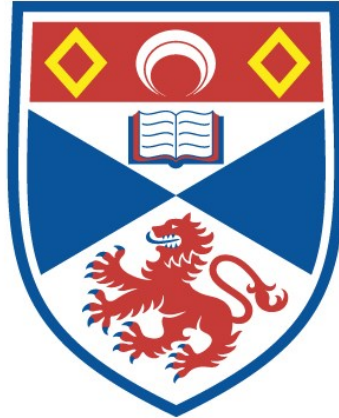


# THE RELIGION OF THOMAS HOBBS

D.M.T. Coles

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
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THE RELIGION of THOMAS HOBBS

Being a Thesis presented by

D. M. T. COLES

to the University of St. Andrews

in application for the degree of Ph.D.

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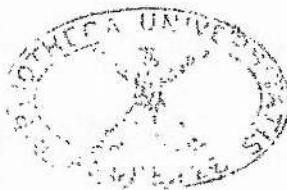
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following Thesis is my own composition and has not been previously presented in application for a Higher Degree.

The Research was carried out in St. Andrews and Edinburgh.

Date *20<sup>th</sup> April 1954*

Signature



CERTIFICATE

I certify that Mr.D.M.T.Coles has spent nine terms at Research Work in St.Andrews and Edinburgh, that he has fulfilled the conditions of Ordinance No.16 ( St.Andrews ) and that he is qualified to submit the accompanying Thesis in application for the degree of Ph.D.

Date 20 April 1954.

Signature

### CAREER

I matriculated in the University of St. Andrews in October 1946 and followed a course leading to graduation in Arts until June 1949.

In October 1949 I commenced the Research on which the following Thesis is now being submitted as a Ph.D. Thesis.

Date *20<sup>th</sup> April 1954*

Signature

## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The life of Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679) covered what may well have been the most remarkable span of time in the history of the modern world. When he died little more than twenty years remained to the seventeenth century, and to this century before others properly belongs the proud title, la grande siècle. Its achievement was much more than mere outward magnificence. It was a century of the most stupendous advances in knowledge, and the most violent political and religious upheaval and change. In science the revolutionary work of Kepler and Galileo ushered in a new and brilliant age; in philosophy Descartes and Bacon respectively laid the foundations of new approaches to knowledge; in medicine, in social theory, in the study of history, in art, immense strides forward were taken. In religion the century is one of ferment and adjustment: Europe acclimatizes itself to religious individualism, to heterodoxy, and to a steady decline in reverence for authority. The new faith is as revolutionary as the new thought, and both mark a decisive breach with tradition. At the close of the century the contours of the modern world are clearly seen, the trends of thought, the direction of human endeavour. The reign of humanism is established in the minds of men. It is the great age of blue prints. We must perhaps go back to the century of Greek splendour which began with the age of Pericles to find a period of like intellectual and formative significance to Europe; and it is interesting that a crucial part of the earlier age was recorded by Thucydides,



a member of the aristocratic party and something of a reactionary, whose history was translated by Hobbes early in his literary career.

Among pioneers of the new thought we may select Descartes and Bacon as founding divergent systems of speculation. Descartes heads a line of continental philosophers who were persuaded largely of the sufficiency of pure thought to discover objective truth. They were rationalist and dogmatic; they stressed the importance of mind as opposed to matter, had great respect for mathematics, and reasoned deductively. Bacon is father of the experimental school. Among pure philosophers his intellectual descendants were the British empiricists. Bacon himself appears to have had no clear-cut philosophy, but the importance he attached to induction, which is a method of reasoning based purely and simply on observation, marks him as the founder of modern empiricism. Both these philosophers departed from tradition; both were severely critical of much that was handed down to them, and in particular of Aristotle.

Where does Hobbes stand in relation to the new thought as represented by the outlook and work of these two great thinkers? In the first place we may say that Hobbes was as critical of the philosophy of the past as were Bacon and Descartes, and his strictures against Aristotle as interpreted by the Schoolmen were even more outspoken and uncompromising. Hobbes, like Bacon and Descartes, felt himself very much to be breaking new

ground; to be a philosophical pioneer; and so far he resembles them and they resemble each other. What is his relation to them as they diverge? I think it may be said that he stands somewhere between them. Like Descartes he regarded mathematics as a basic science, and believed that all human knowledge was mathematical in kind. His method was deductive. On the other hand his nominalism, his belief that all knowledge in the first instance is derived from sense, and his theory of human psychology based on observations, rank him with the empiricists. Bacon disregarded deduction, whereas Hobbes arranged his arguments in a deductive system. Whatever affinities Hobbes had with the experimental school, scientists and philosophers, he derived from Galileo rather than from Bacon. On the whole he stands midway between the rationalists and empiricists; and Spinoza a little after him also occupies something of an equivocal position. Spinoza was a rationalist, but his starkly objective approach to the study of human nature, which for the most part is treated unemotionally like a mathematical problem, links him closely with Hobbes, and reproduces something of the spirit of the Novum Organum. If Hobbes cannot be assigned to any philosophical school, but must be regarded as balanced between them, Spinoza cannot be placed unreservedly on the side of the Cartesians.

Where did Hobbes stand in relation to the new faith? With many features of it he was in close sympathy; and his

hostility to Roman Catholicism was deep rooted. I cannot help feeling that the Church of England, so far as it was broad and tolerant and dutifully Erastian, was his proper religious habitat. With most aspects of Puritanism as it was manifest in England he was in violent mental conflict for the great part of his long life. Hobbes's sympathy with the new faith was almost entirely to the extent that it was a breach with the past. The throwing off of the papal yoke received his full approval, but he had expected better things than either the threat of a new ecclesiastical tyranny, or religious anarchy. That the old authority had been discarded was wholly good; but it should be replaced by a new authority, not ecclesiastical but secular.

We are to write about the religion of Hobbes, and as his religious opinions were voiced either in the heat of controversy, or as incidental to a larger aim which was at least half persuasion, some enquiry into his motives for writing is necessary. To understand his motives it is essential to understand something of the circumstances in which he wrote. In particular to gain any comprehension of his very dogmatic religious opinions we must understand the effect upon him of the religious scene in England in the first half of the seventeenth century. Hobbes makes the observation in Chapter I of the English translation of *De Corpore*: "The scope of all speculation is the

performance of some action or thing to be done," and he goes on to explain that the utility of moral and civil philosophy is chiefly the avoidance of war, especially civil war (a). He is here revealing to us, though not explicitly, the considerations which were responsible for a great part of his work. His motive was worthy but it was not always nor altogether disinterested; but in this respect he was not different from other writers on controversial subjects. The manner of De Corpore in general is detached enough, but this cannot be said of Leviathan. The aim of Hobbes in writing Leviathan was to persuade other people to accept his point of view, but this for two good reasons: firstly, and very important, because he firmly believed in the truth of his propositions and the validity of his arguments; and secondly because he believed the acceptance of these to be paramountly needful in the circumstances of his time.

It is possible, in fact, to trace a division in his work corresponding with a variation of immediate aim. His motives were at some times less disinterested than at others. The effect of this, however, must not be over-emphasised. It is necessary to read all the works of Hobbes to understand him, and if all are studied impartially a truly remarkable cohesion between them all will be noted; and although there are the two

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(a) E. I. 7.



groups of doctrine corresponding to the variation in aim which we have referred to, many seeming contradictions upon a closer examination simply vanish. Many are accounted for by a certain change of emphasis over the years as the works were composed. Times changed and the demands of the situation became more urgent. When Leviathan was written, for instances, Hobbes was an exile, and the worst calamity had befallen his native land. As compared therefore with De Cive (which was completed at the beginning of the exile but before the worst had happened) and with the Elements of Law, with which works it is in close logical agreement, the style of Leviathan is perhaps a little more explosive, the reproofs are sharper, the irony and sarcasm more trenchant. And it is this change in manner which is responsible for some apparent contradictions. An example will serve to illustrate the point. In De Cive is the statement: "Whatsoever a man does against his conscience is a sin; for he who doth so contemns the law." (a). In Leviathan is the statement: "Another doctrine repugnant to civil society is that whatsoever a man does against his conscience is sin; and it dependeth upon the presumption of making himself judge of good and evil" (b). The contradiction seems more surprising when we consider that in both contexts Hobbes is discussing

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(a) E. II. 152

(b) Lev. 172

opinions which tend to undermine the commonwealth. The explanation is simple. Both statements are qualified, and in the light of the qualifications can be seen not to be at variance. It is true that sin in the sense of punishable crime is an outward breach of the civil law, and the fact of culpability is in no way affected by the state of the offender's conscience, though the degree of his culpability may be. But apart from overt wrongdoing Hobbes consistently stresses the fundamental importance of wrong intention, that is intention to break the law of nature. Such intention because it contemns the law (of nature), is against a man's conscience, that is against the rational conviction that all thinking men must have as to the kind of conduct which will best serve their long-term interests. In Leviathan Hobbes chooses to make as his first statement one that is arresting and even paradoxical, and to qualify it afterwards. In De Cive an opposite and softer procedure is adopted.

We have admitted that Hobbes was not always nor often disinterested as he wrote; but however biassed in this or that particular discussion there is throughout much of his work a deep interest in morality as morality is expressed in behaviour. It is this persistent interest which gives to the works a harmony of tone and a harmony of deep intention in spite

of some surface incompatibilities. In "The Political Philosophy of Hobbes" Leo Strauss argues that Hobbes's political philosophy has a moral basis: that it is not derived from natural science but founded on first hand experience of human life (a). Hobbes's early admiration for Aristotle, seen not from the scholastic but from the humanist point of view, was because of a leaning of his thought to ethics (b). He turned from humanism, says Strauss, to history, because men do not obey precepts, (c) unless they are either confronted with the bad consequences of disobedience, or are compelled to obey by the threat of punishment. The evil consequences of certain courses of action can be learned by a study of history, which provides the necessary illustrations to teach those that are reasonable. Aristotle had laid down the golden mean as a rule for conduct. Although Hobbes was primarily interested in behaviour and its effect on others, (d) true virtue for him "is no longer conceived to be a state but solely an intention". Hobbes discusses the importance of motive in morality in Chapter 15 of Leviathan, the same chapter in which he rejects Aristotle's golden mean, or "mediocrity of passion" as he calls

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(a)	Political Philosophy of Hobbes by Leo Strauss	P. 29
(b)	" " " " " "	P. 52
(c)	" " " " " "	P. 98
(d)	" " " " " "	P. ?

it. The just or righteous man is one whose conduct habitually conforms to reason, and an overt breach now and then does not make the man unrighteous. Similarly "the injustice of manners is the disposition or aptitude to do injury, and is injustice before it proceed to act" (a). The study of history led Hobbes to a belief in prudence as descriptive of good aims and motives, and as a principle of conduct. Prudence is gained by experience interpreted by reason, and it is the foundation of his political philosophy. "The same presupposition which caused the turn to history," says Strauss, "is the basis of Hobbes's political philosophy: the replacement of the morality of obedience by the morality of Prudence" (b).

The moral bias of Hobbes, seen in the early evolution of his thought, in the fact that history (the science of facts) when it had provided the philosopher with a principle of moral behaviour was laid aside in favour of a more or less dogmatic philosophy, and traceable as we have seen through much of his work, throws some light on the writings as a whole, their manner as well as the matter contained in them. He is persuaded of the truth of his philosophy; he is persuaded also of its expediency. Only if it is accepted will the majority of men behave themselves. He would have other people accept

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(a) Lev. 77

(b) Political Philosophy of Hobbes by Leo Strauss P. 98



his views so as to produce the result he considers most desirable; and the most desirable result is good behaviour. As good behaviour is outward it amounts to obedience to the law; and because the law is the same for all there will be uniformity of behaviour and outward harmony and peace. He holds especially that there must be obedience in matters of faith and conscience, as well as in purely secular concerns. In fact it is in this aspect of obedience that he is most vitally interested, and to understand his interest we must consider the circumstances through which he lived.

Hobbes was moved by a dread and abhorrence of anarchy; and for him the religious anarchy of the seventeenth century, aggravating political division, and contributing greatly to civil war and revolution, was the greatest evil in the world. It was an almost inevitable first fruit of the Reformation, the point of departure of which was the discrediting and discarding of an autocratic central authority in religious matters. With the swing of the pendulum religious revolt expressed itself in an extreme form of individualism. The pretensions of a hierarchy of intermediaries who had claimed to interpret doctrine, forgive sins, and intercede, were ousted by the doctrine of immediate and free access to God, and the sovereignty of private conscience; so that Hobbes could complain in

Behemoth: "For after the Bible was translated into English every man, nay every boy and every wench that could read English, thought that they spoke with God Almighty and understood what he said . . . . every man became a judge of religion and an interpreter of the scripture to himself" (a). Belief in personal inspiration was carried to the most absurd lengths; and because it infected the influential as well as the unimportant, the high and the low, could not fail to make confusion in the state worse confounded. The revolt against all authority in religious matters was championed not only by bigoted puritans, but by free thinkers and agnostics. John Wildman, the agnostic and republican, objected tersely in the Putney Debates, 1647, to the selection by Oliver Cromwell of texts from the Old and New Testaments to support his point of view, but strongly denied the right of the magistrate to direct or order individual thought. "God hath made you instruments of liberty", he told the Council of the Army; "in matters of religion that's preferred to us before life. Let's have that or nothing" (b). Wildman's "Agreement of the People", which represented the army's case in the Putney Debates, and which

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(a) E. VI. 190

(b) "John Wildman, Plotter and Postmaster", by Maurice Ashley P.

demande among other things complete freedom of conscience, was characterised by Cromwell as "academic, theoretical, impracticable, and, worst of all, tending to anarchy". (a ). Ireton's criticism was more specific and acute: "The Case for the Army", which had been reproduced more concisely in the "Agreement of the People", assumed the importance of the army's engagements, but the army's spokesmen were arguing that engagements could be broken if such was revealed to be the will of God (b). Colonel Rainsborough had declared that one's "bounden duty to God" and one's conscience was paramount; and at another point in the debate one, Buffecoate, put the matter more drastically: "Whatsoever hopes or obligations I should be bound unto, if afterwards God should reveal himself, I would break it speedily, if it were an hundred a day". (c)

The extreme religious individualism of some of the Independents, of the Levellers and Republicans, was in part an answer to the authoritarian policy of Laud; but it must have been the effect also of other causes, as it had been present in Elizabethan times, and had gained ground ever since. One cause was, as Hobbes thought, the rapid dissemination of Scripture in the mother tongue, so that even the unlearned

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(a) John Wildman, Plotter and Postmaster", by Maurice Ashley P. 1

(b) " " " " " " " " " P. 2

(c) Rushworth's Historical Collections (revised). Vol. VI  
Ann. 1647 P. 275

could read and imagine that they understood. In fact the authoritarian policy of Laud was just as much an answer to religious individualism, as its cause. The teaching of Hobbes was another answer, and so was the military dictatorship of Cromwell. The fate of the first parliament of the Protectorate which foundered on the rock of independency and liberty of conscience, exposes a fatal flaw in this kind of thought in a community of zealots. Claims to follow private conscience in matters of religion, if conscience is to be trusted, must lead to denunciations of those who do not agree; denunciations will naturally be met by counterblast, and so conflict inevitably ensues. And although Christ claimed to bring not peace but a sword, the meaning of his words cannot be accepted as a criterion of healthy Christianity in a state that accepts the creed officially. In a heathen state the claim may well be held to justify persecution. From another point of view it is arguable that the dictates of consciences which are so private as to be out of joint, can scarcely have any validity as interpretations of a religion which claims to be universal.

