan* xii.16.

²²⁵ *Leviathan* xii.16.

²²⁶ *Leviathan* xii.17.

²²⁷ *Leviathan* xii.17.

²²⁸ *Leviathan* xii.18.

were more likely to worship and respect gods when they could view a piece of art that represented the gods, because they believed that the gods were “housed in” the art.²²⁹ Finally, Hobbes claims that the Gentile authors have engaged in fictitious “revelation” and have convinced men to “find their fortunes” in oracles, prophets, and other unreliable sources.²³⁰

These claims are significant. According to Hobbes, the “first founders and legislators of commonwealths among the Gentiles” sought to allow for political stability.²³¹ In order to enforce obedience, the authors of the Gentiles had to convince men that a divine being existed.²³² If men had no god to obey, nothing would stop a “mere mortal” from attempting to gain power of the commonwealth.²³³ The Gentiles realized that men would listen to and abide by their laws if they believed that the sources of the laws were the gods, rather than the Gentile authors.²³⁴ Hobbes notes that the Romans, “that had conquered the greatest part of the then known world,” tolerated religion as long as it posed no problem for the proper functioning of the government.²³⁵ The Romans did not, however, tolerate Judaism because Jews were not willing to recognize “any mortal king or state whatsoever.”²³⁶ However, he carefully qualifies his

²²⁹ *Leviathan* xii.18.

²³⁰ *Leviathan* xii.19

²³¹ *Leviathan* xii.20.

²³² *Leviathan* xii.20.

²³³ *Leviathan* xii.20.

²³⁴ *Leviathan* xii.20.

²³⁵ *Leviathan* xii.21.

²³⁶ *Leviathan* xii.21.

derogatory argument regarding religion by acknowledging that “Abraham, Moses, and our blessed Saviour” brought us the “laws of the kingdom of God.”²³⁷ A commonwealth would only tolerate religion if it did not pose a threat to the state. While Hobbes does not directly criticize Christianity in this passage, Christianity did not always coexist with good government so easily.²³⁸

After discussing the causes of the religion of the Gentiles, Hobbes expands on his discussion regarding the origins of Christianity. Hobbes asserts that “where God himself by supernatural revelation planted religion, there he also made to himself a peculiar kingdom and gave laws.”²³⁹ Hobbes further notes that “laws civil are part of religion, and therefore the distinction of temporal and spiritual domination hath there no place.”²⁴⁰ God rules over the entire earth, but Hobbes claims that he can also rule a single nation.²⁴¹ Religion and government are not distinguishable. Citizens of the commonwealth are supposed to obey God not only because of his divine powers, but also because he is rightfully in charge of the state. With this claim, Hobbes qualifies earlier statements that he made regarding religion. While he initially claims that religion is the product of fear and anxiety, Christianity emerges as an exception to this teaching. God “planted” this religion on earth in order to establish a commonwealth.

²³⁷ *Leviathan* xii.12.

²³⁸ *Leviathan* xii.21

²³⁹ *Leviathan* xii.22.

²⁴⁰ *Leviathan* xii.22.

²⁴¹ *Leviathan* xii.22.

Hobbes acknowledges that men will always desire to understand the natural causes of events.²⁴² The state will never successfully “abolish” the “first seeds or principles” of religion from human nature.²⁴³ As a result, “new religions” will arise.²⁴⁴ Hobbes claims that the “multitude” will begin to subscribe to the belief system of a man whom they believe speaks to God.²⁴⁵ According to Hobbes, the teachings of these men must be “contradicted and rejected” unless they have the power of the “civil sword.”²⁴⁶ Hobbes knows that men that claim to speak to God pose a threat to his project. Men will not obey the laws of the commonwealth if they begin answering to another authority. As a result, Hobbes seeks to diminish the faith citizens of the commonwealth may place in men who claim to speak to God.

Prophets

Part I, Chapter 12 serves as Hobbes’ most significant and commonly read discourse on religion. However, Hobbes offers a far more extensive critique of religion in Parts III and IV. While Hobbes addresses the problems that prophecy poses to the state in several chapters, his most significant attack occurs in Part III, Chapter 36.

²⁴² *Leviathan* xii.23.

²⁴³ *Leviathan* xii.23.

²⁴⁴ *Leviathan* xii.23.

²⁴⁵ *Leviathan* xii.24.

²⁴⁶ *Leviathan* xii.24.

In this chapter, Hobbes seeks to define the phrase “the word of God.”²⁴⁷ Hobbes offers several possible definitions for this phrase, claiming that it would literally mean words spoken by God.²⁴⁸ However, the phrase could also indicate that the text is about God or “God and his government, that is to say, the doctrine of religion.”²⁴⁹ Hobbes references several examples in the Bible in which the “word of God was the doctrine of Christian religion.”²⁵⁰

In Acts 15:7, Hobbes claims that “the word of God is called ‘the word of the Gospel,’ because it containeth the kingdom of Christ.”²⁵¹ In Romans 10:8-9, Hobbes argues that “the word of faith” is synonymous with “the doctrine of Christ come and raised from the dead.”²⁵² According to Hobbes, “the word of the kingdom” in Matthew 13:19 refers to “the doctrine of the kingdom taught by Christ.”²⁵³ With these citations, Hobbes claims that the “word of God” does not always refer to words spoken by God. Rather, he expands the definition to encompass “the doctrine of the Christian religion.” He does so because it is conducive to his political goals. Hobbes asserts that the “word of God” can be “metaphorically” understood as God’s “wisdom, power, and eternal decree in making the world.”²⁵⁴ Hobbes attempts to amplify God’s power over this world. He

²⁴⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvi.1.

²⁴⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁴⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁵⁰ *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁵¹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁵² *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁵³ *Leviathan* xxxvi.2.

²⁵⁴ *Leviathan* xxxvi.3.

wants men to fear God. By expanding his definition to things concerning the “doctrine of Christian religion,” he is able to accomplish this task. However, with this broad interpretation, he also precludes the intercession of men who claim to have access to God’s revised teaching.

After this discussion, Hobbes discourses on the various definitions of the word “prophet.”²⁵⁵ The term “prophet” can refer to a man who speaks to God, a man who predicts events to come, or “someone that speaketh incoherently.”²⁵⁶ Hobbes further notes that prophets are not only men who speak to God, but also men “that in Christian churches have a calling to say public prayers for the congregation.”²⁵⁷ With this claim, Hobbes suggests that prophets could simply be spokesmen for Christianity. Hobbes lowers the standards for becoming a prophet.²⁵⁸ In doing so, he diminishes their authority. By Hobbes’ standards, any man who claims to speak for God, for the Church, or for the sovereign would be considered a prophet. Hobbes further claims that men who predict future events often only pretend to be prophets and make false claims.²⁵⁹ According to Hobbes, these men should not be trusted. These men might persuade citizens to listen to their teachings, instead of the laws of the commonwealth.

²⁵⁵ *Leviathan* xxxvi.7.

²⁵⁶ *Leviathan* xxxvi.7.

²⁵⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvi.7.

²⁵⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvi.7.

²⁵⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.8.

According to Hobbes, men who claim to speak to God should also not be trusted because it is unclear how God communicated with these men.²⁶⁰ Hobbes claims that “after the time of Moses (where the manner how God spake immediately to man in the Old Testament is expressed) he spake always by a vision or a dream.”²⁶¹ Hobbes does not hold information received through dreams in high regard.²⁶² In Part I, after he defines imagination as “decaying sense,” Hobbes suggests that dreams are nothing but “imaginings of them that sleep.”²⁶³ He claims that dreams are problematic because men often believe that they are “awake” when they dream.²⁶⁴ Hobbes notes that pagan prophets failed to distinguish between “vision” and “dreams.”²⁶⁵ As a result, these men founded a religion “that worshipped satyrs, fawns, nymphs.”²⁶⁶ This religion, which was based on dreams, was not credible.²⁶⁷

In latter portions of the text, Hobbes addresses dreams again. He asserts that the dreams of prophets are nothing but “imaginings which they had in their sleep of in an ecstasy.”²⁶⁸ Hobbes places no authority in prophets that did not speak directly to God. Though Hobbes initially claims that God spoke immediately to Moses, he later suggests

²⁶⁰ *Leviathan* xxxvi.9.

²⁶¹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.10.

²⁶² *Leviathan* xxxvi.11.

²⁶³ *Leviathan* ii.2, ii.5.

²⁶⁴ *Leviathan* ii.5.

²⁶⁵ *Leviathan* ii.8.

²⁶⁶ *Leviathan* ii.8.