There was hardly a Puritan leader who saw the dangers ahead. Pym's indictment of the clergy in a speech made in the opening days of the Long Parliament, ignores completely the peril that king and clergy were trying to meet. After a lengthy recital



of grievances Pym denounced the "ambitious and corrupt clergy, preaching down the laws of God and liberties of the kingdom; pretending divine authority and absolute power in the king to do what he will with us" (a). This was very justified, no doubt, up to a point; but the whole tirade is one-sided, and in the event the absolute power of Oliver Cromwell to do as he would, was the upshot. However excessive were the activities of Laud, the king could find ample ground for authoritative action as had Queen Elizabeth before him. The King's declaration of 10th December 1641, touching religion and common prayer, was in effect the answer of Leviathan to religious anarchy. Being "sensible that the present division, separation, and disorder about the worship and service of God, as it is established by the laws and statutes of the kingdom in the Church of England, tendeth to great distraction and confusion . . ." the <sup>King</sup> ~~proclama-~~ ~~tion~~ commands "obedience to the laws and statutes ordained for the establishing of the true religion in these kingdoms". (b)

Religious troubles were not confined to England. All over Europe was grim evidence of the devastating effect of religious disunity aggravating political division. The treaty of Westphalia was in 1648, toward the end of the ten year period

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(a) Rushworth's Historial Collections (revised)  
Vol. IV Ann. 1640 Sect. Nov. 7th Sp. by Pym

(b) Rushworth's Historial Collections (revised)  
Vol. IV Ann 1640 Dec. 10th. Proclamation by King

passed by Hobbes in France, when his thoughts were "almost altogether unhinged from the mathematics", and he was busy with De Cive and Leviathan, the works in which he sets down his political and religious cures for anarchy. The Treaty of Westphalia provided for religious toleration, but Germany was depopulated and a physical ruin, so that the destructive effect of religious disunity inflaming political division, could scarcely be illustrated more terribly. The fate of Germany was perhaps sealed by the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, which attempted to settle the quarrels which were the result of Luther's Reformation. A political fragmentation which was unnatural and unhealthy had to be accepted as unavoidable fact, with the Emperor's suzerainty from that time constituting little more than a nominal link. Charles V had claimed a paramount prerogative to decide the Empire's religion; but with the treaty of 1555 such a prerogative was tacitly abolished, or declared not to exist. The principle of cuius regio eius religio was accepted, so that each local prince became the arbiter of religion in his territory. But this Erastian confirmation of local sovereignties had in due course the very effect which Hobbes staunchly maintained must be the effect of an opposite policy in England, and actually did result from an opposite policy in France. In urging his Erastian doctrine Hobbes must, perhaps, be held to have in view a political unit with more obvious

durability and logical raison d'etre than some of the petty states of Germany. The sixteenth century history of France, which was a united nation and which had for long enjoyed considerable religious independence, gives much more support to the Erastian views of Hobbes. In France it was an early tolerance of religious dissent, a denial in effect of the Erastian principle, which proved to be the road to havoc. So that in both Germany and France, though the case of each seems to have a very different bearing on the question of church and state relations, the fatal influence of religious disunity on the condition of civil peace, was illustrated. All these events on the continent, contemporary and historical, were of course well known to Hobbes, and must have been in mind as he grappled in argument with the problems at home. It is not to be wondered at, and may well be considered much to his credit, that he set himself with all the power of argument he could muster, to persuade his countrymen of the danger and of the remedy as he saw it.

Although many of the convictions of Hobbes were presented forcibly to the reader, with the object of persuading the reader to accept them and act upon them, there is the other side of his work, in which his motive was more disinterested and further from pure persuasion. Hobbes's political views, together with the Erastian corollary, must have been formed comparatively

early. But the mechanistic materialism was at least as early. Both are encountered side by side in the Elements of Law; and the heads of the mechanistic doctrine were published in the Tract on First Principles. It was in 1628 that Hobbes discovered geometry, "the mother of all natural sciences" (a), and the seed germinated which was to grow into such an impressive if slightly lopsided tree. Side by side with his determination to persuade his countrymen by rational argument of the peril they were in and the remedy - which determination induced him to write De Cive (which in the chronology of argument was the third section of his Elements of Philosophy) before the first and second section - he set himself the task of reducing the study of human nature "to the rules and infallibility of reason" (b), that is to make it a branch of mathematical learning or science. The phrase quoted is from the Epistle Dedicatory of "Human Nature", and here he draws a distinction between mathematical and dogmatical learning. Reason in her discourses, he tells us, employs only mathematical, as it alone is "free from controversy and dispute" (c). In the Epistle Dedicatory to the translation of De Corpore he claims to have made a science of sociology, or civil philosophy (d), and in the preface to the English

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(a) Lev. 365

(b) E. IV. Human Nature, Epistle Dedicatory

(c) E. IV. Human Nature, Epistle Dedicatory

(d) E. I De Corpore translation, Epistle Dedicatory



translation of De Cive he declares: "Whatsoever things they are in which the present age doth differ from the rude simplicity of antiquity, we must acknowledge to be a debt which we owe merely to geometry" (a). There could be no branch of learning more impartial than geometry.

These two motives, the disinterested motive of the philosopher, and the persuasion of the pragmatist, can be traced throughout the works; and a certain incompatibility between them is responsible for some anomalies. The fact, for instance, that the morality and the doctrine of sin and conscience are not convincingly reconciled with the radical materialism which underlies the doctrine of necessity may be attributable to a divergence of approach and intention on the part of Hobbes. The one motive based on a conviction of the infallibility of a certain method, and an acceptance of the mechanistic doctrine of the scientists which was carried to its logical conclusion, produced an emphatic and undiluted materialism. From this the doctrine of necessity followed logically, and on the side of religion Hobbes was committed to an extreme version of the doctrine of predestination. The other motive, springing from a conviction as honest as the first, to the effect that a general acceptance of certain opinions about the state and its relation to the church was necessary if peace was to be secured and the life of the commonwealth preserved, produced the theory

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(a) E. II De Cive Translation, Preface

of sovereignty and the Erastianism. On this side also must be placed the moral teaching and the doctrine of sin, as in certain aspects they are closely linked with considerations of the sovereign's prerogatives. These two bodies of doctrine, largely inspired by different motives, are officially linked by empirical observations of human nature, and by an analysis of human passions and the will. The success of the official reconciliation may be questioned, and a certain breach between the two sides of doctrine seems to remain. Critics have been hasty to jump into this breach and exploit it, and to magnify every seeming inconsistency. From the first, in fact, they have purported to discover grounds for accusing Hobbes of dishonesty and insincerity; and in the following paragraphs we shall consider briefly the assault that has been made on his integrity.

It has been held that Hobbes was a man without a religion; an enemy of religion; and "most unkindest cut of all" an atheist. The religious opinions he expressed were insincere, and brought in cynically to boost his argument. Criticism of this sort was made not exclusively by theologians. Here and there perhaps, was an admirer with literary reputation, as Waller or Cowley; but Hobbes could claim no friend or kindred among philosophers, except perhaps Spinoza. Among the lower intellectual orders, however, Hobbism spread and flourished with the devastating rapidity of a pestilence, and as Pepys tells

us, Leviathan was so much in demand that it was unobtainable. Hobbes was a false prophet whose appeal lay with the baser sort, and everybody with a reputation to guard, especially the theologians and men of religion, <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ his implacable <sup>enemy</sup> ~~enemies~~. <sup>Religious people</sup> ~~They~~ would have nothing to do with him, or they opposed him; and in opposition their earnestness betokened deep feeling, sometimes a deep-seated fear.

Clarendon sneers about the "very reasonable intimation of the wisdom of Oliver's politics" in Leviathan and insinuates that Hobbes entertained the "hope that Cromwell would think him worthy to be a Counsellor, who had given him such an earnest that he should serve him with success" (a). He makes the suggestion further, one which seems to have been quite unfounded, that Hobbes favoured the Independents because Cromwell was known to be "of that faction"; and he adds: "But I dare say he did with his heart, as well as by his tongue, quit that party the very day that the King was proclaimed, as he is ready to quit all his other opinions true or false, as soon as the sovereign power shall please to require him" (b). The tirade overlooks the fact that Hobbes makes the sovereign the measure of just and unjust, but not of true and false; but this inaccuracy beside, the imputation of dishonesty and time serving is one that recurs. It was felt that Hobbes only had to be judged out of his own

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(a) Clarendon's Brief Survey of Leviathan - Survey of Ch. 25

(b) Clarendon's Brief Survey of Leviathan - Survey of Ch. 47

mouth; that as he had provided justification for duplicity and bad faith in his writing, (the sovereign's command, he was interpreted as holding, justifies anything) and had acted upon these evil principles, no serious consideration ought to be given to anything that he wrote.

It is admitted that there was some ground in the conduct of Hobbes for a fraction of the imputations and innuendoes that were cast up at him. Certainly he deserted the King's party in France, submitted to the Lord Protector, and lived quietly in England, while the state church was ravaged and desecrated, and, what is much more important, while the official policy was one of toleration to all the sects. Of course on a fair interpretation of Hobbes's political doctrine, flexibility and accommodation, a quick change with the change of sovereignty, were not only not condemned, but were the logical and correct course. The sovereignty Hobbes acknowledged was de facto in so far as the crucial question to be asked was, who is in a position to afford me protection? And if toleration was the religious policy prescribed by Oliver Cromwell, then toleration was the law for Hobbes. His friend, Waller, who was at times a far more ardent supporter of the Church of England, pursued a similar course of apparent vacillation and accommodation. Both men were found to be enthusiastic supporters of Church and King after the Restoration, and tacitly claim that their loyalty had been unbroken. Waller inscribed an address of welcome to



Charles II, and Hobbes was shortly to write "Behemoth"; and just as the tone of Waller's address savours too much of private interest, so we may be permitted to regard with some scepticism the vehement tirades of Behemoth. The "democratical men" were no doubt objects of hatred and scorn, and the fragmentary religions contumacious and contemptible; but why had the writer deliberately come back to England into the middle of all this? Was it because of some imagined personal danger in France? Such questions might be asked, and have been asked, by the critical, but Hobbes provides his own justification quite fully in Leviathan. His actions were consistent with his doctrine.

As we have suggested the most deadly shaft of the critics was to accuse Hobbes of atheism; and he appears to have felt genuine resentment at the accusation. There was certainly no ground for it in his writings. However impersonal and unlike the God of Love we must conceive his deity to have been, the existence of the deity goes without question. For all that the word, atheist, was flung at him repeatedly. He was in fact the "father of atheists". Clarendon pleads that in view of his odious doctrines "a man can hardly avoid saying, he hath no religion"(a), and Bramhall upbraids him for "making atheism to be more reasonable than superstition", and considers that his doctrine denying the existence of incorporeal spirits

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(a) Clarendon, A Brief Survey of Leviathan, Epistle Dedicatory

"is that main root of atheism" (a); Clarke joins him with Spinoza and other atheists as the butt and target of his "Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God". We shall later discuss the God of Hobbes, and we shall uphold the opinion that the charge of atheism had only a meagre justification; nevertheless it expressed the sense of outrage, the horror, the fear of contemporaries.

A modern view has been expressed as follows: "very nearly every statement of Hobbes can be reduced either to hatred and contempt of schoolmen and clerics, or to fear of civil war and to love of ordered living in a stable commonwealth" (b). There is a suggestion that these alternatives are mutually exclusive; but it is questionable whether Hobbes would have so regarded them. In his opinion many of the doctrines held by schoolmen and clerics were seditious, and as such inimical to peace and security. Again, although it is admitted that in much of his writing Hobbes was motivated by a desire for internal peace and security and to persuade other people of the means to achieve these objectives, this does not affect the value of his teaching which must stand or fall on its merits. It may even be admitted, without prejudice to the sincerity and validity of his principal works, that on rare occasions he could write from

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(a) E. IV. 289

(b) Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background P. 95.

a purely personal motive: to justify himself; to avoid a threatened danger. His treatise on heresy is an example. In this he arrived at the pathetic conclusion that since the abolition of the Court of High Commission there was in the country no tribunal of competent jurisdiction to judge a case of heresy. The treatise was hurriedly composed to meet a danger which seemed to threaten when a bill was before the House of Commons in 1636 against atheism and profaneness. But there would seem to be little support for the allegation that the whole philosophical system was in effect a by-product to a larger aim motivated by hatred, fear and a craving for security. The triumphant materialism of the Elements of Law had already taken firm root up to ten years earlier (see Short Tract on First Principles) and it amounted to this, that current mechanism, a science relating only to bodies, was transferred to the human soul; and to argue for instance that this revolutionary theory was in reality part of a campaign of special pleading to serve the end of polemics or persuasion, would seem scarcely to be justified.

A strong argument to support the view that as a writer Hobbes was largely sincere, is that an insincere writer would scarcely have insisted on presenting unpopular and provocative opinions; unpopular that is to say with religious leaders, who in the seventeenth century were also most influential politically. In plain fact he was running grave risks. In

seventeenth century England, religious feeling ran higher perhaps than it has ever done, and there was a very real danger to the heretic of unpleasant retribution. Do not the circumstances point to a quite rare degree of moral courage and intellectual integrity on the part of Hobbes? What he believed he had to declare, either as principles or articles of faith, or to be necessary doctrine on practical grounds, regardless of consequences. And on more than one occasion his own written words seemed to constitute such an indictment in the hands of ill-wishers, that he was driven to flight one way or the other across the Channel, or to prepare a hasty defence.

At the back of the great concerted outcry against Hobbes was his refusal to pander to tender consciences. He would not accommodate himself to the feeling and outlook of Doctors of the Church, or tone down his remarks out of regard for their susceptibilities; at least that was how his discourse appeared to them, and being accustomed to deference they could not tolerate his attitude. He would treat a cherished Doctrine, like that of the Trinity, in a manner which seemed irreverent; and in Chapter XII of Leviathan, headed "Of Religion", the disparagement of his tone seems unmistakable. In this Chapter he expresses himself as being largely in agreement with the poets who declared that "the Gods were at first created by human fear". It must be noted that he refers here to "the gods", and not to the true God of Christianity, and a reasonable interpretation of



his words suggests that the disparagement was directed against the fear religions of primitive times. After all, heathendom was a fact of history; and a fact for which every honest philosopher or historian ought to attempt an account. Hobbes gives us a naturalistic explanation of the origin of religion, of the general kind that would at least be understood to-day, and might be widely acceptable.

There is another kind of imputation made against the honesty and sincerity of Hobbes. Although his general integrity is accepted, it is alleged that his religious views were forced upon him by polemical considerations, and the circumstances of his age. In his History of Free Thought, J.M. Robertson writes that "Hobbes is .... the anti-Presbyterian, or anti-Puritan philosopher; and to discredit anarchic religion in the eyes of the majority he is obliged to speak as a judicial churchman". Accordingly, "his unfaith in the current religion is only incidentally revealed" in his writings. Again, of course, there is ground for making such a charge. The religion certainly dovetails in with the politics, and gives it support in a remarkable way. And then there is the unusual exegesis which certainly suggests that the writer's tongue was often in his cheek. In an age that turned naturally to the Bible for enlightenment, he appears quite cynically to twist and turn scripture from its obvious and traditional interpretation, solely to give supplementary support to dogmatic assertions.

These are sometimes the appearances.

We may admit frankly that Hobbes's interpretation of scripture, and his novel restatement of ancient doctrine, is one of the most difficult features of his work to defend; especially in view of his strictures against the publication of private interpretations of the Bible and private opinions on religion. Rather than ~~contradicting~~ his words by actions in so manifest a way, we are tempted to say, why not leave out religion altogether. There was ample precedent for the exclusion of religion from philosophical discourse: there were the examples of Bacon and Descartes. There is also of course the very unequivocal dictum of Hobbes himself to the effect that philosophy excludes the doctrine of God. On the other hand as we have seen the compulsion of circumstances and events forced Hobbes to bring religion into his discussions. A large part of his work was an answer to religious anarchy. When allowance is made for the fact that attention was paid to the exigencies of his secular argument as he wrote about religion, it is <sup>suggested</sup> ~~argued~~ that this is not ground for a charge of insincerity. In his philosophy, in fact, there is a strong element of pragmatism: he was interested in the kind of practice, and the kind of belief as generating practice, which would produce the most desirable results. And to hold belief on pragmatic grounds is no less sincere than to preach conduct on these grounds.

It may of course be the case, as Robertson suggests, that Hobbes feared to surrender himself openly and outspokenly to free thought and scepticism because of the strength of public opinion against such councils of the devil. In "Brief Lives" Aubrey records that on reading Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus Hobbes said that "he (Spinoza) had cut through him a barre's length, for he durst not write so boldly " (a). This certainly suggests that Hobbes would have liked to go much further from orthodoxy than he did, but was influenced by respect for public opinion. If this interpretation is correct there is still the question of how far he might have wished to go. Spinoza was not a free-thinker of the kind that Robertson champions, although he was a completely emancipated thinker. Perhaps it was his complete detachment from preconception which Hobbes admired; and it may be that upon grounds of his own, and to serve a purpose that he deemed desirable, Hobbes reserved not only in his scheme of philosophy, but in his mind, a place for religion, and tacitly sanctioned its utility if he somewhat debased its status. This possibility seems more feasible than the opinion of Robertson, in view of the reckless disregard of public opinion which one encounters sometimes in Hobbes's writings. When for instance

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(a) Aubrey: Brief Lives Ed. Andrew Clark 1898 Vol. I. P. 357

Hobbes wrote, "Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind and imagined from tales publicly allowed, religion; not allowed, superstition" (a), he was making a statement calculated to shock serious-minded Christians, who have always taken a transcendental view of their own religion, and have regarded all other so-called religions as superstitions. Hobbes is putting all religions indifferently on the same level; and the distinction he draws between religion and superstition does not allow to religion a transcendent, or even an intrinsic, superiority. He was not, I think, trying to shock anybody, nor was it his intention to belittle religion. He was simply writing what he conceived to be the truth; and this I think we must give him credit for doing in almost everything that he wrote. In the passage we have quoted he was placing judiciously on record his opinion as to what constituted religion, the worthy function of which was to serve the state rather than to divide or overmaster it. The claim he makes at the end of Leviathan rings true: "There is nothing in this whole discourse nor in that I writ before of the same subject in Latin, as far as I can perceive, contrary either to the word of God, or to good manners" (b).

In this thesis Hobbes will be taken at his word. His most important and most provocative thoughts on religion were

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(a) Lev. 26

(b) Lev. 391



undoubtedly those Erastian principles which he proclaimed, and which were a logical extension of his doctrine of sovereignty. As Erastianism in a less radical form than is presented to us in Leviathan has been preserved in the constitution of the Church of England, and has been accepted as true and valid doctrine by a great many though not all of her ecclesiastics, the background of the doctrine will be considered. Is the doctrine rooted in the early history of the church and as for the Church of England, what was the relation between church and state, and what were the prerogatives and status of the sovereign in the early days of the Church? After a discussion of these questions we shall consider the full extent of the doctrine propounded by Hobbes.

Part II will deal with Hobbes's doctrine of necessity, as it was enlarged upon in his famous dispute with Bramhall. The doctrine it will be argued was in the first place a philosophical assumption, which joined to it on the religious side an extreme form of the doctrine of predestination. The assumption was accepted without question and enthusiastically; and if it was not taken at first hand from the founders of scientific mechanism, it was accepted because their theory and demonstration had bequeathed to the century of Hobbes a supercharged atmosphere of determinism. Some account will be given of the evolution of the principles of scientific mechanism which dominated the seventeenth century. From scientific



mechanism and a belief in the deity, predestination was an unavoidable deduction; and Hobbes admitted predestination as a theological tenet. Because of the importance attached to this doctrine in his century, attention will be directed to its immediate background. Hobbes, however, was not in love with the doctrine; it was not like his Erastianism an original and favourite theme; and he did what he could to blunt its most obtrusive rigours. To conclude this section we shall have something to say of the God of Hobbes.

In Part III we shall discuss Hobbes's doctrine of sin and crime, and his doctrine of good and bad. Both doctrines, it will be argued, were misunderstood or misrepresented by critics; and in both Hobbes was much closer to the opinions of more orthodox moralists than has been commonly allowed.

In Part IV on Hobbes and the Seventeenth Century, we shall discuss first the main religious parties, the Episcopalians and the Puritans, in relation to Hobbes; and this will include an examination of Hobbes's exegesis, <sup>as</sup> and having at this stage of the discourse a vital interest in the light of the Puritan attitude to Scripture. Secondly we shall consider how some of the contemporaries of Hobbes were affected by the revolutions in science and religion which presented to the century a soul searching dilemma of divided loyalties. Perplexity, renunciation, unawareness, are all exhibited, and these will be considered as a commentary and reflection on the reaction of

Hobbes to the challenge of his age. To conclude this section we shall consider some aspects of the teaching of Spinoza who derived much from Hobbes and carried some of his arguments further.

Part V will be concerned with critics, theologians and others, who attacked the religious teaching of Hobbes in general, and his moral doctrine in particular. The account will be opened with a brief note on the Cambridge Platonists, and will embrace other critics not belonging to this school. It will be emphasised that Hobbes's moral teaching was not really at variance fundamentally with Christian ethics.

The concluding Part VI will treat of certain religious developments in England during the century and a half after Hobbes's death, and especially of the growth and change and reversion of thought in the Church of England. The evolution of ecclesiastical opinion, it may fairly be claimed, is to some extent foreshadowed in Hobbes. He struck the notes of controversy and set the pitch unwittingly, and with such accompaniments that he would neither be recognised or acknowledged by many remote intellectual inheritors, especially those with a standing in the Church to maintain. But to the unbiased investigator there is significance in the similarity between the dominant and pressing religious themes in Leviathan, and the subjects of controversy in the developing ecclesiastical establishment.

P A R T I

THE RELATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE  
AND THE DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGNTY

### ERASTIANISM

The name Erastianism is taken from the name of a German professor and theologian, Thomas Erastus, who was born probably at Baden in 1524. He studied philosophy and medicine, as well as the scriptures and religion, at Basil for nine years, and then returned to Switzerland where he stayed until the Elector Palatine appointed him Professor of Physic at Heidelberg University. The last part of his life was spent at Basil, and it was here that he composed his famous Thesis touching Excommunication and its defence. In 1659 the Thesis was translated from the Latin into English, and the full title to the English translation is "An Examination of the most grave question whether excommunication, or the debarring from the sacraments of professing Christians, because of their sins, be a divine ordinance, or a human invention". It is argued that there is no authority in scripture, nor is there justification, for any kind of excommunication other than an exclusion from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And authority for this even is doubtful. There is no such thing as excommunication from the spiritual church. The conclusion reached is that excommunication is a human invention, but that the practice is legitimate for the sake of discipline. It was introduced into the church about 200 AD "to serve as some restraint to wickedness" (a), and among the early Christians the authority

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(a) Erastus Thesis LXX

was exercised by Elders or Bishops, who discharged the function of magistrates, as the "Church continued under a heathen government" (a). From this the conclusion is drawn that "as this duty ceased as soon as the government became Christian, so in this case excommunication ought also to cease, even allowing that they had exercised it previously" (b). The Elders acted as magistrates and were not an ecclesiastical court "as we now oppose ecclesiastical to civil" (c). "I see no reason", the writer argues, "why the Christian magistrate at the present day should not possess the same power, which God commanded the magistrate to exercise in the Jewish commonwealth" (d). In a later section there is the observation "wherever the magistrate is Godly and Christian, there is no need of any other authority, under any other pretension or title, to rule or punish the people" (e). These dicta together summarise the doctrine which has come to be known as Erastianism.

Hobbes is, I suppose, the most famous, outspoken, and uncompromising exponent of Erastianism in the history of English thought; and in his application of the doctrine to

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- (a) Erastus Thesis LXXI
  - (b) " " LXXI
  - (c) " " LXXI
  - (d) " " LXXIII
  - (e) " " LXXIV



the Church of England, he is thorough in a manner not surpassed in the rest of his unrestrained assertions of dogma. He adduces in support of the doctrine a great weight of scripture, and refers also to conditions in the primitive church. In his various criticisms of excommunication, for instance, he refers to conditions in the primitive church to support a view which was identical with that expressed by Dr. Erastus. The chief pastors of the primitive church, he maintains, could inflict no other punishment on a church member than that contact with a wilful offender against discipline should be avoided. The imposition of any other punishment was a right appropriated to the civil power alone (a). The pastors could not, for example, excommunicate a heretic in the sense of casting him out of the church. On this same topic he declares in Leviathan, answering Bellarmine, that in excommunicating Theodosius the Emperor (if it be true he did so) Ambrose was guilty of "a capital crime". So also were the excommunications by popes, cited by the Cardinal, of other sovereign princes "the greatest crimes that are incident to human nature" (b).

Hobbes refers to the period of the Christian emperors and

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(a) E. IV. 389

(b) Lev. 318

gains important support. He notes in his Treatise on Heresy the authoritative role of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, in calling the Council of Nicaea and settling the Arian dispute (a). In those days church matters and state matters were so intermingled that they could not be separated; and it was natural and proper that the Emperor should charge the council as to its business, and that its findings should be embodied in the Emperor's decrees (b). It was moreover a law of the Emperor, promulgated at the general council at Constantinople, which for the sake of the peace of the church made heresy a punishable crime (c). Hobbes takes it for granted in Leviathan that in the early days of the Christian empire, the bishops of Rome "were first invested in the right of being supreme teachers of Christian doctrine, by and under Christian emperors, within the limits of the Roman Empire, as is acknowledged by themselves by the title of Pontifex Maximus, who was an officer subject to the civil state" (d). The first four general councils, Hobbes declares in Behemoth, were convened by emperors and derived their authority from them (e); and he

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(a) E. <sup>VI</sup>IV. 391 - 393

(b) Eusebius Vit. Const. III 17 - 20

(c) E. <sup>VI</sup>IV. 399

(d) Lev. 377

(e) E. <sup>VI</sup>IV. 176

disposes easily of the ridiculous suggestion that when the emperors became Christian they submitted to the pope (a). The bishop of Rome was not then recognised as holding any primacy over other bishops (b); but even suppose he were so recognised, "if by bishop of Rome be understood either the Monarch of the church, or the supreme pastor of it; not Sylvester, but Constantine, who was the first Christian emperor, was that bishop" (c). After the first four general councils "the power of the Roman church grew up apace; and, either by the negligence or weakness of succeeding emperors, the pope did what he pleased in religion" (d). He first began to claim temporal power "after the inundation of the northern people had overflowed the western parts of the empire and possessed *themselves* of Italy (e). Towards the end of Leviathan Hobbes traces the "synthesis and construction of the pontifical power" in stages. The web began to be spun with the natural reverence felt for the apostles; after that there was the evolution of presbyteries in the various cities, which contributed to the establishment eventually of monarchical

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(a) E. <sup>VI</sup>IV. 177

(b) Lev. 362

(c) Lev. 301

(d) E. <sup>VI</sup>IV. 402

(e) E. VI 178

bishoprics. At length the bishop of Rome took upon himself "an authority over all other bishops" (a), and from this there was a single step to the assumption of authority over princes. Leviathan is brought to an end by a sarcastic tirade against the methods used by the papacy to fasten its authority on the necks of the people; and in his Dialogue of the Common Law Hobbes declares "For the pope .... from long before the Conquest, encroached every day upon the power temporal .... and for that end in every country he had his court ecclesiastical, and there was scarce any cause temporal which he could not, by one shift or other, hook into his jurisdiction, in such sort as to have it tried in his own courts at Rome, or in France, or in England itself" (b).

Hobbes agrees with Luther that no significance can be attached to the fact that the pope places a crown on the emperor's head, as he is himself elected to his office by cardinals over whom he subsequently wields jurisdiction. It is a fact that within his realm the emperor is supreme, or ought to be, in all matters relating to church and state; and the claim that the pope would put forward, to wield an authority which is above kings, is a usurpation. To promote

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(a) Lev. 380

(b) E. VI. 111

his unlawful ambition the pope has made great use of "preaching friars", against whom Hobbs inveighs in Behemoth. "The end which the pope had in multiplying sermons, was no other than to prop and enlarge his own authority over all Christian kings and states" (a). And the end likewise of school theology was "to bring religion to an art" and to blind the multitude with seeming profundity, so that simple people would admire the doctrines "because they understood them not;" and all would acknowledge "the pope's authority no more than was due to him" (b). Hobbes argues that the pope's design in fostering the foundation of universities was to promote "the advancement of his own authority in the countries where universities were erected".(c).

Clarendon denied the aspersion against universities, and claimed that in England and France they consistently resisted papal pretensions. In England it was the kings who at one period of our history let in, and even invited in, the usurper, to secure advantage for themselves (d). Hobbes agrees as to the mistakes and negligence of Norman and Plantagenet kings down

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(a) E. VI. 184

(b) E. VI. 185

(c) E. VI 214 (See also E. VII. 400 Marks of Dr. Wallis's Scotch Church Politics)

(d) Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan. Survey of Chapter 29



to the time of Edward III. He argues, for instance, that the support given by the pope to Thomas Becket against Henry II (the end of which after Becket's murder was the abject submission of the king) followed inevitably upon the action of William the Conqueror, who by undertaking not to infringe the liberties of the church, dispensed with part of his sovereignty (a). From that moment the ecclesiastics, with foreign aid, began their encroachments. To incite and encourage them were such iniquitous declarations as a decree of the fourth Lateran council, extending papal authority over kings and their subjects, and which led among other things to "the oppression of John, King of England" (b). The negligence of kings and the ambition of popes worked together to extinguish the true and lawful regime of Christ's church in the realm of England. In all these references and arguments Hobbes does not anywhere remark that it was the Church of England, more than any other body, which suffered during the period of papal encroachment; but he might have made this observation, and his argument would have been strengthened. In a later section an attempt will be made to show that from the earliest days the Church of England had maintained an independence and autonomy under the hereditary monarch, which now for a time was lost.

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(a) Lev. 171

(b) Lev. 313

Erastianism is a hybrid doctrine, half religious and half political; and to-day, while the religious side is still actively debated by interested and zealous believers, the doctrine is the occasion of little political controversy, because of a decline, no doubt, in the direct influence of belief on the fortunes and stability of the state. The climate of our age is more open-minded in some respects, and also more sceptical than that of former ages. So that the stresses and strains of religious difference and controversy are not of such magnitude as to upset the balance of society. This was not so in the seventeenth century, and it is a fact that while to certain religious leaders the Erastian doctrine constituted a challenge to fundamental belief, to other leaders of thought it gave expression on its political side of an indispensable principle, upon which the fortunes and very survival of the commonwealth depended.

The doctrine of indivisible sovereignty was of ancient origin, but had come much into prominence with the emergence of powerful nation states; and since the disruptive and anarchic potentialities of the Reformation had made themselves felt in religious wars and civil wars, an additional urgency had been lent to the discussion of the problem. The doctrine which Bodin propounded, that there can be no rival sovereigns, is found in the Institutes of Justinian; and throughout the Middle Ages the question of sovereignty had been much to the

fore and had been hotly debated. Was the emperor the sole head of Christendom and accountable to no one but God? The fact that the emperor's claim to undivided authority was for a while successfully challenged by the pope, led to the kind of internal feud and bloodshed which Hobbes said must inevitably accompany divided authority, and was a powerful contributing cause of the ultimate rupture which clove Europe in two. Following the rupture the concept of nation quickly gained ground in the thoughts of men to oust the concept of Christendom. Freedom from external interference became a fact and a sovereign right which was jealously guarded; and because the final partition of Europe led to rivalry and national wars, it was paramountly necessary for the sovereign's hands to be strengthened. Bodin simply repeated doctrine that had been current for centuries, but he gave to it an emphasis in favour of purely arbitrary sovereign authority, which may not have been present in the mind of any Roman or Mediaeval jurist. The doctrine of absolute and indivisible sovereignty continued to enjoy the support of most political theorists throughout the seventeenth century, and found pithy expression in the dictum of Louis XIV, L'Etat e'est Moi. The sovereign, it was held, could not share authority with any person or body, could admit no rival, and in general was not subject to any limitation. This, at any rate, was the doctrine of Hobbes; and it is therefore natural that he should

have been the principle exponent of Erastianism on its political side.