²⁶⁷ *Leviathan* ii.8.

²⁶⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvi.11.

that readers of the Bible cannot be sure how God communicated with Moses.²⁶⁹ He notes that God differentiated between Moses and the other prophets, so it is impossible that they communicated through “a dream or vision.”²⁷⁰ Clearly, God could not have “spake or appeared as he is in his own nature,” as to make this assumption would be “to deny his infiniteness.”²⁷¹ Neither can one assume that God spoke “by inspiration, or infusion in the Holy Spirit,” as making this assumption would “make Moses equal with Christ.”²⁷² Finally, Hobbes argues that “to say he spake by the Holy Spirit” would be to “attribute nothing to him supernatural.”²⁷³ He is unable to conclude what method God used to communicate with Moses.²⁷⁴ With these claims, Hobbes seeks to undermine the miraculous quality of prophets. According to Hobbes, we can only be sure that there was one “sovereign prophet” in the New Testament: Christ.²⁷⁵

Hobbes further notes that 70 men “prophesied in the camp of the Israelites” with Moses.²⁷⁶ He claims that their “prophesying” was “subordinate” to that of Moses.²⁷⁷ In fact, he claims “the Spirit of God” in these men was “nothing but the mind and

²⁶⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.13.

²⁷⁰ *Leviathan* xxxvi.13.

²⁷¹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.13.

²⁷² *Leviathan* xxxvi.13.

²⁷³ *Leviathan* xxxvi.13.

²⁷⁴ *Leviathan* xxxvi.14.

²⁷⁵ *Leviathan* xxxvi.14.

²⁷⁶ *Leviathan* xxxvi.16.

²⁷⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvi.16.

disposition to obey and assist Moses in the administration of the government.”²⁷⁸ Hobbes suggests that the spirit of God cannot dwell bodily within men.²⁷⁹ In this instance, Hobbes reinterprets an important Biblical passage in order ensure that its message is better suited for his project. In Numbers 11:24-25, Moses “gathered seventy elders of the people,” and “the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.”²⁸⁰ Clearly, Hobbes reinterprets this passage in order to suggest that the seventy elders lacked the prophetic powers that Moses possessed. Hobbes argues that few men are prophets, despite the fact that many men claim to speak to or commune with God.

Hobbes presents the probability of a true prophet’s existence as unlikely.²⁸¹ As a result, he claims that “men had need to be very circumspect and wary in obeying the voice of man, that pretending himself to be a prophet, requires us to obey God in that way which he in God’s name telleth us to be the way to happiness.”²⁸² At the end of this chapter, he even asserts that the “Christian sovereign” is the sovereign prophet, rather than Christ.²⁸³

To summarize Hobbes’ critical account of prophecy: Hobbes attempts to convince men that individuals who claim to speak to God cannot be trusted. He realizes that these men could endanger the sovereign, as citizens may listen and abide by their teachings

²⁷⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvi.16

²⁷⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.16.

²⁸⁰ Numbers 11:24-25.

²⁸¹ *Leviathan* xxxvi.19.

²⁸² *Leviathan* xxxvi.19.

²⁸³ *Leviathan* xxxvi.20.

rather than those of the commonwealth. Thus, he offers a critique of religious claims derived from purported congress with God.

Miracles

In addition to his discourse regarding prophecy, Hobbes offers commentary regarding miracles in chapter 37.²⁸⁴ He claims that “by miracles are signified the admirable works of God, and therefore, they are also called wonders.”²⁸⁵ Miracles only occur because God wants to ensure that men do not “doubt” him.²⁸⁶ Men “wonder” at “strange” events or events that they assume cannot be the result of natural causes.²⁸⁷ If an event occurs on a regular basis, then it is not a miracle.²⁸⁸ For example, when a “piece of wood” changes, no miracle has occurred.²⁸⁹ In this instance, Hobbes clearly contradicts Exodus 15:25, in which Moses throws a piece of wood into water and makes it “sweet.”²⁹⁰ He suggests that the increase of scientific inquiry can diminish the frequency of miracles. The scientific inquiry that he advocates for in Part I can explain many events that may have previously deemed miracles by men.

²⁸⁴ *Leviathan* xxxvii.1.

²⁸⁵ *Leviathan* xxxvii.1.

²⁸⁶ *Leviathan* xxxvii.1.

²⁸⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvii.2.

²⁸⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvii.3.

²⁸⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvii.3.

²⁹⁰ Exodus 15:25.

While some men assume that particular events are miracles, other men with more knowledge of the event realize that it is the result of natural causes.²⁹¹ Some events occur regularly, but only some men realize that these events are not out of the ordinary.²⁹² As a result, “ignorant and superstitious men” assume that some events are miracles, when they are not.²⁹³ Men admire miracles not because they are amazed that God could create a miracle, but “because he does it at the prayer or word of a man.”²⁹⁴

With his use of miracles, God did not seek to ensure that all men became Christians.²⁹⁵ Rather, he wanted men who he “had determined should become his elect” to believe in his authority.²⁹⁶ According to Hobbes, “the miraculous plagues of Egypt” were merely used to ensure that “the people of Israel believe that Moses came unto them.”²⁹⁷ In order to come to this conclusion, Hobbes departs from the Bible. In Exodus, God tells Moses that he wants his “wonders” to be “multiplied in the land of Egypt.”²⁹⁸ God further tells Moses that he will “harden Pharaoh’s heart”, and when the Pharaoh does not listen to Moses, he will take the Israelites out of Egypt “by great acts of judgment.”²⁹⁹ God finally claims that these acts will make the Israelites realize that he is

²⁹¹ *Leviathan* xxxvii.5.

²⁹² *Leviathan* xxxvii.5.

²⁹³ *Leviathan* xxxvii.5.

²⁹⁴ *Leviathan* xxxvii.6.

²⁹⁵ *Leviathan* xxxvii.6.

²⁹⁶ *Leviathan* xxxvii.6.

²⁹⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvii.6.

²⁹⁸ Exodus 7:3.

²⁹⁹ Exodus 7:4.

“the Lord.”³⁰⁰ Hobbes reinterprets the meaning of miracles in order to diminish the faith that men have in them. By claiming that miracles must be events that occur rarely and events that cannot be explained by natural causes, Hobbes offers a very narrow definition of miracles. Many events that men would normally deem miracles are not encompassed in Hobbes’ definition. Additionally, he claims that God created miracles only to compel belief among men who he wanted to be in his elect. Miracles are presented as a tool to enforce political stability in a sovereign, not to evangelize.

Hobbes eventually offers an even more subversive description of a miracle: “a work of God (besides his operation by the way of nature, ordained in the creation), done for the making manifest to his elect the mission of an extraordinary minister for their salvation.”³⁰¹ With this definition, Hobbes concludes that prophets are able to create miracles not because of their own “virtue,” but because God gave them this capability.³⁰² Hobbes further claims that “no devil, angel, or other created spirit, can do a miracle.”³⁰³ Unfortunately, men are easily deceived by events that they assume are miracles.³⁰⁴ Crafty men whom the Greeks call *Thaumaturgi* use their “dexterity” to make “wonderful” events occur.³⁰⁵ Hobbes references an example of two of these men.³⁰⁶ One

³⁰⁰ Exodus 7:5.

³⁰¹ *Leviathan* xxxvii.7.

³⁰² *Leviathan* xxxvii.8.

³⁰³ *Leviathan* xxxvii.9.

³⁰⁴ *Leviathan* xxxvii.10.

³⁰⁵ *Leviathan* xxxvii.12.

³⁰⁶ *Leviathan* xxxvii.12.

man pretended to be lame, while the “other” pretended to “cure him with a charm.”³⁰⁷

The existence of sham miracles among the pagans leaves open the possibility of sham miracles among Christians; this critique might extend perhaps to Christ himself, who famously healed many afflicted persons, including the lame, as in John 5:3-9. Hobbes thus surreptitiously suggests that Jesus may have been a crafty man who attempts to deceive the people.

In addition to his claims regarding Jesus, Hobbes also rejects the Eucharist.³⁰⁸ According to Hobbes, “if a man pretend that after certain words spoken over a piece of bread, that presently God hath made it not bread, but a god or a man (or both), and nevertheless it looketh still as like bread as it ever it did, there is no reason for any man to think it really done.”³⁰⁹ Unless a man inquires about this situation with God’s “vicar or lieutenant,” who is the sovereign, he should not believe that it actually occurs.³¹⁰ With this statement, Hobbes undermines the power of the Catholic Church, as the Pope was known as the Vicar of Christ. While a man can hold whatever beliefs he wants to privately, he should always adhere to the beliefs of “God’s supreme lieutenant,” or the sovereign, publicly.³¹¹

Hobbes uses chapter 37 to undermine men’s faith in miracles. This chapter, like several others in Part III, serves as a critique of revealed religion. Hobbes wants to ensure that men listen to and obey no authority other than the sovereign. Men who

³⁰⁷ *Leviathan* xxxvii.12.