It must not be thought that there is any real divorce between the political and religious aspects of Erastianism. The distinction is simply drawn to indicate a difference in emphasis which is apparent in the arguments of various protagonists. Hobbes was interested primarily in the political bearing of the doctrine; but the doctrine had also for him as well as for everybody else certain vital religious implications; and he cannot in any way be released from responsibility for the religious inferences to be drawn from the political and secular views he expressed. He was in any case aware of this and would not have claimed exoneration.

For our part we shall treat the Erastianism of Hobbes from the point of view of its religious importance. It was a religious doctrine, and in fact it was by a long way the most important of his religious doctrines, and the most ardently protested. The supralapsarian predestination which followed necessarily from the mechanistic determinism which was a primitive article of faith, he did not find especially congenial as seems to be proved by the efforts he made to mitigate its most harrowing severities. He himself attached more importance to his Erastianism than to anything else he had to say about the church, and echoes are to be heard even to-day of the opinions he asserted. The controversy about free will

and predestination, into which he entered, continued for a while, and had for protagonists the Jesuits and Jansenists, Wesley and Whitfield, and as an uncompromising exponent of strict Calvinism, Jonathan Edwards of Massachusetts. But the dispute did not survive the eighteenth century as a fierce preoccupation of theologians, and for much more than a century now some form of Arminianism has been accepted by almost all Christian bodies. Erastianism, on the other hand, survived much longer as a live and vital subject of ecclesiastical debate; and for two centuries after the death of Hobbes the doctrine still agitated the minds of theologians, and ruffled the surface calm, not only of the body ecclesiastical, but of the body social as well.

Because of the significance which Hobbes himself attached to this doctrine, and because of its historical importance, it is thought appropriate to give it first place in a discussion of Hobbes's religious views. And it is also felt appropriate and useful to enquire what historical case, if any, might be made out for it. Reference will be made to opinions expressed from the earliest times by Christian Fathers and apologists about the church and state relations, and to the attitude and practice of the church. And then to bring the discussion to the precise state of affairs which occasioned the uncompromising stand and dogmatic assertions of Hobbes, a survey will be attempted of the relation between sovereign and church



and papacy since the establishment of the Church of England in the days of the Heptarchy. These enquiries will now be undertaken as briefly as possible.

THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE REFORMERS

The attitude that Christians ought to adopt to a secular ruler is expressed in one of the famous sayings of Christ: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (a). At this point the infant church began its relations with Caesar, and a loyal and scrupulous observance of Christ's precept appears to have been accepted as duty. The precept is found reiterated in the writings of the apostolic fathers and the apologists. There was only one consideration, according to these writers, which exempted a Christian from his duty of obedience to Caesar: if Caesar's command was against conscience it was sinful for the Christians to obey. That they would not obey such commands is proved by their willingness to be thrown to the beasts rather than sacrifice. As Tertullian says: "Thus do we give worship unto Caesar, so far and in such a way as is lawful for us and is fit for him, as a man next to God, and having from God whatever he hath, and as only less than the true God". But he adds: "We do not sacrifice for Caesar as the heathen" (b). In an apology addressed to Antoninus Pius, Justyn Martyr had earlier declared, after quoting the command of Christ, render

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(a) Matt. 22 : 21

(b) Tertullian, ad Scapulam

unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's: "Wherefore we worship God only; but in all other matters we joyfully serve you, confessing that ye are kings and rulers; and praying that ye may be found to possess, together with your royal power, a sound and discerning mind" (a). The duty of obedience extended to all decrees that were not unequivocally against the Christian conscience. As to bad decrees of the Emperor, God would take account of them, and "in these shall they also be punished" (b).

To the limit of conscience the early Christians felt a duty to obey the secular ruler; and they prayed for the secular ruler. In this they followed the command of St. Paul. They were law abiding citizens, and good citizens, as is maintained repeatedly by the apologists. They believed that kings and rulers were ordained by God. And we must remember that at this time Caesar was a pagan. On the other hand the early Christians held staunchly to the view that as a body they were separate from the state; they were elect people called out by God, like Abraham and his descendants; the church and the state existed side by side, grow together like wheat and tares in the same field; but there was no intermingling, no assimilation, because <sup>in</sup> of their conception the state was the world, and the dominion of the Prince of this World. Among

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(a) Justyn Martyr, Apology to Antoninus Pius XXIII

(b) Irenaeus Contra Haerises, Bk. V Ch. XXIV

the earliest writings the "Vision of Hermes" brings out the idea of separation, and anticipates the vision of Augustine of two irreconcilable cities: "And he said unto me, 'Ye know that ye who are the servants of the Lord, live here as in a pilgrimage; for your city is far off from this city" (a). It is noticeable that the more the Christians felt their otherworldliness, and the more they set themselves over against the world <sup>in</sup> of spiritual isolation, so the more careful were they as to outward behaviour, and the more humble in submission. This was the paradox in their claims and their behaviour which baffled their contemporaries, and roused first the suspicion and then the hatred of their enemies: humility and loftiness, daily prayers for those in authority and obstinate refusal to sacrifice, meekness and blamelessness toward those without and utter fearlessness in confession of their faith.

Again and again the note of meekness and submission is sounded. St. Barnabas writes in the "Way of Light": "Thou shalt be subject unto the Lord, and to inferior masters as to the representatives of God, in fear and reverence" (b). In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome declares: "Let us reverence our Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us honour those who are set over us " (c): and in

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- (a) Third Book of Hermes called Similitudes, Similitude I  
(b) Epistles of St. Barnabas XIX The Way of Light  
(c) First Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, XXI

the same epistle he draws a comparison between the Christian fight of faith and "those who fight under our earthly governors; how orderly, how readily, and with what exact obedience, they perform those things that are commanded them" (a). The same dutiful tone is heard later: "Thou, Lord, has given to our rulers and governors upon the earth the power of their sovereignty, through thine exceeding and unutterable might, that we knowing the glory and honour which is given unto them from Thee, may submit ourselves unto them, in no wise resisting thy will" (b).

There is the humility and indeed the flattery which Dyonisius of Alexandria displays. In an epistle to Aemilius he refers to the emperors: "The very deity . . . . has committed sovereignty to the hands of their most sacred majesties, Valerius and Gallienus" (c). There is the humble address of Athenagoras in his Apology: "O most excellent, clement, and benevolent Emperor . . . ." and so on. These may be compared with the more sober attitude of Theophilus, foreshadowing

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- (a) First Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians XXXVII  
(b) " " " " " " " " LXI  
(c) Epistle of Dyonisius of Alexandria to Aemilius



Tertullian: "I will therefore rather honour the emperor, not indeed worshipping him, but praying for him. But I worship God, who is the real and true God, knowing that the emperor is under him". The emperor "is not made to be worshipped, but to be honoured with a lawful honour. For he is not a God, but a man appointed by God, not to be worshipped, but to judge justly" (a). Theophilus would pray for the Emperor, and this Christian duty is clearly acknowledged by the apostolic fathers. St. Ignatius exhorts the Ephesians to prayer, and to behave themselves unblameably towards those that are without (b). Polycarp writes to the Philippians: "Pray for all the saints; pray also for kings and all in authority, and for those who persecute you and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross, that your fruit may be manifest in all, and that ye may be perfect in Christ" (c).

The apostolic fathers and the early apologists lived in the inspiration of direct contacts, and under the influence of the great apostle who had left an indelible mark on the church; and they are interesting as showing what were the traditions of the early church. It is quite clear that the primitive Christians looked upon disobedience to their pagan overlords as

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(a) Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus Bok. I (2)

(b) St. Ignatius to the Ephesians X.

(c) Polycarp to the Philippians XII.

sin, unless in a matter of conscience. The windows into the age are few, but they are enough to show that this was the accepted and unquestioned attitude; and of course it is the attitude which is enjoined on Christians in the Gospels and Epistles. These were not yet accepted as canonical, and may not even have been known and read, but the early Christians appear to have been in agreement with them and among themselves on all important questions of doctrine and policy. Justyn Martyr, to take an example, has no reference to any of the Epistles, and makes only one brief reference to three of the apostles, to Peter and to the two named Boanerges, the Sons of Thunder; and yet even this apologist, who retained in outlook so much that was good in pagan culture, shows a remarkable harmony in tone with the apostles. The ear of the church was turned to precepts and traditions that had been handed down, and these they transmit to us.

At the end of the second century and the beginning of the third something of a change is evident. There is no less recognition by Tertullian of the duty of obedience, but this we gather is a Christian duty. His tone has a certain severity and he is less humble than the earlier fathers. Something of the tone is perhaps observable in Justyn:

"But since our hopes are not fixed upon the present world, we care not for our murderers, knowing that at all events we must die" (a). In his Apology, Tertullian commences an address to the government as follows: "If ye, rulers of the Roman Empire, sitting judicially upon your open and lofty seat of judgment, and occupying as it were, the most elevated position in the state, are yet unable openly to enquire, and closely to examine, what is the real truth in questions respecting the Christian religion . . . . the truth may still be permitted to reach your ears by the secret means of a written apology". (b) He is indignant because of false accusations about Christian morals (his indignation is shared by all the apologists) and over the instructions of Trajan to Pliny, that persons of this persuasion (Christians) should not be enquired after, but should be punished if brought before him. "What a self-contradictory sentence! He assumes their innocence, when he directs inquiry not to be made; yet commends them to be punished as guilty" (c). As to the Emperor, "He hath no other origin as emperor, than he had as a man before he was emperor: his power and his life are alike the gifts of God" (d). There

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(a) Justyn Martyr, Apology to Antoninus Pius XI.

(b) Tertullian Apology I. Address.

(c) " " II

(d) " " XXX

There is also a hint of appeal to arbitration otherwise than to the deity. This is to the *jus naturae*: "It belongeth of right unto mankind, that everyone may worship as he thinketh best"(a). He returns, however, to duty though not to submission: "We all pray without ceasing for all emperors, beseeching for them a long life, a secure reign; that their families may be preserved in safety, their armies brave, the senate faithful, the people honest, the whole world peaceful, and whatever other things either the people or the emperor can desire" (b). When we consider the uncompromising nature of Tertullian; his enthusiasm to rid himself of every trace of paganism; his passionate denunciations of laxity, worldliness, conformity; his fear and anger at the trend to secularise the church; his terrible earnestness; this honest prayer is sufficiently remarkable.

Origen and Cyprian at different times and in different spheres, may be taken to represent a growing sense of the importance and authority of the church hierarchy. Cyprian in his uncompromising attitude to the lapsi, and to the libelli pacis of the confessors in prison, stood for the authority of the bishops and tended to identify the church with the

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(a) Tertullian *Ad Scapulam*

(b) Tertullian, *Apology XXX*

monarchical hierarchy. "It is impossible to have God as father, without having the church as mother". Origen answers decisively the derisive taunts of Celsus against the Christian claim that "all things have been made subject to us, earth, and water, and air, and stars, and are ordained to be subject to us" (a). Against the plea that there is no harm in gaining the favour of the rulers of the earth, Origen declares: "There is therefore one whose favour we shall seek, and to whom we ought to pray that he would be gracious to us, the most High God" (b). Again he declares "We are to despise ingratiating ourselves with kings or any other men, not only if their favour is to be won by murders, licentiousness, or deeds of cruelty; but even if it involves impiety towards God, or any servile expression of flattery or obsequiousness" (c).

After Cyprian, and after the conversion of Constantine, the greatest change took place in the relation between church and state. An Emperor professed Christianity, and in fact styled himself a bishop in charge of affairs external to the church (d). The changes which now took place had been pending for along time; they were in the direction of

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- (a) Origen Contra Celsum Bk. IV Ch. XXIII  
(b) " " " Bk. VIII Ch. LXIII  
(c) " " " Bk. VIII Ch. LXV  
(d) Eusebius, Vit. Const. IV : XXIV



secularisation, with the church developing, as auxiliary to its spiritual mission, a secular organisation modelled on the state. These changes had been deplored by Tertullian and had led him at last to break with the catholic church. Tertullian was the last great representative of primitive Christianity, but died with an unresolved conflict in his breast. He too believed in the hierarchy, and that it was ordained by God and represented God on the earth. The primitives regarded the church and the state as opposed to each other; and Tertullian also took that view. But he had a far grander and loftier conception of the standing and dignity of the church as a corporate and united body on earth. He claimed for himself the prerogative, and for all leaders of the church, to stand up to the emperor, and if necessary to administer rebukes. Gradually a movement toward rapprochement, to compromise with the state and in particular to adopt its organisation, made itself increasingly felt in moments of calm between the official persecutions, which in the third century replaced the sporadic and chronic persecutions of the first and second centuries. It was perhaps inevitable that an emperor would be converted, because the number of Christians had increased so rapidly. Even in his time Tertullian had argued in the

Christian's favour that being "the most in every city" they yet live in stillness and moderation (a).

Under the first of the Christian emperors there appears to have been no question about sovereignty in ecclesiastical affairs. It appears to have been taken for granted that a Christian emperor should be head of the church. For example to settle the Donatist dispute both sides appealed without hesitation to Constantine. Again to reach a settlement of the Arian dispute it was the same emperor who convened a general council and gave his name and title to the decrees embodying its recommendations. What could have been more natural? Gradually, however, there developed in the church in the west a spirit of independence, and it was at first largely because of the necessity for finding some way to counter a widespread disregard of the same Council of Nicaea. Western independence centres round the name of Ambrose, who was Bishop of Milan. And of course there was Rome, a see almost destined for independence. In the Miscellany of Baluze there is a letter to Henry, Presbyter and Cardinal, which has the statement that the imperial seat of Rome is ceded to the successors of Peter <sup>in</sup> end perpetuity (b).

We shall consider briefly the position of Ambrose. While

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(a) Tertullian Ad Scapulam

(b) Miscellany of Baluze, Edn. 1700 Bk. V p. 81

his contemporary, Optatus Bishop of Milevis, takes what may be called the traditional view: "Non enim Respublica est in Ecclesia, sed Ecclesia in Respublica est", Ambrose often employs language and takes up an attitude which seem to deny the import of this dictum. In his reply to a challenge to dispute before the Emperor in the east with Auxentius the so-called Arian bishop, with regular umpires appointed on both sides, Ambrose refuses on the ground that laymen cannot be judges on questions of faith; and he declares that the reply is given with due honour to the Emperor, and in loyalty to him without sin against God. "For the Emperor is within the Church, not over the Church" (a). Ambrose frequently challenges the Eastern Emperor's authority in Church matters; and he assumes a prerogative, it would seem, as father of the Church, not only to admonish the Emperor, but also to excommunicate him. To the Christian and amenable Gratian his injunctions or peremptory requests are couched in suitable language of subordination. "Deign then, most pious prince, to deal with all these matters, lest we should appear to have met to no purpose, when we obeyed your Grace's injunctions" (b). In the correspondence following the Council of Aquileia with Theodosius, the admonitory tone is felt. The Council dealt with the questions

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(a) Ambrose Letters. Letter XXI

(b) " " Letter X

at issue between east and west, and in a letter written by Ambrose after the Council in the name of the bishops, he makes complaints and suggestions as to appointments to bishoprics in the east, matters which the emperor considered his own prerogative. Although Theodosius did not accept the recommendations, and in his reply "represented that these affairs . . . . ought to be judged in the east, where all the parties were present, and that there was no reason to oblige those of the East to come into the West", there was nevertheless no toning down of western pretensions, merely an appropriate show of outward deference to the emperor. Because of the part taken by the same emperor in a massacre of the Thessalonians, it is said that Ambrose excommunicated him for a time.

The high-handed attitude of the Bishop is well illustrated by the tone of his correspondence with the boy emperor, Valentinian, on the occasion of an attempt by the pagan party in the Senate to procure restoration of the pagan statue and altar of Victory. Ambrose requests to be furnished with a copy of the memorial of Symmachus petitioning the restoration. If the emperor does not comply with this request (of Ambrose)

"we as bishops cannot quietly permit and connive at it; it will indeed be in your power to come to the church, but there you will either not find a priest, or you will find one purposed to resist" (a). Ambrose argues that he has a right as bishop to make the request, because it concerns what is not a civil matter, but a matter of religion. He has in view, that is to say, a division of authority between the temporal and the spiritual. There is as yet no claim by any church dignitary to temporal authority over temporal rulers. This was to await the development of the papacy beyond the dream of the most ambitious or the most autocratic of the church fathers.

Augustine, most spiritual of the Christian theologians, yet accepted the earthly city. Christians have also their life on earth; are social creatures. The ultimate and the real for Christians is a spiritual reality beyond, but "we give a much more unlimited approval to their idea (of pagan philosophers) that the life of the wise man must be social. For how could the city of God .... either take a beginning to be developed, or attain its proper destiny, if the life of the saints were not a social life? But who can enumerate all the great grievances with which human society abounds in the misery of this mortal state? Who can weigh them?" (b). In "De Civitate Dei" Augustine lays great stress on the dangers

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(a) Ambrose Letters. Letter XVII

(b) De Civitate Dei Bk. XIX (5)



and unhappiness of the social life on earth, which is still the lot of the Christian who may nevertheless look forward to the eternal peace of the heavenly city. Here, though we have no abiding city, we yet have to live our earthly lives, suffer through the error of human judgments, the diversity of languages, the misery of wars, even those called just. Even the friendship of good men cannot be securely rested in, so long as the dangers of this life force us to be anxious (a). In a later section there is the purely Platonic doctrine of order or harmony of parts, which by implication allows a definite and honourable place to the temporal and earthly (b). Moreover there are order and law (good things) in both the heavenly and earthly city, and in the latter human society is served by those who rule it (c), and "in the administration of things necessary for the maintenance of mortal life, the citizens of the heavenly city make no scruple to obey the law of the earthly city (as mortal life is common to both cities), so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it"; but he says, in matters of faith and worship there is disharmony. The two cities could not have common laws of religion, since the heavenly worships the one true God and the earthly worships many Gods (d).

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(a)	De Civitate Dei	Bk. XIX	(8)
(b)	" " "	Bk. XIX	(13)
(c)	" " "	Bk. XIX	(14)
(d)	" " "	Bk. XIX	(17)

Finally there is this: "This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, institutions, whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained, but recognising that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace, It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long as no hindrance to the one supreme and true God is there introduced. Even the heavenly city, therefore, while in its state of pilgrimage, avails itself of the peace of earth, and, so far as it can without injuring faith and godliness, desires and maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessaries of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven" (a).

Augustine accepts the earthly city and holds that the Christian must adapt himself to it as much as conscience allows. He believes in the divine origin and appointment of kings, and holds that even evil rulers are ordained by God, who in his inscrutable wisdom "judges that the state of human affairs is worthy of such lords". To such rulers as Nero "power and dominion are not given ... save by the providence of the most

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(a) De Civitate Dei Bk XIX (17)

high God" (a). Nevertheless "there could be nothing more fortunate for human affairs than that, by the the mercy of God, they who are endowed with true piety of life, if they have the skill for ruling people, should also have the power" (b). In human affairs the temporal and spiritual have each their allotted places; and the rulers on earth, whatever their private character, hold office by the appointment of God and must be honoured and obeyed.

That all rulers are ordained by God is also the official view of Gregory, but he has precise views as to the apportionment of prerogatives. His letters to the emperor are couched in terms almost of obsequiousness; but he does not hold that the emperor's nominee in Italy, the Exarch, is an authority superior to the bishops of Rome. He is never discourteous to him, but is often high-handed. Officially he holds that the church and state co-operate, each ruling over a different sphere, and the emperor is God's vicar and representative on earth in all things temporal: "What he does, if canonical, we follow; if it is not canonical, we bear it as far as we can without sin" (c). With this may be read an observation in a letter to John Bishop (brother in the church).

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(a) De Civitate Dei Bk. V (19)

(b) " " " Bk. V (19)

(c) Gregory, Epistle XI (29)

Gregory writes: "Moreover the animosity of the aforesaid Romanus Patricius (the Exarch) ought not to move you, since, as we are above him in place and rank, we ought so much the more to tolerate with forbearance and dignity any light conduct on his part" (a). And there are many claims by implication that he is in a position to admonish the emperor himself. In a letter to Callinicus, Exarch of Italy, ("Your most sweet Excellency") he refers to an order received by the Exarch from the Emperor, bidding him not to compel schismatics to return to the church. Gregory counsels the Exarch to inform "our most pious emperors . . . . that in their times and through the succour of almighty God and your exertions, schismatics are hastening to return of their own accord" (b). He does not consider that there should be any interference of the spiritual in the temporal, or the temporal in the spiritual, and yet meddles himself a great deal, and is ready to call in the assistance of the temporal arm whenever necessary. To the Exarch of Africa he writes that as God has given him victories in the wars of this life, so ought he "to oppose the enemies of the church with all activity of mind and body", so that his reputation may shine forth when he resists "the adversaries of the Catholic church on behalf of the Christian people", and when he and those under him "bravely fight ecclesiastical battles

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(a) Gregory, Epistle II (46)

(b) " " IX (9)

as warriors of the Lord" (a). His dealings with the Lombards, when he assumed full authority entirely on his own initiative, may be explained by the remoteness of his acknowledged temporal overlord, and his repudiation of any suzerainty in the Exarch over himself as bishop.

Like Augustine, Gregory considered the question of the bad ruler, and came to a conclusion very similar to that of his great predecessor. "Subjects are to be admonished that they judge not rashly the lives of their superiors, if perchance they see them act blameably in anything, lest whence they rightly find fault with evil they thence be sunk by the impulse of elation to lower depths. They are to be admonished that, when they consider the faults of their superiors, they grow not too bold against them, but, if any of their deeds are exceedingly bad, so judge of them within themselves that, constrained by the fear of God, they still refuse not to bear the yoke of reverence under them" .... "For when we offend against those who are set over us, we go against the ordinance of him who set them over us" (b).

What conclusion can be reached about the relation between church and state in the period between the apostolic ministry and the emergency of the papacy as it has continued to the

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(a) Gregory, Epistle I (74)

(b) Gregory, Pastoral Rule III (4)



present time? Two things stand out: (1) The church grew continually, in numbers to begin with and then in influence; and as its influence grew so its attitude to the temporal power was modified. The humility and submission of Barnabas and Clement, in keeping as it undoubtedly was with the teaching and tradition of the apostles, was dictated by circumstances. To the limit of conscience the church must submit without murmuring, or be utterly extinguished. As influence grew with numbers so the less were church leaders disposed to suffer in silence. They were increasingly conscious of the growing strength of the church both as a spiritual force and as a temporal organisation. There was not, however, throughout the period of the pagan empire any repudiation on the part of church leaders of the Christian duty of obedience to the state as far as conscience would permit. (2) After the conversion of Constantine the Christian emperor was immediately, and for a considerable time, accepted as head of the church as well as of the state. No other interpretation can be placed on the behaviour of ecclesiastics after the conversion, on the unchallenged declaration of the emperor, and on his actions. It was not until political decadence and division in the Empire had given opportunity to church dignitaries of considerable local authority and prestige to assert for the church a novel status, that political division was aggravated by a deep ecclesiastical division destined to become permanent

and irreconcilable. In the east the ecclesiastical hierarchy remained loyal to the emperor as their Christian head. The Eastern Church was an Erastian church. In the west the hierarchy, dominated eventually by the pope, went its own way, at first to complete autonomy, and then toward a conception of the church as paramount authority in every sphere of human activity.

The period between Gregory the Great and the Reformation will be covered by a brief survey of the fortunes of the Church of England. At this point it may be useful to mention some opinions of Reformers on the relation between Church and State. Luther, the first of the Reformers, returned to the position of Gregory, and contemplated a division of authority. He was not Erastian. It was his first business to assail the Catholic Church, and especially the pope, and not least on the ground of pretensions to authority that was not rightly his. In the Babylonish Captivity he denounced in scathing terms the pontiffs and princes, not of the Catholic Church, but of the Synagogue of Satan. In his Address to the Nobility he attacked the setting up by the pope of the Holy Roman Empire, a step taken in opposition to the lawful emperor at Constantinople, and with the intent that the new political organisation would be subservient to the pope. Nevertheless the founding of the Holy Roman Empire was in the providence of

God; God requires that "this empire (shall) be governed by the Christian princes of Germany, though the pope may have stolen or robbed, or newly fashioned it. It is all God's ordering which came to pass before we knew of it"; and the pious wish is added "now may God help us to secure our freedom". Luther heaps scorn on the pope's claim to superiority over the emperor because he himself placed the crown on the emperor's head. "Now he is himself crowned pope by three cardinals; yet they are subject to him, and he is above them". The rest of this passage is worth quoting in full: "Why, then, contrary to his own example and to the doctrine and practice of the whole world and the scriptures, should he exalt himself above the temporal authorities, and the empire, for no other reason than that he crowns and consecrates the emperor? It suffices that he is above him in all divine matters - that is, in preaching, teaching, and the administrations of the sacraments - in which matters, however, every priest or bishop is above all other men, just as St. Ambrose in his chair was above the Emperor Theodosius, and the Prophet Nathan above David, and Samuel above Saul. Therefore let the German emperor be a true free emperor, and let not his authority and his sword be overborne by these blind pretences of the pope's sycophants, as if they were to be exceptions, and be above the temporal sword in all things". From which it can be recognised that we are back at the belief in a division

of authority between the temporal and spiritual held by Gregory, Augustine, and Ambrose.

Calvin, like Luther, went back to the doctrine of divided authority: man is subject to two kinds of government, that relating to the soul and eternal life, and that relating to civil justice. The thought of the extermination of civil polity, Calvin argues, is inhuman barbarism. Magistrates have their command from God and are invested with his authority (a). "There is no power but of God" (b). Although the functions of the two kinds of government are distinct, there is a convergence of motive and intention. "Even the heathen writers have recognised that the first duty of government is the promotion of piety", and "all laws are preposterous which neglect the claims of God" (c). In elaborating the function and powers of the civil power Calvin declares that it is lawful for the state even to kill (and in so doing to execute the judgments of God), and to wage war for "public vengeance" (d). Calvin rules that laws are the prerogative of the state, and should be obeyed by all, "provided they be passed according to

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- (a) Calvin, Institutes Bk. IV : XX (7)  
(b) " " Bk. IV : XX (7)  
(c) " " Bk. IV : XX (9)  
(d) " " Bk. IV : XX (11)

the perpetual rule of love". Certain "barbarous and savage" laws ought not to be considered as laws, "since they are not only violations of all righteousness, but outrages against humanity itself" (a). There is a certain suggestion here of over-riding laws or rights of nature; it will be seen later that Hobbes also permitted some restrictions to the absolute authority of the law giver.

As to evil rulers, Calvin's view is identical with that of Gregory and Augustine. The word of God teaches us "To submit to the government, not only of those princes who discharge their duty to us with becoming integrity and fidelity, but to all who possess the sovereignty, even though they perform none of the duties of their function" (b). It is God who sets up and removes kings (c); and "Finally, we owe these sentiments of affection and reverence to all our rulers, whatever their character may be: which we more frequently refuse, that we may learn not to scrutinise the persons themselves, but may be satisfied with knowing that they are invested by the will of the Lord with that function, upon which he hath impressed an inviolable majesty. But it will be said, that rulers owe mutual duties to their subjects. That I have already confessed. But he who infers from this that obedience ought to be rendered

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(a) Calvin, Institutes Bk. IV : XX (15)

(b) " " Bk. IV : XX (25)

(c) " " Bk. IV : XX (26)



to none but just rulers, is a very bad reasoner" (a). There is, however, one proviso: " .. in the obedience which we have shown to be due to the authority of governors, it is always necessary to make one exception, and that is entitled to our first attention, that it do not seduce us from obedience to Him to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty all their sceptres ought to submit ... If they command anything against Him, it ought not to have the least attention; nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all that dignity attached to magistrates" (b). Like Luther, Calvin was not Erastian; and in fact Hobbes attacks the Calvinist system in general, and Beza in particular on this very score: "The most difficult place to answer, of all those that can be brought, to prove the kingdom of God by Christ is already in the world, is alleged, not by Bellarmine, nor any other of the church of Rome; but by Beza ... For the Presbytery hath challenged the power to excommunicate their own kings, and to be supreme moderators in religion, in the place where they have that form of church government, no less than the pope challengeth it universally" (c).

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(a) Calvin, Institutes Bk. IV : XX (29)

(b) " " Bk. IV : XX (32)

(c) Lev. 338

The French Confession, inspired by Calvin, reiterates in a very abbreviated form the general tenour of the Institutes; while making concessions in still more generous terms to the "lieutenants or officers" of Christ, our civil magistrates, who must be obeyed and taxes paid "even if they are unbelievers". The Belgic Confession reminds us of the duties of magistrates, and the Scotch Confession tells us why magistrates are to be obeyed. It is because "Emperors, kingdoms, dominions are ordained of God". The Thirty Nine Articles of 1571 are Erastian as might be expected; but what is not quite expected is the language of Article XXXVII. This is not the language of humble subordinates writing timidly of matters concerning their Supreme Governor. "We give not to our princes the ministry either of God's word, or of sacraments .... but that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to our Godly princes in Holy Scripture by God himself". This we give "that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers". The American revision of the Thirty Nine Articles is explicitly Anti-Erastian in its version of this Article XXXVII. "The power of the civil magistrate extendeth to all men, as well clergy as laity, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual". It is the duty of all Christians, however, to "pay respectful obedience

to the civil authority". The Irish Articles, pre-occupied with the pretensions of a foreign potentate, the pope, reaffirm the doctrine of the English articles. The king's authority extends to all estates, ecclesiastical as well as civil "so as no other foreign power hath or ought to have, any superiority over them". The supreme government of all estates in all cases "doth of right appertain to the king's highness". The Confessors do not give the right to administer the sacraments or the power of the keys, "but that prerogative only which we see to have been given unto all godly princes in Holy Scripture by God himself" (a). Article LIX declares that "the pope hath no power or authority to depose the king".

The Westminster Confession of 1647 is of more than usual interest as the party of the confessors was actually in arms against the sovereign. It is stressed that the civil sovereign may not administer the sacraments or assume the power of the keys. But he has the authority and also the duty to see that peace and unity is preserved in the church; "for the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God" (b). The assumption here of course, and in the articles of the Church of England, is that the sovereign is a Christian.

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(a) Irish Articles, Article LVIII

(b) Westminster Confession, Ch. XXIII (3)

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND FROM ITS ORIGINS

Some review of the special development and somewhat insular fortunes of the Church of England is necessary to the appraisal of its post-Reformation Erastian status, and the claims that have been made for and against that position. The history may be viewed in the light of a question: would it be justifiable to claim for the Church of England that it has fairly consistently asserted independence of foreign domination, and fairly consistently acknowledged that the sovereign's prerogatives extend to the control of the church and its hierarchy in England?