³⁰⁸ *Leviathan* xxxvii.13.

³⁰⁹ *Leviathan* xxxvii.13.

³¹⁰ *Leviathan* xxxvii.13.

³¹¹ *Leviathan* xxxvii.13.

appear to perform miracles pose a problem for this goal. Hobbes knows that citizens of the sovereign may want to follow these men. He must convince men that true miracles are very difficult to create. While he does not restrict private beliefs regarding miracles, he seeks to ensure that men will always abide by the sovereign's laws in public.

Hell

In chapter 39, Hobbes reinterprets another important Biblical topic: hell. Hobbes opens the chapter by claiming that the sovereign is capable of “inflicting greater punishments than death.”³¹² Hobbes further notes that “Jesus Christ hath satisfied for the sins of all that believe in him; and therefore recovered to all believers that Eternal Life which was lost by the sin of Adam.”³¹³ Interestingly, Hobbes claims that eternal life will occur on this earth.³¹⁴ Hobbes concludes that When Christ takes the place of Adam, “all shall me made alive,” on this earth.³¹⁵ He cites Psalm 133:3 in support of his claim: “Upon Zion God commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”³¹⁶ Since Zion is located in Jerusalem, Hobbes concludes that eternal life must be on this earth.³¹⁷ He also references Revelations 2:7 to bolster his argument: “To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which in in the midst of the paradise of God.”³¹⁸ Hobbes notes

³¹² *Leviathan* xxxviii.1.

³¹³ *Leviathan* xxxviii.2.

³¹⁴ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

³¹⁵ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

³¹⁶ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

³¹⁷ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

³¹⁸ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

that “this was the tree of Adam’s eternal life, but his life was to have been on earth.”³¹⁹

In his edition of the *Leviathan*, Edwin Curley notes that “Hobbes’ conception of the life eternal seems to be among his unconventional readings of scripture.”³²⁰ Hobbes must reinterpret scripture in order to conclude that eternal life will be on earth. Readers of the *Leviathan* must attempt to determine what Hobbes sought to accomplish with this reinterpretation. As Hobbes further discusses hell in chapter 39, possible reasons for his reinterpretation emerge.

Hobbes suggests that the Old and New Testaments provide no definitive claims regarding where the damned are sent when they die.³²¹ The damned will not go “under ground” or “under water” or to the Valley of Hinnon.³²² Additionally, Hobbes notes that “Satan, Devil,” and “Abaddon” are not proper nouns, but “appellatives.”³²³ He asserts that these terms refer to “the enemy of them that shall be in the kingdom of God,” rather than the “demons” that men often assume they are.³²⁴ Based on his conclusions regarding the location of the eternal life, Hobbes determines that the Enemy’s “kingdom,” or hell, must be on earth as well.³²⁵ He recognizes that many Biblical passages suggest that men in hell are exposed to “torments” such as the “weeping and

³¹⁹ *Leviathan* xxxviii.3.

³²⁰ Edwin Curley, ed., *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994) 302, footnote 3.

³²¹ *Leviathan* xxxviii.6.

³²² *Leviathan* xxxviii.11.

³²³ *Leviathan* xxxviii.12.

³²⁴ *Leviathan* xxxviii.12.

³²⁵ *Leviathan* xxxviii.13.

gnashing of teeth described in Matthew 8:12 and eternal fire described in Mark 9:44.³²⁶ Despite his use of these citations, Hobbes suggests that men in hell will not suffer from eternal punishment.³²⁷ Rather, the damned will suffer a “second death.”³²⁸ In order to support this claim, Hobbes references Revelations 20:13-14, verses in which the “grave” are thrown “into the lake of fire.”³²⁹ With his reinterpretation, Hobbes ignores the Biblical text. The “lake of fire” refers to eternal punishment in Revelations. Hobbes’ discussion in this section lends support to Strauss’ argument that Hobbes’ project is “based on the axiom that violent death is the greatest evil.”³³⁰ Hobbes suggests that men should fear violent death more than eternal punishment. In doing so, he subordinates the New Testament teaching regarding eternal punishment to his own.

Hobbes expands his discussion of eternal life when he defines salvation as “the joys of life eternal.”³³¹ He finds support for this definition in Matthew 9:2.³³² Hobbes notes that in this verse, Christ cures a paralyzed man.³³³ According to Hobbes, in the paralytic’s situation, “death and misery were the punishments of sin.”³³⁴ Thus, “the discharge of sin must also be a discharge of death and misery, that is to say, salvation

³²⁶ *Leviathan* xxxviii.14.

³²⁷ *Leviathan* xxxviii.14.

³²⁸ *Leviathan* xxxviii.14.

³²⁹ *Leviathan* xxxviii.14.

³³⁰ Strauss 2011, 26.

³³¹ *Leviathan* xxxviii.15.

³³² *Leviathan* xxxviii.15.

³³³ *Leviathan* xxxviii.15.

³³⁴ *Leviathan* xxxviii.15.

absolute.”³³⁵ Hobbes clearly reinterprets this passage in order to conclude that salvation and forgiveness of sin are synonymous. In Matthew 9:6, Jesus claims that he “has authority on earth to forgive sins.”³³⁶ He does not comment on salvation. Hobbes suggests that it is far easier to achieve salvation than it actually is. Jesus merely has to forgive your sins. In latter sections, Hobbes even suggests that “eternal salvation” can occur on earth, rather than in heaven.³³⁷

With his reinterpretation of hell and the afterworld, Hobbes makes hell seem less frightening. While the connection between this reinterpretation and Hobbes’ project may remain unclear, Christopher McClure’s arguments appear to be validated by an exegesis of the text. Hobbes forces readers to consider alternative descriptions of hell and the afterlife, even if they do not agree with them. He forces them to reason about the afterlife. Through this reasoning process, Hobbes hopes that his readers will realize that they cannot comprehend the afterlife. Hobbes suggests that men can contemplate the afterlife, but they will never truly know anything about it.³³⁸ Thus, his reinterpretation allows for the scientific inquiry and individual thought that he desires. Additionally, by persuading readers that the afterlife may not be particularly bad, Hobbes can convince his audience that violent death truly is the greatest evil. By redirecting man’s focus to the potentiality of violent death on this earth, Hobbes can lend more power to earthly government, which protects human life.

³³⁵ *Leviathan* xxxviii.15.

³³⁶ John 9:6.

³³⁷ *Leviathan* xxxviii.17.

³³⁸ McClure 2011, 27.

Hobbes' Reinterpretation of "Church"

Hobbes offers yet another significant reinterpretation of scripture in chapter 40. In this chapter, Hobbes addresses the word "Church."³³⁹ He notes that this term is sometimes used to refer to a house in which Christians gather to worship.³⁴⁰ However, the more common definition refers to a "congregation or an assembly of citizens, called forth to hear the magistrate speak unto them."³⁴¹ Finally, Hobbes claims that the word can mean "the men that have right to be of the congregation, though not actually assembled."³⁴² In this "sense," the Church has the power to "make laws" or do anything that it deems necessary.³⁴³ Following this discussion, Hobbes defines Church as "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."³⁴⁴ By this definition, any Church that has arisen without gaining the permission of the sovereign is "an unlawful assembly."³⁴⁵ He further concludes that a "universal Church" cannot exist, "there is no power on earth to which all other commonwealths are subject."³⁴⁶ With this commentary, Hobbes limits the power of the Church. By claiming that there is no universal church, he undermines the authority of the

³³⁹ *Leviathan* xxxix.1.

³⁴⁰ *Leviathan* xxxix.1.

³⁴¹ *Leviathan* xxxix.2.

³⁴² *Leviathan* xxxix.3.

³⁴³ *Leviathan* xxxix.4.

³⁴⁴ *Leviathan* xxxix.4.

³⁴⁵ *Leviathan* xxxix.4.

³⁴⁶ *Leviathan* xxxix.5.

Catholic Church. Churches can only exist under the supervision of the sovereign. Hobbes must ignore several Biblical teachings in order to make this argument. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus tells Peter “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”³⁴⁷ In Matthew 18:20, Jesus says “for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”³⁴⁸ Hobbes also ignores that Great Commission in Matthew 28:16 and the First Church in Acts 1-2 to make this assertion.³⁴⁹ The Church can most definitely exist outside of the supervision of the sovereign, as readers of the Bible can observe in Acts 12:1-7. In these verses, “King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church,” “had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword,” and arrested Peter.³⁵⁰ While Peter was imprisoned, the church prayed for him and an “angel of the Lord” eventually released him from his chains in prison.³⁵¹ Hobbes must ignore this passage in order to make the conclusion that he does.

Hobbes engages in significant reinterpretations of scripture in Part III, Chapters 37, 38, 39, and 40. Clearly, he believes that prophets pose a threat to the power of a sovereign. He wants to diminish the faith that men place in prophets for this reason. He also wants to ensure that men do not place much faith in miracles. While men are allowed to hold their own private beliefs, they must adhere to the laws of the sovereign in public. It would be damaging to the sovereign if citizens listened to every man who

³⁴⁷ Matthew 16:18.

³⁴⁸ Matthew 18:20.

³⁴⁹ Matthew 28:16, Acts 1-2.

³⁵⁰ Acts 12:1-3.

³⁵¹ Acts 12:5-7.

claimed that he had performed a miracle. Hobbes is very critical of revealed religion in this chapter as well. His revision of the terms prophet, miracle, hell, and the Church all support the goal of convincing men convincing men to engage in rational inquiry regarding the afterlife. This reinterpretation helps him to accomplish his scientific goals. However, it also aids his goal of convincing men that they should fear violent death more than anything else. This is the core tenet of his project. Most important to this particular thesis, Hobbes redefines the word “Church” in order to give the sovereign maximum power, while eliminating the power of the Catholic Church or any “universal church.” In Part III, chapter 42, Hobbes attacks that institution more directly.

Chapter III: Hobbes' Most Significant Critique

In Part III, chapter 42, Hobbes offers one of his most significant and detailed discussions regarding religion. In this chapter, “Of Power Ecclesiastical,” Hobbes critiques the Catholic Church. In the opening paragraphs of the chapter, Hobbes seeks to define “Power Ecclesiastical” and explain where it can be found.³⁵² He claims that he must “distinguish” between the time “before the conversion of kings and men endued with sovereign civil power” and the time “after their conversion.”³⁵³ According to Hobbes, no civil sovereign “publicly allowed the teaching of Christian religion” until a long time after Christ’s ascension.³⁵⁴

Before the sovereign “allowed the teaching of the Christian religion,” the apostles were given power ecclesiastical.³⁵⁵ After the apostles, “the power was delivered again to others by these ordained.”³⁵⁶ This power was given through the “imposition of hands.”³⁵⁷ According to Hobbes, Jesus, “between his resurrection and ascension, gave his spirit to the apostles first (John 20:22), by ‘breathing on them and saying receive ye the Holy Spirit.’”³⁵⁸ However, after the ascension, he gave his spirit by “sending down upon them ‘a mighty wind and cloven tongues of fire,’ and not by the imposition of hands.”³⁵⁹ With

³⁵² *Leviathan* xlii.1.

³⁵³ *Leviathan* xlii.1.

³⁵⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.1.

³⁵⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.2.

³⁵⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.2.

³⁵⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.2.

³⁵⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.2.

³⁵⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.2.

these claims, Hobbes suggests that Jesus endowed all of the apostles equally with power. However, Hobbes must clearly depart from scripture in order to make this conclusion. In Matthew 16:13, Jesus asks his disciples who the Son of Man is.³⁶⁰ Peter is the only disciple who is able to identify him as the Messiah, and Jesus says that the “Father in heaven” revealed this to Peter.³⁶¹ Jesus tells Peter that he will give him the “keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”³⁶² Peter’s ascendancy is confirmed in Acts. In Acts 2:14-42, Peter pours the Holy Spirit onto the men of Judea and baptizes them, forming the first Church.³⁶³ Hobbes must ignore the undoubtedly special role of Peter in the Bible in order to make his assertions.

Hobbes considers whether or not ecclesiastical power is “monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical,” as Cardinal Bellarmine had contemplated this question.³⁶⁴ He concludes that ecclesiastical power is actually only the “power to teach” Christianity, which is bestowed upon “apostles and other ministers of the Gospel.”³⁶⁵ From this claim, Hobbes can conclude that Christ’s ministers cannot require “obedience,” unless they are kings or the agents thereof.³⁶⁶ Christ will not reign over the earth until the resurrection, when the ministers of Christ are merely supposed to persuade men to embrace

³⁶⁰ Matthew 16:13.

³⁶¹ Matthew 16:14-17.

³⁶² Matthew 16:19 .

³⁶³ Acts 2:14-42.

³⁶⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.5.; According to Edwin Curley, “between 1851 and 1592, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine published a series of disputations” against heretics.

³⁶⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.5.

³⁶⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.6.

Christianity, not enforce obedience through “coercion and punishing.”³⁶⁷ Once again, Hobbes seeks to diminish the authority of the Church. Ministers of Christ are not allowed to do anything but evangelize and spread the word of Christ. Hobbes must demote these men to this role in order to enforce obedience in the sovereign. If the Pope or any other Church official possessed political authority, citizens of the sovereign might obey the Church’s orders before those of the sovereign. Hobbes must eliminate the possibility of divided authority.

While Hobbes ensures that the Church has no influence on political life, he also argues that the sovereign cannot “forbid us to believe in Christ.”³⁶⁸ According to Hobbes, “Faith is a gift of God, which man can neither give nor take away by promise of rewards or menaces of torture.”³⁶⁹ If the sovereign commands citizens to profess publicly that they do not believe in God, the citizen may be forced to comply, but God can pardon him.³⁷⁰ Since this individual was compelled to deny God by the sovereign, the action is not his own, but the sovereign’s.³⁷¹ These claims demonstrate that Hobbes is mostly concerned with the beliefs that men profess publicly, rather than the beliefs they hold in private. The sovereign cannot regulate the private beliefs of man, but it can force him to adhere to any belief in public, even one that is not Christian. These claims may emerge as convoluted, as Hobbes advocates for a Christian sovereign. Furthermore, they are in tension with Christ’s commentary regarding hypocrites. In Matthew 7:5, Christ tells a

³⁶⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.6-8.

³⁶⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.11.

³⁶⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.11.

³⁷⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.11.

³⁷¹ *Leviathan* xlii.11.

hypocrite to “first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”³⁷² However, it is not overly surprising that Hobbes hesitates to regulate a man’s privately held beliefs. While Hobbes is deeply concerned with political stability, he also cannot abandon his scientific goals.³⁷³ In order to make his scientific project realizable, he must allow for individual inquiry. This inquiry will not hinder political stability as long as men are willing to obey the laws of the sovereign in the public realm.

Following these claims, Hobbes discusses the responsibilities of the apostles.³⁷⁴ According to Hobbes, part of their “commission” was to “teach” Christianity to other nations.³⁷⁵ These men taught “out of the Old Testament that Jesus was Christ (that is to say, king),” and that he rose from the dead.³⁷⁶ Once citizens of the commonwealth believed these claims, they no longer had to obey the apostles.³⁷⁷ In making these claims, Hobbes clearly reinterprets the message of Matthew 28:19-20, in which Jesus tells the apostles to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything.”³⁷⁸

³⁷² Matthew 7:5.

³⁷³ In Part I, Chapter Nine, Hobbes notes that there are only two types of knowledge, science and history.

³⁷⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.14.

³⁷⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.17.

³⁷⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.17.

³⁷⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.17.

³⁷⁸ Matthew 28:19-20.

Hobbes concludes his commentary regarding the apostles by noting that they were also given the authority to perform baptisms.³⁷⁹ As a result of this authority, the apostles have the “power of remission and retention of sins.”³⁸⁰ However, this power does not exist in particular individuals, but the “assembly of the faithful.”³⁸¹ Hobbes ultimately concludes that the apostles only had the power to preach, teach, baptize and offer forgiveness of sins as a community. With this claim, Hobbes ignores Paul’s career in Acts. For example, in Acts 19:11, “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.”³⁸² Clearly, the apostles were granted more power than Hobbes suggests. However, it is not surprising that Hobbes reinterprets scripture in this fashion. By diminishing the authority of the apostles, Hobbes ensures that civil authority is placed in the sovereign, rather than the Church. Hobbes moves on to address excommunication.³⁸³ According to Hobbes, excommunication should be employed as a “correction of manners, not of errors in opinion.”³⁸⁴ In order to make this assertion, Hobbes must depart from Biblical teachings. In Romans 16:17, Paul urges men to “keep an eye on those who cause dissensions and offenses, in opposition to the teaching” that they have learned and “avoid them.”³⁸⁵ Also, in Matthew 18:15-17 Christ

³⁷⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.18.