The Church of England, as a separate and united community, may be said to date from about the Synod of Hertford, 673, which was convened by the Grecian Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus. The synod was attended by many bishops, and acknowledged by the powerful and wayward Wilfred of York, in that he sent proxies (a). The roots of the Church of England, however, go deeper, and in considering the validity of a claim that the church maintained an independence of the papacy, it is instructive to consider the character of its antecedents and ecclesiastical progenitors. A virile and influential strain derives from the ancient British church, through the Irish Celtic church. At the time of the Synod of Whitby, 664, that

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(a) Bede, Ecclesiastical History IV : V

is sixty-seven years after the arrival of St. Augustine with his mission, much more than half the converted heptarchy belonged to the Celtic church. There is no evidence that this church acknowledged the pope. The church, however, was catholic as opposed to Arian, and may claim to have preserved the primitive apostolic spirit, isolated as it was from continental developments.

The other strain has its source in Rome. Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory I, and in 601, four years after his arrival, received from Gregory the gift of the pallium as sign of his official appointment as head of the Roman Catholic Church in England. This was the first occasion on which the pallium was so sent, and as the gift was repeated by Gregory's successors to the successors of Augustine, the custom became established, and it came to be held that the title and right of the metropolitan in England was not complete without it. With the mission of Augustine there begins the official connection between Christian churches in England and Rome. The relation was at first, however, of the young to the old; and, as far as Rome was concerned, was of a paternal and advisory nature. Due recognition was always given to the rights and powers of civil sovereigns. Augustine's authority, as invested in him by Gregory, was over bishops and not over kings. Bede records a letter of Gregory to Augustine defining the latter's



authority: "The bishops of Britain were, on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be all subject to his rule" (a). Augustine, in fact, was somewhat high handed, and failed to gain the co-operation of the British bishops whom he met on the banks of the Severn. Much less did he secure from them an acknowledgement of his ecclesiastical overlordship. Acting, however, with the King of Kent he founded two subordinate bishoprics nearer home - at Rochester and London - and generally made his authority a reality in the south-east corner of England.

Two events of prime importance in the early history of the Church of England were the Synod of Whitby, 664, and the appointment by Pope Vitalian, on his own initiative, of Theodore of Tarsus to the primacy of Canterbury. The Synod of Whitby marked the victory of Roman over Celtic Christianity; and the activities of Theodore in co-operation with the kings of the Heptarchy, through the subdivision and consequent weakening of bishoprics, led to the establishment of the primacy of Canterbury (b). The Synod of Hertford, already referred to, which was summoned by Theodore, marks really the birth of the Church of England as a single organism under an Archbishop; and the Archbishop it must be noted was the direct

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(a) Bede, Ecclesiastical History .I : XXIX

(b) " " " IV: II

nominee and representative of the pope. From this date the history of the Church of England is of a gradual and steady Romanisation; but at first autonomy, if not independence, was jealously maintained, and there were no encroachments on the paramount rights of the civil sovereign. It was the king, for instance, who nominated bishops to fill the augmented sees. The career of Wilfrid, Bishop of Northumberland, illustrates the standing of the civil sovereign, and the extent to which the church could exercise autonomy. Wilfrid made two visits to Rome. The first in 653 was to learn the Roman services and discipline, and from this visit the bishop returned an ardent propagandist for the Roman way. It was largely through his influence, though he himself came from Lindisfarne, cradle of Celtic Christianity in England, that the Synod of Whitby was a victory for Rome. Wilfrid's second visit was in 679, and was undertaken deliberately to gain the support of the pope against the king of Northumbria, with whom Wilfrid had differences over the creation of a second Northumbrian see at Lincoln. The outcome of Wilfrid's visit, from which he returned bringing "the written judgment of the Apostolic See .... with its bulls and stamped seals", may be read in Eddius chapters XXXIV to XXXVI. The heading of Chapter XXXIV, which reads, "How the king despised the judgments of the Apostolic See", summarises the story for us.

Romanisation, however, proceeded. In 735 the pope made the gift of a second archbishopric through the pallium. In 757 Pope Paul I admonished Egbert, Archbishop of York, and the King of Northumbria for taking three monasteries from Abbot Forthred (a); and so on. But on the other hand legates of Pope Adrian, sent to confirm the apostolic faith, and to renew the friendship of an earlier time between the English church and the See of Rome, did not assume any position of authority and it was the kings of Mercia and the West Saxons who convened a council for the establishment of a third archbishopric.

It was natural, when on the civil side the country was divided into seven provinces, that the standing of the primate, acknowledged throughout the country, should be enhanced. With the establishment of a single monarchy, and especially after the great work of Alfred, the position and claims of the monarch came into prominence. We now read of kings appointing abbots and bishops, convening and presiding at church councils, striving to hold the balance between the Roman party, now represented by Benedictine monks who had taken all Europe by storm, and the married clergy whose champions were the great barons. The Council of Winchester, 968, convened to settle the dispute just mentioned, and the Council of Calne, 975, are

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(a) Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland, edited A.W. Hadden and W. Stubbs. Vol. III. 394

especially interesting. They were called by the king, and carried on deliberations while he presided. The king's initiative, and the leading part he played in what amounted to ecclesiastical parliaments are a sufficient indication of the royal standing in the church; and Freeman remarks upon the close identification of church and nation at this time (a). But in spite of powerful opposition the Benedictines and monachism were here to stay as a permanent ultramontane force. The monks were missionary votaries, obeying a rule, living by customs, and wearing a habit, which marked them as of international significance; they were fired with the spirit of duty and owed an allegiance that were neither local or national.

On the whole, however, the Anglo Saxon Church held itself free from subservience to the papacy; and as to the relation between church dignatories and the civil sovereign, the story is mainly one of co-operation, with a tacit recognition, at all events after the unification of the kingdom, of the rights of sovereignty. The ultimate authority lay with the king, and the fact was not challenged by the church. The submission and obedience of the bishops is illustrated by the legend of Wulfstan, recorded by Freeman. The last of the English bishops "a simple and unlearned man who knew not the French tongue", was urged by King William and the Primate to give up his staff

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(a) E. A. Freeman, History of Norman Conquest I p. 406



and ring of office. Wulfstan, it is said, walked to the tomb of Edward the Confessor, and spoke to his dead master: ".... They chargè thee with error who didst make me a bishop; they charge me with presumption in that I obeyed thee. Yet will I not resign my staff to them, but I will give back to thee the charge which thou didst give me".(a)

With the Norman conquest begins an acceleration of the Romanising process. There was at once a change of outlook. Hildebrand was the ruling spirit at Rome, and Rome had been in alliance with the Normans since the Treaty of Melfi, 1059. William landed with the pope's blessing, and papal legates followed him to assist in ecclesiastical affairs. The new Archbishop, Lanfranc, consecrated in 1070, shows considerable independence of the king, and was a favourite of the pope. His attitude even to the masterful William is one of equality rather than subjection; for instance over the question of the profession of canonical obedience of Thomas, elect of York, we see him asserting his "right" in defiance of the king's displeasure (b). William settled this particular dispute by a compromise, which nevertheless provided that a profession should be made to Lanfranc personally, but that Thomas should not be bound to do the like to any successor of Lanfranc. A

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(a) E. A. Freeman, History of Norman Conquest IV p. 381 - 382

(b) " " " " " IV Ch. XIX



situation developed during his primacy which may be described as autonomy between church and state; king and archbishop working together in their particular spheres to bring about a total submission of the realm. As far as the ecclesiastical sphere is concerned this took the form of a gradual removal of English prelates (a). Although there is a movement toward separation of church and state, a movement which William may have helped forward by raising the status of the church (b), there are during this reign no encroachments from Rome; and William was strong enough to tolerate interference from abroad only so long as it was convenient to him. Alexander II moreover respected the character of William, and gladly left ecclesiastical affairs in England to his favourite archbishop. As Freeman says: "At that time it might well seem that the two foremost men of the mainland of Western Christendom had crossed over together to rule as pope and Caesar in the island which men looked on as another world" (c).

In resisting interference Lanfranc was as determined as the king. He claimed for the Church of England, according to Hook, "an entire independence of Rome" (d). Nevertheless

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- (a) E. A. Freeman, History of Norman Conquest IV Ch. XIX
  - (b) Oxford History of England, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, p. 167
  - (c) E. A. Freeman, History of Norman Conquest IV p. 349 - 350
  - (d) W. F. Hook. Church History

these were the days of Hildebrand, and of revolution in the relation between church and state throughout western Europe, and not only in England; of the growth of the idea of Christendom as an earthly dominion, as well as a spiritual kingdom. As this idea gained control of men's minds there was an inevitable concentration of influence and prestige in Rome, and an inevitable concentration of outlook in that direction. Through the reigns of the Norman dynasty, and the first of the Plantagenets, the story gradually unfolds of powerful ecclesiastics with progressively more confidence and arrogance, pitting themselves against the civil sovereign, and falling back for support and authority on the pope. There is a development of the spirit of independence in ecclesiastics in their attitude to ~~the~~ authority at home, and a growth of ultramontaniam in their attitude to the larger world beyond. Hildebrand had dedicated himself to the freeing of the church from bondage to the secular power; and through him, and under his successors Innocent III and Boniface VIII, the roles of protagonists were reversed. It was the state which for a time was brought into effective bondage to the church.

Henry I struggled with his Archbishop, Anselm, over the right of investiture; and in the end the king surrendered his ancient right, the custom of his ancestors (a), to nominate

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(a) Oxford History of England, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta p. 177

and invest bishops, and reserved only the right to assent after election (a). Anselm, on the other hand, agreed, with the consent of the pope, that the clergy should do homage to the king. On this point the historian, Inett, records that "the bull of Paschal, by which Anselm was empowered to dispense with the constitutions of Gregory and Urban which forbid the clergy doing homage to secular princes, Paschal tells him it was a particular favour granted on his request to the king, and to be continued to him no longer than till, by the blessing of Almighty God on the persuasions of Anselm, the heart of the king might be moved to lay it aside". There is a flavour of partisanship about Inett's chronicle, but this comment on this grant to the king by the Roman Court of "a provisional title to that which was before an inherent right of his own" may be noted. "Thus", he writes, "did the great prince tamely bow down to meet the chains that were prepared for him" (b).

In this reign the struggle was between the Primate and the King as to their respective prerogatives, and the cleavage between church and state deepened. But the trend was not consistently Romeward. In 1115 Pope Paschal complained bitterly in a letter to the king about the translation of Ralph, Bishop of Rochester, to the See of Canterbury, without his consent.

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(a) Oxford History of England, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta p. 180

(b) Inett, History of England II. Ch. VI. P. 173, 174

"But you, without advising us, determine all ecclesiastical affairs within yourselves, call councils by your own authority, suffer no appeals to be made to us, and without our consent translate Bishops" (a). However, papal influence revived. In 1125 was held the first legatine council at Westminster, the Legate John de Crema presiding, and Inett comments: "It could not but be a great mortification to him (the archbishop) to see the earliest and most considerable right he could pretend to as a metropolitan thus openly invaded" (b).

In 1126 the pope made Archbishop William of Corbeuil, Papal Legate for life; and in the primacy of Theobald, the archbishop became legate ex officio. In the reign of Stephen the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, set up by William the Conqueror for hearing spiritual causes, was extended to include all cases in which a bishop was involved; and this brings us to the momentous reign of Henry II, in which the issue between church and state, and the question of papal authority in the realm, were for the time decided. It may be generalised that in the Norman period ecclesiastics: (1) asserted more and more independence in the civil sovereign, so that a separation developed between church and state. (2) Through legatine machinery there was, especially toward the end of the period,

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(a) Inett, History of England II. Ch. VII P. 187

(b) " " " " II. Ch. VIII P. 210



a tendency for the Church of England to come increasingly under the dominance of Rome.

Thomas Becket, in the person of the most powerful English prelate after the conquest, unites the two tendencies: separation from the state, and ultramontanism. His struggle with Henry II was over the Constitutions of Clarendon, which had been designed to choke the growing spirit of ecclesiastical independence. The Constitutions purport to codify some part of the customs of the king's ancestors regulating the relation between church and king, and although the validity of this claim has been called in question by some historians, it seems reasonably certain that "the Constitutions represented not unfairly the practice of the past" (a). Henry's demands were moderate and Becket at first assented to the Constitutions and only later came out in open opposition. His quarrel with the king turned on Clause III, concerning criminous clerks. "Clerks cited and accused of any matter shall, when summoned by the king's justice, come before the king's court to answer there, and before the ecclesiastical court for what shall seem to be answerable there, but in such a way that the justice of the king shall send to the court of holy church to see how the case is there tried. And if the clerk be convicted or shall

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(a) Oxford History of England, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta. P. 206



confess, the church ought no longer to protect him" (a). Becket argued that by this clause ecclesiastical offenders would be liable to be tried twice for the same offence; but as it is pointed out in the Oxford History of England "Henry's proposal was in accord both with general practice and the law of the church" (b). As the nobles and bishops sided with the king in the dispute, Becket betook himself to France, and enlisted the support of Pope Alexander III, who openly espoused his cause. Details of the long quarrel need not be gone into. After the murder of Becket, Henry could not resist the ill effects of the deed, though he maintained his own honour and innocence. According to Inett, he "was forced upon an agreement (with the pope's special legates, met in Normandy) which at once gave away all that he had been so long contending for, and which in the consequences thereof overwhelmed the rights of the church and the crown, and let in an usurpation which bore down all before it" (c).

The century following the death of Becket has been called "the nadir of constitutional humiliation"; and the thirteenth century which began with the reign of King John and witnessed

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(a) English Historical Documents 1042 - 1189 Edited Douglas 1953. P. 719

(b) Oxford History of England, From Domesday Book to Magna Carta. P. 206.

(c) Inett, History of England II. Ch. XIV. P. 352

the abject abasement of the kingdom, the "period of papal meridian", when the successors of Hildebrand, from Innocent III to Boniface VIII, "realised the Hildebrandine ideal" (a). King Richard joined in a controversy between his Archbishop and the monks of Canterbury in 1196 about building a college for secular canons in Lambeth. The monks, who were, according to Inett, "great instruments in the papal usurpation" (b), opposed the proceeding. Secular canons, says Inett, were friends to the civil power, and no doubt had been in the main since the coming of the Benedictines in Anglo Saxon times; and the inauguration of the college at Lambeth was part of a general design by the king and bishops to throw out the monks and bring secular canons into cathedral churches. The Archbishop of Canterbury offered the monks terms of accommodation, but these were rejected, and the monks applied to the Court of Rome. Pope Innocent III favoured the monks, and in his letters to the king makes clear the pretensions and claims of the papacy. He tells the king "that he should not bear any contempt of the Apostolic See, and that those who attempted anything to the dishonour thereof should learn by their punishment to know how hard it was to kick against the

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(a) F. Hole, Manual of Church History, P. 118

(b) Inett, History of England II. Ch. XVIII. P. 447



pricks"; and further "that he held the place of God upon earth, and without distinction of persons he would punish the men and the nations that presumed to oppose his commands" (a).

This same pope, by an act of pure opportunism as Inett suggests, gauging the feeling of the people toward King John, and to support against the king the election of Stephen Langton to the See of Canterbury, excommunicated the king, and required that the sentence should be pronounced against him every Sunday and every holy day in all churches in England. In 1208 the whole country was placed under a sentence of Interdict, which lasted until 1213. France had suffered this fate earlier, and a little later the pope excommunicated the king of France, so that Inett marvels at "the tameness of Christian princes" (b). John's continuing quarrel with the pope over the "pretended" Archbishop, Stephen Langton, the sequestration of the property of the bishops pronouncing the Interdict, the appointment by the king to the bishopric of Lincoln of Hugh Wells, who then deserted his master, led eventually to the abject humiliation of John and the realm. The king gave a charter surrendering his kingdom to the pope, and took an oath of fealty to him on receiving it again. At

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(a) Inett, History of England II. Ch. XVIII. P. 457

(b) " " " " II. Ch. XXI. P. 505



the same time he promised an annual payment to Rome of a hundred thousand marks.