³⁸⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.19.

³⁸¹ *Leviathan* xlii.19.

³⁸² Acts 19:11.

³⁸³ *Leviathan* xlii.20.

³⁸⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.24.

³⁸⁵ Romans 16:17.

urges men that sinners to change their ways should be treated as “a pagan or a tax collector.”³⁸⁶ Clearly, excommunication was intended not only for men who exhibited immoral behavior, but also for those who held opinions that contradicted Scriptural teachings. With this reinterpretation, Hobbes may once again be working to ensure that the sovereign does not endanger individual inquiry or that the Church does not affect a man’s place in society. As long as men exhibit the preferred behavior of the sovereign in the public realm, Hobbes will allow them hold their own private beliefs, even if they are opposed to Christian teachings.

The New Testament as Law

In addition to limiting the power of excommunication, Hobbes also discourses on the “power to make scripture law.”³⁸⁷ He claims that there are “two senses wherein a writing may be said to be canonical; for canon signifieth a rule, and a rule is a precept by which a man is guided and directed in any action whatsoever.”³⁸⁸ If a “precept” is “given by a teacher to his disciple,” the teacher cannot enforce the order, but it is still a canon, as it is a rule.³⁸⁹ However, if the rule is “given by one whom that receiveth them is bound to obey,” then the rule is also a law.³⁹⁰ Hobbes further notes that the first “written law of God” to be found in scripture are the Ten Commandments.³⁹¹ Prior to the Ten

³⁸⁶ Matthew 18:15-17.

³⁸⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.36.

³⁸⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.36.

³⁸⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.36.

³⁹⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.36.

³⁹¹ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

Commandments, God had not “chosen any people to be his peculiar kingdom.”³⁹² As Curley notes, Hobbes must ignore the Abrahamic covenant, which occurs in Genesis 12-17, in order to make this assertion.³⁹³

Hobbes reinterprets the First Commandment to mean that men “should not obey, nor honour, the gods of other nations.”³⁹⁴ Second, he claims that men “should not make any image to represent him,” meaning that men should not choose their own representative, but “obey Moses and Aaron.”³⁹⁵ Third, “they should not take the name of God in vain,” meaning that citizens of the commonwealth should not offer negative commentary about their king.³⁹⁶ Finally, Hobbes argues that the Fourth Commandment refers to a citizen’s duty to honor the king on the Sabbath day.³⁹⁷ He does not alter the meaning of the final six Commandments.³⁹⁸ With his gross reinterpretation of first four of the Ten Commandments, Hobbes seeks to conflate kingship and God. Citizens should honor their sovereign as they would God. According to Hobbes, since Moses, Aaron and “succeeding high priests were the civil sovereign,” they had the power to make the

³⁹² *Leviathan* xlii.37.

³⁹³ Curley, *Leviathan* xlii.37, footnote 24, page 351.

³⁹⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

³⁹⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

³⁹⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

³⁹⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

³⁹⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

“Scripture of the Decalogue to be law in the commonwealth of Israel.”³⁹⁹ As a result, he determines that the power to make scripture law rests in the civil sovereign.⁴⁰⁰

Hobbes does not stop his commentary regarding the law here, as he eventually addresses the New Testament.⁴⁰¹ According to Hobbes, the New Testament should never be considered canonical, unless the sovereign claims that it should be law.⁴⁰² As Hobbes has already established, “a law is the commandment of that man (or assembly) to whom we have given sovereign authority to make such rules for the direction of our actions.”⁴⁰³ Thus, rules that are given by other men must be considered nothing but “counsel and advice.”⁴⁰⁴ As a result, these rules are not binding and men can choose not to observe them.⁴⁰⁵ Not surprisingly, Hobbes once again attempts to “judaicize” Christianity, as Beiner suggests. His political project is predicated on the religion of the Old Testament, not the New Testament, though he does even diminish God’s authority in the Old Testament. Hobbes does not want men to focus on what will come in the next world. Rather, he wants them to fear violent death in this world. He must convince men that the New Testament should not be understood as the law of the sovereign.

³⁹⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.37.

⁴⁰⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.39.

⁴⁰¹ *Leviathan* xlii.43.

⁴⁰² *Leviathan* xlii.43.

⁴⁰³ *Leviathan* xlii.43.

⁴⁰⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.43.

⁴⁰⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.43.

Hobbes acknowledges that the New Testament may appear to be law.⁴⁰⁶ However, he claims that the New Testament contains “no more laws” than the following “precepts”: “repent; be baptized; keep the commandments; believe the gospel, come unto me; sell all that thou hast; give it to the poor; and follow me.”⁴⁰⁷ He further notes that these “precepts,” are “not commands, but invitations and callings of men to Christianity.”⁴⁰⁸ In this instance, Hobbes’ claims clearly run afoul to the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 5:17, Christ proclaims that “do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”⁴⁰⁹ He further states that “for truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, in Matthew 28:19-20, Christ instructs his disciples to “make disciples of all nations” and teach others to “obey” what Christ has “commanded” them.⁴¹¹ Finally, Hobbes must reinterpret one of Christ’s most important commands. In Matthew 16:24, Christ tells his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”⁴¹² Most plausibly, Jesus is instructing his disciples that they, too, will die for the Lord. This statement is not merely a “precept,” as Hobbes suggests. In order to conclude that the

⁴⁰⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.45.

⁴⁰⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.45.

⁴⁰⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.45.

⁴⁰⁹ Matthew 5:17

⁴¹⁰ Matthew 5:18.

⁴¹¹ Matthew 28:19-20.

⁴¹² Matthew 16:24.

New Testament should not be treated as law, but simply advice, Hobbes must ignore key Biblical teachings.

The Reduced Power of Church Offices

Next, Hobbes discusses the differences between magisterial and ministerial apostles.⁴¹³ He claims that magisterial officers were meant for “preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God to infidels; of administering the sacraments and divine service; and of teaching the rules of faith and manners to those that were converted.”⁴¹⁴ In contrast, “ministerial was the office of deacons, that is, of them that were appointed to the administration of the secular necessities of the church, at such time as they lived upon a common stock of money, raised out of the voluntary contributions of the faithful.”⁴¹⁵ Hobbes moves on to determine which offices are magisterial, and he concludes that bishops should not be included in this category, as a bishop is “an overseer of superintendent of any business.”⁴¹⁶ Bishops were kings or rulers.⁴¹⁷ According to Hobbes, magisterial offices did not exist in the New Testament, as evangelists and prophets did not possess this kind of authority.⁴¹⁸ Prophets could “interpret the Old Testament” and evangelists could write about the “life and acts of our Saviour,” but they did not hold any sort of offices in the Church.⁴¹⁹ Rather, a man could only become an

⁴¹³ *Leviathan* xlii.49.

⁴¹⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.49.

⁴¹⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.49.

⁴¹⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.54.

⁴¹⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.54.

⁴¹⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.55.

⁴¹⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.55.

officer in the Church if he was elevated to the position.⁴²⁰ In order to support this contention, Hobbes notes that “the apostles Matthias, Paul, and Barnabas were not made by our Saviour himself, but were elected by the Church.”⁴²¹ In making this claim, Hobbes must ignore Saul’s conversion, which occurs in Acts 9.⁴²² There, Jesus appears to Saul because Saul continues to make “murderous threats” against his disciples.⁴²³ While Saul is plagued by blindness for three days, he is eventually “filled with the Holy Spirit” and baptized so he can spread the word of God.⁴²⁴ Hobbes’ claims degrade the authority of the New Testament. He wants to ensure that all civil authority rests in the sovereign, not prophets, evangelists, or apostles. Throughout Part III, Hobbes continues to critique revealed religion, as he sees these men as a threat to the authority of the sovereign.

According to Hobbes, a minister “signifieth one that voluntarily doth the business of another man, and differeth from a servant only in this: that servants are obliged by their condition to what is commanded them, whereas ministers are obliged only by their undertaking.”⁴²⁵ Once again, Hobbes must significantly reinterpret the Biblical definition of a minister in order to make this claim. Hobbes cites Acts 6:2 as evidence in support of

⁴²⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.55.

⁴²¹ *Leviathan* xlii.56.

⁴²² Acts 9:1-19.

⁴²³ Acts 9:1-5.

⁴²⁴ Acts 9:9-18.

⁴²⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.58.

his argument that ministers are akin to servants.⁴²⁶ However, in Acts 6:2 the apostles note that they should not “wait on tables” as servants do, but spread the word of God.⁴²⁷ Hobbes may make this claim in order to argue that that ministers should simply serve the civil sovereign, rather than spread the word and convert men to Christianity.

Hobbes next makes the bold assertion that “the right of tithes and offerings were constituted by the civil power.”⁴²⁸ In order to make these claims, Hobbes must diminish the charity that takes place in Acts 4:32-37.⁴²⁹ In these verses, Christ’s followers sell their possessions in order to leave the revenue “at the apostle’s feet,” so it could be distributed to the less fortunate.⁴³⁰ Additionally, the teachings in Acts 5:1-11 demonstrate that the Church has absolute authority in these matters. In these verses, Ananias, with his wife’s approval, sells property and keeps a portion of the proceeds.⁴³¹ As a result, Ananias and his wife die, as they have “put the Spirit of the Lord to the test.”⁴³² Hobbes also notes that “the ministers of the gospel lived on the benevolence of their flocks.”⁴³³ In order to make this claim, Hobbes ignores 1 Corinthians 9:1-19, in which the apostles renounce their right to make a profit, as they will be supported by the

⁴²⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.58. .

⁴²⁷ Acts 6:2 .

⁴²⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.61.

⁴²⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.64.

⁴³⁰ Acts 4:32-37.

⁴³¹ Acts 5:1-3.

⁴³² Acts 5:5-9.

⁴³³ *Leviathan* xlii.65.

Church.⁴³⁴ From these passages, it is clear that the right to collect and distribute revenue is not found solely in the sovereign. However, it is not surprising that Hobbes makes this claim. If he allowed individuals to offer money to their Church, it is likely that these citizens would be more committed to the Church than to the state. This would be detrimental to political stability.

In latter portions of the text, Hobbes argues that the sovereign “has the right of appointing pastors.”⁴³⁵ He further asserts that the sovereign has “the right of judging what doctrines are fit for peace, and to be taught the subjects.”⁴³⁶ Since the sovereign possesses this authority, the king is free to ensure that the pastor does not gain more power than him.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, if a king determines that a priest is not serving the “public good,” he can dismiss him.⁴³⁸ Through these statements, Hobbes ensures that the sovereign has more power than the Church. In fact, the sovereign has all the powers of the Church and more, as the sovereign can even perform baptisms and other religious functions.⁴³⁹ With this discussion, Hobbes clearly suggests that a church cannot exist as a separate institution from the state in Hobbes’ commonwealth.

⁴³⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:1-19.

⁴³⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.67.

⁴³⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.67.

⁴³⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.70.

⁴³⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.70.

⁴³⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.72.

Increasing the Power of the Sovereign, Enervating the Power of the Pope

While Hobbes continues to offer bold assertions of this nature, he struggles to support them with Scriptural evidence. According to Hobbes, “every sovereign, before Christianity, had the power of teaching and ordaining teachers” and could “exercise any part of the pastoral function.”⁴⁴⁰ As evidence for this claim, Hobbes cites 1 Kings 8, in which “Solomon blessed the people, consecrated the Temple, and pronounced that public prayer,” and had the power of “exercising ecclesiastical functions.”⁴⁴¹ In this instance, Hobbes is attempting to find Scriptural evidence for the divine right of kings, but his citation fails to accomplish his goal. In 1 Kings 9:5, the Lord tells Solomon, “I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised your father David.”⁴⁴² However, in 1 Kings 8, Solomon urges the Israelites to “devote” themselves “completely to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments.”⁴⁴³ Hobbes most likely reinterprets this passage in an effort to convince citizens of the sovereign that they should listen to kings, as they have been appointed by God. He uses this claim to support his contention that the “State and Church are the same men.”⁴⁴⁴

At the end of section 80, there is a natural break in the text, as he next argues against the authority of the Pope.⁴⁴⁵ Hobbes must first address the arguments of Cardinal Bellarmine, who was a strong advocate for the authority of the Papacy over the

⁴⁴⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.78.

⁴⁴¹ *Leviathan* xlii.78.

⁴⁴² 1 Kings 9:5.

⁴⁴³ 1 Kings 8:61 .

⁴⁴⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.79.

⁴⁴⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.81.

commonwealth.⁴⁴⁶ While Bellarmine considers whether monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy provide the best form of government, Hobbes claims that he has already established that monarchy is the “best government of the Church.”⁴⁴⁷ He further notes that the government of the status quo should always be preferred, as it provides peace and stability.⁴⁴⁸ While Hobbes clearly favors a monarchical form of government, he claims that the Pope should not be concerned about government anyway, except in papal states, as he is merely a “schoolmaster.”⁴⁴⁹

Hobbes also addresses Bellarmine’s argument regarding Peter, the “monarch of the Church.”⁴⁵⁰ In Matthew 16:18, Jesus tells Peter that “on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”⁴⁵¹ Hobbes obscures the meaning of this verse in order to suggest that Matthew 16 proves that “the foundation-stone of the Church was meant the fundamental article of the Church’s faith.”⁴⁵² According to Hobbes, Jesus was merely describing how the Church would be built. Hobbes continually underestimates and obscures Christ’s pointed differentiation of Peter in order to make these arguments.

⁴⁴⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.81.

⁴⁴⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.82.

⁴⁴⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.82.

⁴⁴⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.82-83.

⁴⁵⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.84.

⁴⁵¹ Matthew 16:18.

⁴⁵² *Leviathan* xlii.84.

Hobbes addresses several other important claims of Bellarmine. He notes that Bellarmine considered whether or not the Pope was the “Antichrist.”⁴⁵³ Hobbes claims that the Pope could not have been the Antichrist, as he does not fall within the definition set forth in the Bible.⁴⁵⁴ In order to be an Antichrist, a man must “denieth Jesus to be Christ” and “profess himself to be Christ.”⁴⁵⁵ By this definition, the Pope cannot be considered the Antichrist.⁴⁵⁶ However, Hobbes also notes that the Biblical definition for Antichrist does not include a man who falsely pretends to be Christ’s lieutenant.⁴⁵⁷ If the definition encompassed men who pretend to be Christ’s lieutenant, the Pope would be considered the Antichrist.⁴⁵⁸

Hobbes next addresses Bellarmine’s claims regarding Pope’s ability to “judge in all questions of faith and manners.”⁴⁵⁹ Bellarmine claims that “his judgments are infallible,” “that he can make very laws,” and that the Pope was given ecclesiastical power by Jesus.⁴⁶⁰ Bellarmine provided multiple Biblical passages in support of his claims.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵³ *Leviathan* xlii.87.

⁴⁵⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.87.

⁴⁵⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.88.

⁴⁵⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.88.

⁴⁵⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.88.

⁴⁵⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.88.

⁴⁵⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.89.

⁴⁶⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.89.

⁴⁶¹ *Leviathan* xlii.90-109.

In order to bolster his claims regarding infallibility, Bellarmine references Luke 22:31-32, in which he believes that Christ gave Peter “two privileges: one, that neither his faith should fail,” and “that neither he nor any of his successors should ever define any point concerning faith of manners erroneously, or contrary to the definition of a former Pope.”⁴⁶² In Luke 22:31-32, Jesus “predicts Peter’s denial.”⁴⁶³ However, Hobbes claims that Jesus actually gave Peter “a charge to teach all the other apostles” that they have no “jurisdiction in this world.”⁴⁶⁴

Bellarmino also finds support for his claims in John 21:16-17, in which Jesus tells Peter to “feed” his “sheep.”⁴⁶⁵ According to Hobbes, this statement is merely a “commission of teaching.”⁴⁶⁶ In this passage, Jesus actually asks Peter to “follow” him.⁴⁶⁷ Most plausibly, Jesus was not merely commanding Peter to spread the word, but also to obey him. Bellarmine also cites to Exodus 28:30 to bolster his argument regarding the Pope’s infallibility, as God gave the high priest “evidence and truth” in this verse.⁴⁶⁸ Hobbes refutes this argument by claiming “high priest” and “civil sovereign” are synonymous.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶² *Leviathan* xlii.90.

⁴⁶³ Luke 22:31-32 .

⁴⁶⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.90.

⁴⁶⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.92.

⁴⁶⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.92.

⁴⁶⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.92.

⁴⁶⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.93.