In the reign of Henry III, Archbishop Boniface, in his Constitution of Lambeth of 1261 considers with great concern "that the grievances and oppressions which lie hard upon the Church of England do not at all turn to the advantage of the King our Lord" (a). Johnson comments that no king would have been patient under such loads of reproach as were cast upon him in these constitutions, had Henry not become contemptible at home and abroad through his foibles and forgetfulness. One of the chief complaints of the prelate is that bishops were summoned into the secular courts on matters purely ecclesiastical, as for example the exacting of tithes. In this reign the hierarchy at home, and Boniface in particular, exhibited independence, not only of the king, but also of papal tyranny abroad; and this they did with the support of the ecclesiastical courts, which for many years had been steadily extending their power (b).

In the reign of Edward I, the writ of "circumspecte agitatis" of 1285, which defined and limited the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, constituted the first check to

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(a) Johnson's Canons II. P. 183

(b) W. Stubbs, Constitutional History of England Vol. II. P. 68 following

ecclesiastical presumption (a). The next year, however, Archbishop Winchelsey obtained a papal bull forbidding princes to levy, and ecclesiastics to pay, taxes (b). But the end of papal ascendancy was in sight. In the reign of Edward III it began to decline. This was the age of the Avignon captivity, of rival popes, of a rapid lowering throughout christendom of papal prestige. The reign saw the Statutes of Provisors 1350, and Praemunire 1352, the former being the first parliamentary enactment ever made by any power to curb the papacy. Through the exercise by the pope of his right to fill vacant benefices in England with his own nominees, suspending the right of the patron, many church livings were filled by Italians, mostly non-resident. The act was aimed at curbing this abuse and reviving rights of patrons, and provided that any attempt by the court of Rome to interfere with the patron's exercise of his rights, should cause the right of collation to revert to the king. The Statute of Praemunire forbade any matter, of which cognisance properly belonged to the king's court, to be brought before any court out of the realm, and was designed to prevent any one aggrieved by the Statute of Provisors seeking redress at Rome. These Statutes would not have been possible a century earlier, but the papacy would not experience the draining away of its influence and power

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(a) W. Stubbs, Constitutional History of England Vol. II.  
Ch. XIV P. 124

(b) Bull of Boniface VIII de Tallagio etc. D. Wilkins Vol. I  
P. 336



without petulant remonstrance. In 1365 there was a demand by Pope Urban V for the renewal of the annual tribute promised by King John. Parliament refused.

The influence which the great schism had upon the minds of western Europeans was profound and not least in the mind of Wycliffe. He recognised Urban VI as duly elected, and rejoiced over a reforming spirit which he at first evinced. But his joy was short lived, and his disappointment profound when Urban, no less than his rival Clement VII, "injured and destroyed the unity of the church by unbridled passion and by acts of war" (a). In the end according to Lechler he was brought to a renunciation of popedom in principle, and a conviction that "the papacy is the antichrist, and its whole institution from the wicked one" (b). Papal power lingered on, in spite of waning prestige, as seen in the persecution of the Lollards and the Persecution Acts; but with the morning star of the Reformation the great days of the papacy were ended.

The question set at the beginning of this survey of Church of England history may now be reconsidered. Can a valid claim be made for the Church of England that from her foundation she has asserted a considerable degree of independence of foreign interference and that she has respected the special status and

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(a) Lechler's John Wycliffe Vol. II P. 209

(b) " " " Vol. II P. 212

prerogatives of her christian king? It is submitted that the claim is justifiable with respect to the Anglo-Saxon church, especially after the unification of the kingdom. There seems to have been only moderate encroachment, and such as did not seriously challenge the reality of Church of England autonomy. And the ecclesiastics, who owed their appointments to the king, were for the most part staunchly loyal to their patron. The king was for all practical purposes the head of the church, and was recognised as such. After the Conquest a new story unfolds. Encroachments begin and increase in effectiveness; and the hierarchy displays an ever growing independence, and finally defiance of the monarch. Two observations, however, may be made. In the first place the encroachments, both as to their scale and as to the presupposition behind them of wide international papal jurisdiction, were a novelty in the realm of England, if not in other parts of christendom; and point by point they were resisted by successive kings, and even at first by some of the ecclesiastics, including those most ambitious to establish their own independence of the crown. Secondly there were the Constitutions of Clarendon which cited certain ancient rights of the crown over the church, and purported to give them statutory effect. The victory of the papacy over the king and nation was brought about by events caused directly by these enactments. But it may well be called a Pyrrhic victory, as it became inevitable through

humiliation that the state would at length assert itself with finality, and that the substance of the Constitutions would at a future time regulate the relation between church and state and between state and papacy.

I am inclined to the view that there is embedded deep in the history and constitution of the Church of England, the evidence of true original autonomy, and matter and occasion to preserve it for a long time and to a considerable degree. There was in this insular church more real independence at root than, for instance, the Gallican Church could ever enjoy. I am inclined also to the opinion that from the earliest times the king has embodied and symbolised this spirit of independence; and that the church has been happiest, and also most prosperous and influential in the country, when it has gladly acknowledged the king as its head.

HOBBES'S DOCTRINE OF SOVEREIGNTY AND THE CHURCH

We shall see later (Part II) that Hobbes's theological determinism followed logically from an assumption about the nature of the universe, which was irresistibly suggested by contemporary science. Scientific mechanism rested its case upon twin irreducibles: immutable laws of motion operating with mathematical precision on the one hand, and bodies or matter on the other. Matter was held to be indestructible, and the laws of motion were absolutely precise. Accepting this double premise, and rejecting as nonsensical any notion of "immaterial substance", which might be subject to other laws than the laws of science, Hobbes arrived by strict logical process at supralapsarian predestination. It may be noted that in accepting the mechanist's hypothesis, Hobbes was in agreement with almost all leaders of thought of his century, but he alone was consistent and projected current science into religion. He retained the Christian's God, something more than an impersonal first cause, as an incomprehensible anomaly; but for the rest religious belief must adjust itself to a universe of bodies at rest and in motion. Most of Hobbes's arguments in support of his doctrine of necessity with its theological corollary, predestination, contain or imply the submission that the fundamental mechanist's hypothesis must be taken for granted. Here is an example we might say of

materialist theology built upon scientific faith.

The theory of the state, on the other hand, which also has very important religious connexions, purports to be erected upon an empirical foundation. Introspection has revealed to the philosopher certain truths about human nature, and he invites his readers to examine themselves to see whether or not his findings are correct. Roughly the findings are that each man acts from a motive of selfishness. Behaviour may be more or less enlightened according to the intelligence of the individual, but the motive always is self-interest. From this cardinal truth about human nature is deduced the theory of the state and sovereignty, to which is attached an extreme form of Erastianism. At the end of Leviathan Hobbes claims to ground his doctrine of the rights of the sovereign on the known, natural inclinations of mankind and the laws of nature, and his doctrine of the sovereign's ecclesiastical power upon scripture; but these doctrines are complementary and stand or fall together. An indivisible and theoretically unlimited sovereignty such as he propounds clearly cannot admit a separate spiritual headship. The Erastianism is as indispensable ~~as~~ doctrine as predestination, but for a different reason.

Logic, we might say, thrust predestination upon Hobbes; but it was the political state of the country, the circumstances of his age in which political unrest and division was



aggravated by religious anarchy, which gave rise to his Erastianism. The rights of the sovereign he claims to deduce from empirical facts discovered by introspection, no doubt backed by observation; but it is a reasonable conjecture that his mind was fully made up about the rights of sovereigns and the extent of their prerogatives, before he launched upon any reasoned exposition in proof. His mind also was made up about the ecclesiastical status of the sovereign. There is a sense in which it might be said that large parts of Leviathan and De Cive may be special pleading, and that many elaborate arguments are followed through, especially in so far as they appeal to the Bible for support, not to lead in the impersonal way of truth, but to establish what was already considered to be necessary doctrine on grounds of expediency. If scientific faith led to predestination, it was experience which produced Erastianism. It was one of the doctrines in respect of which Hobbes was, as A. E. Taylor, has remarked, "an empiricist malgre lui" (a).

Although Hobbes almost certainly formed his opinions empirically about the rights of sovereigns and the position of the church in the state, he arranged his arguments deductively to support these opinions. And it may well be asked whether the case he makes out and the conclusion he seeks to establish would not better have been treated empirically. The fact is

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(a) A. E. Taylor, Thomas Hobbes. P. 55

that Hobbes was committed to a point of view that was derogatory to knowledge formed wholly from experience, knowledge which "is not attained by reasoning, but found as well in brute beasts as in men" (a). As far as it goes empirical knowledge is infallible, but it does not go very far. On the other hand, at a point in the evolution of his thought he had embraced geometry with the greatest enthusiasm; and the whole purport of his most celebrated literary labours was to reduce sociology to a science like geometry. Hence the deductive arguments to establish the doctrine of sovereignty. But as Clarendon observed: "It was unreasonably undertaken by Bellarmine to establish a title that depends upon matter of fact by arguments from reason, which proved that it ought to be so; so Mr. Hobbes who ... thinks it a sufficient answer to say, if it was not so it should be so, as unreasonably follows the same method" (b).

How are the mechanist's assumption at the foundation of the doctrine of necessity, and the alleged empirical truth of universal selfishness which led to the doctrine of sovereignty, related together? The connecting link is to be found in Hobbes's exposition of the passions and the will. It is

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(a) Lev. 363

(b) Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan. Survey of Ch. 42

possible to give a materialistic and deterministic interpretation of sense impressions, and this Hobbes does; and the interpretation is carried over to processes which may be described as mental: to account for memory and imagination which are the primary stuff of all thought processes, by supposing the movements of sense to linger on with ever diminishing intensity; and to account for all other "mental states" by supposing the motions of sense to affect in some way the vital fluids. The sum total of human passions, good and evil, are but variants of appetite or desire and aversion, which in turn are simply bodily feelings not distinct from bodily pleasure and bodily pain. All human actions, according to Hobbes, are either voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary actions include those which we should now call reflex, and also those by which we satisfy immediately and without deliberation our momentary appetites or desires. Voluntary appetites proceed from the will, which is defined as the last appetite in deliberating. Deliberation is an alternation of appetites and aversions towards an object as it appears to us desirable or undesirable, that is good or evil. In this way Hobbes seeks to preserve the logical coherence of his system as a whole, but his psycho-physiology leaves a very great deal unexplained.

In the first place the argument of Hobbes reads entirely like a logician's case: we do not feel that he has satisfied

himself about what the scientists may be saying, and what observation and experiment may suggest about bodily and nervous and mental functioning. No doubt such studies were in their infancy, but Hobbes seems to plunge in with an explanation that has come entirely out of his own head. And again he is far too dogmatic about his theory and not nearly tentative enough; but that was characteristic of him. Again his psycho-physiological theory is strained to the limit of credibility by his own moral doctrine in which man, a creature of reason and foresight, is distinguished from animals. The account of deliberation simply will not take the weight, and the theory of the last appetite seems completely out of harmony with the definition of justice in the Elements as the constant will and endeavour to do that which is just (a). Apart from these objections the most serious difficulty, since Hobbes's knowledge of human passions is based on introspection, is to find a place for the introspector. It is not contradictory, though perplexing enough, to maintain that all human experiences, mental and bodily, are explicable in materialist terms, to deny that there is any experiencer, but to assert that an experience simply is, simply occurs. Thoughts and feelings, like bodily pains, are events in a stream of events which makes up a human consciousness. And the words which we were obliged to use

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(a) Elements Part II Ch. VI (10)

in the account of deliberation, that an object "appears to us desirable or undesirable" may simply be bad drafting, and might be analysed out of the context, just as Hobbes's own "fore-sight of good and evil consequences" might be got rid of. Deliberation may simply be a succession of events, appetites and aversions, without any entity to take note of them and sum up the possibilities; although if this were so Hobbes's doctrine of morality and his account of the founding of society would have to be rewritten. But if in some way he is not an entity outside the Physiology and chemistry of his own body, how is Hobbes able to write so confidently about these processes? The knowledge of the human passions which he has acquired and would impart to us, is self-knowledge. He invites us also to examine ourselves for corroboration of his teaching. But his account leaves himself the onlooker quite unexplained, just as Hume was left with the empty theatre.

We must try to understand the steps of the argument by which Hobbes seeks to establish his doctrine of sovereignty starting from his conception of human nature. Each man desires his own good, and the greatest good is a negative one, the avoidance of death(a). But outside organised human society, that is in a state of nature, there is an ever present danger of sudden death (death not from natural causes)

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(a) E. II. 8



to say nothing of lesser bodily hurts. The reason for this is that in a state of nature men are to all intents and purposes equal (a), and it is because of this equality that there arises a mutual desire and will to hurt. For this desire there are two distinct causes corresponding to the two types into which humanity is divided. Some are vainglorious and desire to hurt others to establish their own pre-eminence; (b) the rest, though temperate men and willing to accord to others as much as they would claim for themselves (c), are obliged to defend themselves against aggressors, and even to kill in self-defence. Self-aggrandisement and self-defence, with lesser causes, produce a state of universal peril and universal fear. In these circumstances to have a care to oneself, Hobbes argues, is obviously not against reason, and "that which is not contrary to right reason, that all men account to be done justly and with right" (d).

Hobbes defines natural right in one place as "that liberty which every man hath to make use of his natural faculties according to right reason" (e). The definition is important.

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- (a) E. II 6
  - (b) E. II 7
  - (c) E. II 7
  - (d) E. II 8, 9.
  - (e) E. II 9

Spinoza after Hobbes enunciated a doctrine of natural right which is quite different. According to Spinoza might is simply right. Pufendorf criticised the repellent language which Spinoza used in his description of natural right; but he held that Hobbes's view of natural right still left men subject to the rule of natural law and right reason (a). It is because of his elaboration of the extent of natural right in the state of nature that Hobbes has been misunderstood. A right to the end, self-preservation, gives a right to the means (b), he argues; each man is judge of the means which tend to his own preservation (c); this implies that nothing that<sup>A</sup> man deems it necessary for him to do or have is barred, so that by nature each man has a right to all things (d). But the effect of this right of everybody to everything is the same as if there had been no right at all (e), so that a highly paradoxical situation has been reached. The criterion of a right is agreement with right reason, or to use the wording of Hobbes, not being contrary to right reason. And yet the exercise of right leads to a state of affairs which is the same as if there had been no right. To mitigate the paradox

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(a) Pufendorf De Jure Naturae et Gentium. Book II Ch. II(3)

(b) E. II. 9

(c) E. II. 9

(d) E. II. 11

(e) E. II. 11

certain points of Hobbes's exposition as a whole must be examined. And we must consider the questions: what did Hobbes mean by reason? and what are the terms of reason's arbitration in the question of right?

It must be noted in the first place that natural right as expounded by Hobbes is entirely concerned with self-preservation, and the very existence of natural right presupposes a state in which there is a danger of violent death. It is not therefore the existence of natural right which creates conditions of peril, but either aggravates the danger already existing, or fails to dispose of it. Reason allows this first method, abortive in the long run, to remedy a threatening state of insecurity already in being. The first cause of insecurity, as we have seen, is vainglory. Some want more than their share; want to be reckoned pre-eminent; and their pretensions and demands are entirely groundless, as in a state of nature men are virtually equal. The vainglorious are a danger to the rest who have a right to protect themselves. The fact that some men are vainglorious and presumably born with a propensity to vainglory, makes peaceful existence by agreement, and without law, impossible. The admission of vainglory as a natural human attribute is something like assent to the christian doctrine of original sin; and although, as it is often said, in the state of nature there can be no punishable sin in the sense of transgression of the law, it is certainly

the case that men can and do offend against the laws of nature. In a footnote to Chapter I of De Cive Hobbes explains how offences of this sort are committed: "... if any man pretend somewhat to tend necessarily to his preservation, which yet he himself doth not confidently believe so, he may offend against the laws of nature ..." (a). This is that pursuit of conquest "further than ... security requires" (b), which we can recognise as the action of the vainglorious man. Vainglory or pride is the inherited mortal sin of mankind, and so long as there is vainglory there can be no peace or security until there is an authority to keep men in order. .