⁴⁶⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.93.

Finally, Hobbes addresses Bellarmine's evidence to support his claim regarding the Pope's infallibility of "judgment concerning manners."⁴⁷⁰ For this argument, Bellarmine cites to John 16:13, in which Jesus speaks of the "Spirit of truth."⁴⁷¹ Bellarmine argues that this truth refers to the "truth necessary to salvation."⁴⁷² Hobbes objects to this assertion because men other than the Pope can discover the "truth necessary to salvation."⁴⁷³

In addition to his Scriptural citations, Bellarmine asserts that the Pope must be infallible simply because he must have this quality in order to save the Church.⁴⁷⁴ In order to refute this claim, Hobbes once again denies Peter.⁴⁷⁵ The Pope has the same powers of Peter, but there is no Scriptural support for the supremacy of Peter, according to Hobbes.⁴⁷⁶ In order to make this claim, Hobbes must turn a blind eye to many passages in the Book of Acts, including Acts 2:14-40, in which Peter pours the Holy Spirit onto the Church.⁴⁷⁷ As a result of Hobbes' radical reinterpretation, he claims that no citizen should listen to the Pope when his commands contradict those of the sovereign.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.94.

⁴⁷¹ *Leviathan* xlii.94. .

⁴⁷² *Leviathan* xlii.94.

⁴⁷³ *Leviathan* xlii.94.

⁴⁷⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.95.

⁴⁷⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.95.

⁴⁷⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.95.

⁴⁷⁷ Acts 2:14-40.

⁴⁷⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.95.

Following his refutation of Bellarmine's first claim, Hobbes addresses his arguments regarding the Pope's "power to make laws."⁴⁷⁹ To prove this claim, Bellarmine first cites to Deuteronomy 17:12.⁴⁸⁰ This verse reads as follows: "As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the Lord your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel."⁴⁸¹ Next, Hobbes refutes Bellarmine's regarding Matthew 16:19.⁴⁸² In this verse, Jesus tells Peter that he will give him the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" and whatever he will "bind on earth will be bound in heaven."⁴⁸³ While Bellarmine concludes that these passages demonstrate that the Pope can legislate, Hobbes asserts that Bellarmine confuses the powers of the Pope with those of the sovereign, which he traces from Sinai to modern Europe.⁴⁸⁴

Bellarmino also references John 20:21, in which Jesus says "as my father sent me, so send I you."⁴⁸⁵ Hobbes analyzes this passage and finds no Scriptural evidence to suggest that Jesus sent "St. Peter to make laws," and argues that this verse merely demonstrates that Jesus meant to "persuade men to expect his second coming with a steadfast faith."⁴⁸⁶ Next, Hobbes examines Acts 15:28, in which Bellarmine finds

⁴⁷⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.97.

⁴⁸⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.97.

⁴⁸¹ Deuteronomy 17:12 .

⁴⁸² *Leviathan* xlii.98.

⁴⁸³ *Leviathan* xlii.98.

⁴⁸⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.97-98.

⁴⁸⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.100.

⁴⁸⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.100.

evidence for the Pope's legislative power through the "laying of burdens" that is described in the passage.⁴⁸⁷ Hobbes claims that this "laying of burdens" merely refers to a Pope's ability to give advice.⁴⁸⁸

Bellarmino also cites to Romans 13 to bolster this arguments: "let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God."⁴⁸⁹ According to Hobbes, this passage refers to the authority of "ecclesiastical princes."⁴⁹⁰ Furthermore, he notes that "there are not ecclesiastical princes but those that are also civil sovereigns."⁴⁹¹

Bellarmino offers his seventh claim regarding the legislative authority of Popes with a citation to 1 Corinthians 4:21: "Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and the spirit of lenity?"⁴⁹² Hobbes notes that this "rod" does not refer to "the power of a magistrate to punish offenders," but rather the power to excommunicate.⁴⁹³ Contrary to Hobbes' assertion, 1 Corinthians 4:20 reads as follows: "For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power."⁴⁹⁴ Clearly, a magistrate truly does possess the power to punish, not just to excommunicate. Bellarmino further claims that 1 Timothy 3:2 is evidence of the Pope's authority to make laws, but Hobbes argues that this passage was nothing but

⁴⁸⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.101.

⁴⁸⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.101.

⁴⁸⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.102.

⁴⁹⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.102.

⁴⁹¹ *Leviathan* xlii.102.

⁴⁹² *Leviathan* xlii.103.

⁴⁹³ *Leviathan* xlii.103.

⁴⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 4:20.

advice.⁴⁹⁵ 1 Timothy 5:19 is also a “precept,” according to Hobbes, not a law.⁴⁹⁶ Despite Hobbes’ claims, 1 Timothy 5:24 clearly indicates that some individuals will be judged as a result of their sins.⁴⁹⁷ The verses that Hobbes references are not mere “precepts.” They are laws.

Hobbes next addresses Bellarmine’s claims regarding Luke 10:16, which reads as follows: “He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despitheth you, despitheth me.”⁴⁹⁸ According to Hobbes, this verse is not a law.⁴⁹⁹ A pastor cannot enforce this doctrine, but a civil sovereign “may make laws suitable to this doctrine.”⁵⁰⁰ Bellarmine also finds support for his arguments in various sections of the Bible in which the apostles “signify command.”⁵⁰¹ Hobbes continues to suggest that these verses pertain to nothing but “good counsel.”⁵⁰² If the Pope could make laws “peace and justice” would “cease.”⁵⁰³ By refuting all of these Scriptural citations, Hobbes continues to diminish the authority of the Pope and increase the authority of the sovereign.

⁴⁹⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.104.

⁴⁹⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.105.

⁴⁹⁷ 1 Timothy 5:24.

⁴⁹⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.106.

⁴⁹⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.106.

⁵⁰⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.106.

⁵⁰¹ *Leviathan* xlii.107.

⁵⁰² *Leviathan* xlii.107.

⁵⁰³ *Leviathan* xlii.109.

However, Hobbes is not yet finished criticizing Bellarmine's arguments. Bellarmine asserts that Christ gave "ecclesiastical jurisdiction" to the Pope.⁵⁰⁴ According to Hobbes, Bellarmine is not addressing the "question of supremacy between the Pope and Christian kings, but between the Pope and other bishops."⁵⁰⁵ Furthermore, he claims that "this whole dispute, whether Christ left the jurisdiction to the Pope only or to other bishops also, if considered out of those places where the Pope has the civil sovereignty, is a contention *de lana caprina* (about trifles)."⁵⁰⁶ If the bishop or Pope does not reside inside a sovereign, then they have no authority to legislate at all.⁵⁰⁷ Ultimately, Hobbes concludes that only the sovereign has the "power of hearing and determining causes."⁵⁰⁸

In order to support these claims, Hobbes cites Luke 12:14, in which Christ supposedly reserves for himself the power to judge.⁵⁰⁹ However, Hobbes must abstract from scripture in order to make this argument. In Luke 12:14, Jesus explicitly states that he is not to be a judge in other's matters.⁵¹⁰ Hobbes' choice to cite this passage is unusual, as other verses within the New Testament define Christ as the final judge. For example, in 2 Timothy 4:1, Christ is defined as the judge of the "living and the dead."⁵¹¹ However, Hobbes's citation of this passage is not merely hasty work. Following his

⁵⁰⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.110.

⁵⁰⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.110.

⁵⁰⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.111.

⁵⁰⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.111.

⁵⁰⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.111.

⁵⁰⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.112.

⁵¹⁰ Luke 12:14.

⁵¹¹ 2 Timothy 4:1.

citation to Luke 12:14, Hobbes notes that bishops do not receive jurisdiction from Christ, but rather from the sovereign.⁵¹² With his citation to Luke 12:14, Hobbes seems to be implying that the bishops err by claiming Christ's authority when insisting on the legitimacy of their particular sovereignty over their dioceses. He draws attention to a disjuncture between Christ, who is generally dismissive of earthly things, and the bishops, who seemed obsessed with the division of the world.

Furthermore, Hobbes reinterprets Luke 12:14 in an effort to make Christ appear to be more judgmental in order to argue that the Pope does not possess the authority to judge. According to Hobbes, the Pope merely has the "didactical" power, or the power to teach.⁵¹³ Thus, bishops cannot "receive their jurisdiction from the Pope."⁵¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Hobbes must look to the Old Testament in order to deprive bishops of their power.⁵¹⁵ Hobbes cites to 1 Samuel, in which the Israelites, set over themselves a king, after the manner of other nations, the high priest had the civil government, and none but he could make, nor depose an inferior priest.⁵¹⁶ Clearly, Hobbes struggles to adequately support his arguments against Bellarmine in this instance.

Finally, Hobbes addresses Bellarmine's claim that the Pope could have any sort of "supreme temporal power indirectly."⁵¹⁷ According to Hobbes, if the Pope does not possess "supreme civil power directly," then he has no right to challenge it, as "the right

⁵¹² *Leviathan* xlii.113.

⁵¹³ *Leviathan*—xlii.115.

⁵¹⁴ *Leviathan*—xlii.113.

⁵¹⁵ *Leviathan*—xlii.118.

⁵¹⁶ *Leviathan*—xlii.118.

⁵¹⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.121.

of all sovereigns is derived originally from the consent of every one of those that are to be governed.”⁵¹⁸ If power was divided between indirect authorities and direct authorities, civil discord would result.⁵¹⁹

While Bellarmine insists that “civil power is subject to the spiritual,” Hobbes insists that Bellarmine really meant to claim that “the civil sovereign is subject to the spiritual sovereign,” who declined to locate final authority in the bishop of Rome.⁵²⁰ Hobbes argues that Bellarmine is incorrect to dismiss the fact that “all Christian kings, popes, clergy, and all other Christian men make but one commonwealth.”⁵²¹ These men are all Christians and represent “several Churches.”⁵²² The Churches are “capable of commanding and obeying.”⁵²³ The Church Universal is not capable of doing this, as it does not yet have a representative on earth.⁵²⁴ Bellarmine also claims that members of the commonwealth depend on one another, but Hobbes argues that they actually depend on the sovereign.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.123.

⁵¹⁹ *Leviathan* xlii. 123.

⁵²⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.124.

⁵²¹ *Leviathan* xlii.124.

⁵²² *Leviathan* xlii.124.

⁵²³ *Leviathan* xlii.124.

⁵²⁴ *Leviathan* xlii.124.

⁵²⁵ *Leviathan* xlii.125.

Bellarmino offers a second argument regarding the commonwealth's ability to "command" other commonwealths when the others are not acting in the interest of the "spiritual good."⁵²⁶ While Hobbes does not deny this claim, he argues that this line of reasoning also allows the civil sovereign to "make war upon the spiritual sovereign," if the spiritual sovereign is damaging it.⁵²⁷ Clearly, this is a veiled threat. However, Hobbes eventually qualifies his argument, as he notes that the "spiritual sovereign" is not of this world anyway.⁵²⁸ He further argues that Popes do not have a right to dismiss kings that are perceived as heretical.⁵²⁹ Additionally, he notes that only the sovereign can rightfully determine if a man is a heretic.⁵³⁰ Throughout the last paragraphs of the chapter, Hobbes continues to reaffirm that the Pope has merely been given the power to teach.⁵³¹

The second half of chapter 42 has served as a critique of papal authority. Hobbes must degrade the power of the Pope in order to accomplish his political goals. Authority must not be divided between the Pope and the civil sovereign, as their commands could easily be in tension. If this was to occur, citizens may listen to the Pope instead of the sovereign, which would allow for civil discord. Considering the problems that Pope poses to Hobbes' project, it is not surprising that he spends a great deal of time diminishing his power.

⁵²⁶ *Leviathan* xlii.126.

⁵²⁷ *Leviathan* xlii.127.

⁵²⁸ *Leviathan* xlii.128.

⁵²⁹ *Leviathan* xlii.129-130.

⁵³⁰ *Leviathan* xlii.130.

⁵³¹ *Leviathan* xlii.134.

Conclusion

While my examination of Part III, Chapter 42 of the *Leviathan* has clearly demonstrated that Hobbes engages in radical reinterpretation of scripture and the Catholic Church, my analysis alone does not answer the central question of this project: why does Hobbes engage in this radical critique? Scholars who have analyzed the topic have failed to adequately answer this question. Those who have examined his critique of religion offer various potential motivations that drove Hobbes to reinterpret scripture. As Christopher McClure notes, scholars that have analyzed the topic can be divided into three camps: those that believe Hobbes' reinterpretation is merely subversive, those that argue he believed in God, even though his reinterpretation is highly unorthodox, and those that believe he reinterpreted religion in order to ensure that it would not damage his political and scientific goals. While all of these claims have merit, my project lends support to the thesis that Hobbes' critique of religion is primarily subversive.

Clearly, Hobbes keeps his political and scientific goals in mind when critiquing religion. As this paper has demonstrated, Hobbes is aware that religion is somewhat natural for men, as they desire to know the causes of events. Part I, Chapter 12 serves as Hobbes' first substantive discussion of religion. In this chapter, he differentiates between a philosophical belief in God and religion. While Hobbes does not appear to be concerned about men who hold a philosophical belief in God, as their belief is merely the result of curiosity and the scientific inquiry that he desires, he offers a very harsh critique of religion. According to Hobbes, religion is the product of "fear and ignorance." Hobbes must offer this harsh critique, as prophecy would be incredibly damaging to his political goals. Prophets, or men who claim to speak to God, would allow for divided

loyalties in the sovereign. Men might be more inclined to listen to prophets than sovereign authority.

In addition to his critique of religion, Hobbes reinterprets scripture in an effort to critique the Church. Part III, chapter 42 serves as his most significant critique thereof. In this chapter, Hobbes drastically reduces the power of Church offices and the Pope. Much like his discussion of religion in chapter 12, Hobbes critiques the Church partially because of his political motivations. Hobbes is aware that Church offices and the Pope would be damaging to his political project. Much like prophets, the Pope and other Church officials would be a detriment to political stability. In order to obey Church officials, citizens would have to disobey the sovereign. My analysis regarding chapter 42 of the *Leviathan* demonstrates that Hobbes reinterprets and critiques the Church in order to aid his political goals. However, my examination of this chapter also helps to fill existing gaps in the scholarship surrounding Hobbes' critique of religion. While all of the positions that Christopher McClure describes have merit, none of them recognize that Hobbes' discourse is not merely a critique of the religion and the Church. While Hobbes may not deny the existence of a God, his critique radical critique of the Church is not merely a demonstration of his opposition to Church officials. Because many of the Church teachings appear to correspond to the Gospels, by offering a radical critique of the Church, Hobbes is also condemning Christianity in general.

In order to degrade the authority of Church officials, Hobbes must completely ignore key messages of the New Testament. For example, in John 14-16, Jesus describes his earthly kingdom. In John 14:1-3, Jesus tells his disciples,

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.⁵³²

While Hobbes conflates the civil sovereign with a representative of God, he can locate no evidence for this claim in the New Testament.

Furthermore, he must completely ignore a fundamental message of the Gospel of Matthew and the New Testament in general, the primacy of Peter. In Matthew 16:18, Christ tells Peter, "you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."⁵³³ When considering this verse, it is clear that Hobbes not only critiques the Church. He critiques Christianity, as he continually denies Peter, the disciple in whom Christ invests his fullest authority, throughout chapter 42. The implications of this denial are telling. Since the Church is established by Christ, and is carried out by Peter, Hobbes cannot be considered a Christian.

Much like previous scholars who have analyzed the topic, my examination of Hobbes' critique of religion, the Church, and his reinterpretation of scripture allow me to conclude that Hobbes knew that he knew these topics posed problems for both his political and scientific projects. However, my analysis also fills existing gaps in the scholarship. Each of the three camps of Hobbes scholarship that McClure identifies make compelling arguments. Hobbes does not deny the existence of a God, but he does radically reinterpret scripture. Additionally, he clearly shows concern for his political

⁵³² John 14:1-3

⁵³³ Matthew 16:18.

and scientific goals throughout his project. However, while he has concern for these goals, my analysis of chapter 42 confirms that his project is subversive. By radically critiquing the Church, Hobbes may not explicitly deny the existence of a God, but he does not have to. His critique of ecclesiastical power not only critiques Church authority, but Christianity in general. Thus, while all of the claims the McClure references are understandable, this paper reveals the way in which the three camps of scholarship might be integrated—and partially vindicated—by reading chapter 42. Hobbes realizes that religion cannot be abolished, so he ensures that it will not disrupt political stability. However, this fact should not lead readers to conclude that Hobbes was a genuine Christian. Hobbes' reinterpretation of scripture was not merely a necessary byproduct of the modern project that he proposed in Parts I and II. Hobbes' critique of the Church as contained in Part III, chapter 42 of the *Leviathan* serves as evidence that Hobbes is no Christian.

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