In "The Political Philosophy of Hobbes" Strauss suggests that in the first chapter of De Cive Hobbes had in mind a minimum and a maximum right. It is the minimum, the naked right to preserve one's life, which is the basis of morality. This right is just; while the exercise of right in excess of this, as the right of all to all, is unjust. A footnote in De Cive seems to support this view. Some will argue that the sovereign "will take all, spoil all, kill all ... First, though by right, that is without injury to them, he may do it, yet can he not do it justly, that is, without breach of the natural laws and injury against God" (c). (It will be noted

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(a) E. II 9 footnote

(b) Lev. 64

(c) E. II 80 footnote

that Hobbes speaks here of the existence of justice and injustice before the founding of the state.) On the other hand there is no suggestion of a minimum and a maximum right in Chapter 1 of De Cive. The state of war is reached through a legitimate exercise of natural right in agreement with right reason. We must now consider how reason enters into the exercise of natural right.

In his chapter in Leviathan on reason Hobbes distinguishes between science and prudence. "Science is the knowledge of consequences, and dependence of <sup>one</sup> ~~the~~ fact upon another" (a) and is acquired by the process of reasoning, or reckoning with words (b), by the "peculiar and true ratiocination" by which every man makes appraisal of the consequences of his actions (c). Prudence, he says, is gained by experience (d), and men with their natural prudence "are in better and nobler condition" than those who reason (that is reckon) badly, or trust to others who reckon badly. We may assume that the natural right of self-preservation which is exercised by every man in the state of nature is sanctioned by natural prudence, rather than discovered by the calculation or reckoning which

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(a) Lev. 21

(b) Lev. 18

(c) E. II. 16 footnote

(d) Lev. 21



attains to science. The fact that the exercise of natural right issues at length in a self-stultifying claim to unlimited right, may be attributed to the fact that up to this point experience has been defective. The aggression of the vainglorious must be experienced to be known, and so must the brutish state of war which is inevitable in a state of nature. In the state of nature everyone is governed by his own reason (a); that is to say everyone must rely on his own judgment and experience; "and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies" (b). Only experience can teach men that the rights they have claimed, and on a short view claimed with prudence, to preserve their lives, must in fact produce the opposite effect. If life is to be secure there must be a mutual limitation of right, or transfer of right. Experience will teach this lesson, and to that extent natural prudence will become enhanced.

If we assume that prudence is the arbiter in the state of nature, we may enquire into the precise terms of the arbitration. "It is not against reason that a man doth all he can to preserve his own body and limbs, both from death and pain," Hobbes writes in the Elements of Law; "and that which

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(a) Lev. 67

(b) Lev. 67

is not against reason men call right ..." (a). In De Cive the wording is almost the same: "That which is not contrary to right reason, that all men account to be done justly and with right" (b). The exercise of natural right in a state of nature is nowhere stated to be the command or dictate of reason, as is obedience to the laws of nature. "A law of nature", says Hobbes in Chapter 14 of Leviathan, "is a precept or general rule found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life" (c). The law of nature and the reason which discovers it are mandatory: they command and forbid. "Right", on the other hand, "consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear" (d). Science, we might say, and the laws of nature which are deductions of science, provide infallible rulings. Prudence gives counsel; and the natural rights we claim are sanctioned and allowed by prudence.

Both prudence and science are capacities or potentialities of all men. They are not faculties. Hobbes indeed sometimes refers to reason as a faculty: "it is no less a part of human nature than any other faculty or affection of the mind"(e);

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(a) Elements Part I Ch. XIV (6)

(b) E. II 8

(c) Lev. 66

(d) Lev. 66

(e) E. II. 16

but he expressly denies that it is a faculty as that term was used by seventeenth century theologians. Much less is it a divine faculty. It is simply a human capability which will show a man eventually the way to his own profit. "Reason is no less of the nature of man than passion, and is the same in all men, because all men agree in the will to be directed and governed in the way to that which they desire to attain, namely their own good, which is the work of reason" (a). In the state of nature profit is the measure of right, which is the degree of liberty allowed to the individual by reason, or prudence. In the commonwealth also, where the law is silent, men are free to act in the way reason shall suggest is most profitably to themselves. The fact that the degree of individual liberty permitted by private reason or prudence, at a certain stage in human development proves to be self-stultifying, merely emphasises the intractability of human nature when not restrained within the bounds of organised society; and realisation of this truth comes by bitter experience.

Because human nature is such that without society and laws men are condemned to live in a perpetual state of war, it follows that for survival society must be sought; and reason functioning naturally, naturally and inevitably leads men to this conclusion. Men discover the first law of nature, or the

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(a) Elements Part I : XV (1)

first precept dictated by natural reason for the abolition of insecurity and fear, and the rest of the laws of nature in order. The first law of nature is to seek peace and follow it; the second is that a man be willing, when others do the same, to lay down his right to all things as far as is necessary for peace (a). Rights may be laid down either by simple renunciation, or by transfer (b); the individuals in the state of nature lay down their right to all things by transfer. The transferee, who may be a man or an assembly, becomes the sovereign. This is the account Hobbes gives of the founding of a commonwealth, and doubtless it is not put forward positively as history. To understand the rights of states and duties of subjects, it is necessary, he argues in the Epistle Dedicatory to *De Cive*, "that they be so considered as if they were dissolved;" and to corroborate his theory, or fiction, he makes reference to savages in America and to children. Strauss says that he had dispensed with the need to appeal to history, since he had grasped a typical history (c).

The laws of nature, Hobbes declares in the beginning of *De Cive*, are the conditions of society and of human peace.

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(a) Lev. 67

(b) Lev. 67

(c) Strauss - *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. P. 104



There is no other way to reach ordered society except by obedience to the laws of nature. But the way is not difficult to discover. Once or twice he declares that these laws are written in men's hearts. This is metaphorical language, but expresses the intimacy of human understanding of the laws. They are dictates of reason, which is "no less of the nature of man than passion" (a). They are precepts or general rules found out by reason, or theorems concerning the kind of behaviour which is necessary to maintain peace and security. The exercise of natural right is a primary natural impulse in agreement with reason, or not against reason. The kind of behaviour enjoined by the laws of nature has a more advanced status, because the laws of nature are deductions of science and have universal validity; they are infallible rules absolutely annexed to the demands of human nature, and obligatory upon all men, who break them at their peril. The laws of nature, in one sense, belong as intimately to a man as the right of nature, or reason itself. In one sense reason is attained by industry (b); or is acquired wit grounded on the right use of speech, and is not found in children until they can talk;(c) but the potentiality is inborn like the

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(a) Elements Part I : XV (1)

(b) Lev. 21

(c) Lev. 21



ability to learn to speak, or for that matter to walk. I will quote in full a passage from De Cive which has been referred to already, because it states concisely some of the points which we have been trying to make, and is not superseded by anything in Leviathan: "Therefore reason is a certain law; which, since it is no less a part of human nature than any other faculty or affection of the mind, is also termed natural. Therefore the law of nature, that I may define it, is the dictate of right reason, conversant about those things which are either to be done or omitted for the constant preservation of life and members, as much as in us lies" (a). The laws of nature, let it be repeated, are the same for all, are changeless and eternal; and as we shall see they are the basis of morality. In propounding his doctrine of these laws of nature Hobbes can be seen to have no such opinion of human depravity as was entertained by many theologians of his day.

Hobbes has deduced the fact of surrender to the sovereign, and the extent of his prerogatives, from a primary proposition about human nature; and he has appealed only slightly to experience, and that not for confirmation, but illustration. He does not, however, allow his arguments to stand altogether on their own merits, careful as he is to avoid logical fallacies. He calls in scripture to support him in each of his accounts of the genesis of the state, though more perfunctorily

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(a) E. II. 16

perhaps in Leviathan than in the earlier works. It is his contention that the authority of the sovereign is absolute and indivisible; the sovereign has no rivals; in particular he has no ecclesiastical rivals. The pope has no valid or scriptural claim to overrule the sovereign; nor may any other religious person put forward a valid claim to disobey, in obedience, for example, to the voice of private conscience. It is this part of Hobbes's argument which will now be considered, and in the process it will be necessary to examine some of his many and interesting appeals to scripture to support his point of view. In this context, more than any other, his peculiar, and, as many theologians have held, his outrageous, exegesis is illustrated.

Hobbes recommends that to the Bible should be applied a "wise and learned interpretation" (a) according to the main design: and in the light of this high-minded canon we may refer, for example, to Chapter XXXVIII of Leviathan in which he presents a "proof" that the Kingdom of Heaven could not be located anywhere but on earth. The orthodox interpretation of the term "Kingdom of Heaven" is out of harmony with the Hobbeian dogma that nothing exists except body, and so scripture is quoted liberally from the Old Testament first,

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(a) Lev. 202

and then from the New, "by which it is evident" that salvation shall be on earth (a). The argument is clinched by the suggestion that since Heaven is God's throne, and earth his footstool, "it seemeth not suitable to the dignity of a king" that his subjects should have any place as high as his throne and higher than his footstool; "nor", he says, "can I find any evident text for it in Holy Scripture" (b). In Chapter XLIV Hobbes undertakes to show that texts that mention eternal fire, eternal torments, or the worm that never dieth, do not contradict the doctrine of a second and everlasting death "in the proper and natural sense of the word death" (c). The second death, in other words, is complete extinction, and does not begin an eternity of torment as the orthodox believe. The first death, also, is a total extinction of life, and the resurrection is a resurrection of the corporeal body, a miraculous quickening of dust. How this could possibly be he does not attempt to explain; what is insisted on is that there is no such entity as an immortal soul. And yet these concepts, eternal punishment and immortal soul, have been felt by generations of Bible students to be taught in the book. Hobbes "proves" from the book that this is not so.

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(a) Lev. 249

(b) Lev. 250

(c) Lev. 343

Having proved that the Kingdom of Heaven can have no other location than on earth, Hobbes can assert that the kingdom is not in being yet, but will be inaugurated later (at the resurrection), otherwise Christians would owe a divided loyalty to Christ, and the civil sovereign (a). There is no such thing as a spiritual kingdom in being now. In the meantime Christ, though he may be God, is not a king, and does not rival the civil sovereign; and when he was on earth he ordered his disciples to give tribute to Caesar. In his teaching and conduct he upheld consistently the authority of the civil sovereign, and did not set himself up as a rival, so that the ground is taken away from subversive people, as in the late troubles "sick-brained men" who made apostates from natural reason (b), who claim to interpose their private interpretation of Scripture between undisciplined indulgence of private religion on the one side, and obedience to the state on the other. Christ obeyed and taught obedience; moreover he has been removed opportunely by his father from the earthly scene and in no sense does he at the present time interfere in earthly affairs or claim an allegiance which usurps the lawful prerogatives of the civil sovereign. All this Hobbes claims to prove by excursions into the Pentateuch, and the sayings of

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(a) Lev. 263, 264, 315

(b) E. II. 156

Christ himself.

Hobbes's borrowings from Old Testament history do, as a matter of fact, provide him with some good arguing points. And as it has been maintained already, there is much in the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, and the practice of the early church, to lend him support. From the Old Testament he shows that the power of interpreting the Word of God, and the supreme civil power, were united in Moses while he lived; that they were united in the High Priest in the time of Joshua and until King Saul's time; and that they were united in the kings until the time of the captivity (a). He quotes from the story of King Josiah that he "gathered together all the several degrees of his kingdom, the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people; and he read in their ears all the words of the covenant"(b). Turning to New Testament times, the apostles enjoined their followers to submit to the civil power, to pray for kings, and the like; and in post-apostolic times, as we have seen, there is plenty of evidence that after the conversion of Constantine and for several centuries the Christian emperor was acknowledged by Christians as head of the church as well as of the state. Indeed for a time there seems to have been no thought of separating these two. There is of course the difficulty of the pagan emperor;

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(a) Lev. 259, 260

(b) E. II. 245



but to him there was at least a duty of submission and obedience to the limit of conscience, on the authority of the apostles. Hobbes would perhaps like to go further than this, but so far history is fairly well on his side.

Hobbes has been directing his argument to bolster up the absolute nature of the civil sovereign's authority, "proved by most evident testimonies of the Scripture, as well old as new", in matters religious as well as civil. Later we shall detail some of the sovereign prerogatives; and yet it might be thought surprising that Hobbes does not subscribe to the current Jacobean and Laudian doctrine of Divine Right. His rejection of this dogma was, however, consistent with his teaching as a whole. The question, where does sovereignty reside? is, in all cases a question of fact: and sovereignty may reside in an assembly as well as in a king. Such an opinion is hardly consistent with the doctrine of divine right of kings, as that doctrine was held by the supporters of Charles I. If there is any sense in which the sovereign holds his office by divine right, it is in the fact that the laws of nature which are the unwritten laws of God command obedience to the sovereign, and dictate behaviour which supports him in his office. It would be in this sense that we ought to interpret a passage in Behemoth in which it is asserted that the civil laws are God's laws, and the sovereign is appointed

by God to make them; "that the king owes his crown to God only, and to no man, ecclesiastic or other" (a). On the face of it this statement is a reversal of the more usual teaching that the sovereign's position and tenure of office is such that a social contract may be deemed to be at the back of it, and that he has the authority to declare what is divine law, and to give to it the force of law in the commonwealth.

Absolute authority is held to be enjoyed by all sovereigns, christian and pagan alike; and "when the civil sovereign is an infidel, every one of his own subjects that resisteth him, sinneth against the laws of God" (b). There are occasions when a christian subject would commit sin by obeying but on no pretext should he offer resistance to his sovereign. Whenever obedience is sinful the Christian should choose a martyr's death. This is clearly taught by Hobbes, but as he is concerned mainly with the problems and dangers which beset seventeenth century England, most of his discourse is taken up with the rights and status of a Christian sovereign in a Christian state. And it is to these rights that we shall chiefly refer as we discuss some details of the doctrine of Hobbes.

"In Christian cities", Hobbes declares in Leviathan, stating an unqualified case for undivided authority, "the judgment both of spiritual and temporal matters belongs unto

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(a) E. VI 236  
(b) Lev. 328

the civil authority. And that man or council that hath the supreme power is head both of the city and of the church, for a church and a city is but one thing" (a). Division of authority is anathema to Hobbes, because he is sure it means weakness. There can be no rivals for authority, and no theoretical limit to the sovereign's powers. Hobbes's attitude to this question is well illustrated in his <sup>views</sup>~~views~~ of the Trinity. Because of a peculiar sanctity and prestige attaching to the doctrine, of such a nature that its denial has always been held to exclude the denier from the Christian fold, he accords a grudging assent to the doctrine: "In the Kingdom of God there may be three persons independent, without breach of unity in God that reigneth"; but he continues, "where men reign, that be subject to diversity of opinion, it cannot be so" (b). There is too much latent propensity to division as it is, without setting up or acknowledging rival authorities, church and state. He denounces the doctors of the church who "set up a supremacy against the sovereignty; canons against laws; and a ghostly authority against the civil" (c). "All human law", he declares, "is civil . . . ."

The civil laws may be divided, according to the diversity of

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(a) E. II. 297

(b) Lev. 176

(c) Lev. 174

their subject matter, into sacred or secular .... For the civil sacred laws are the human laws (which are also called ecclesiastical) concerning things sacred" (a). He heaps scorn upon the democratical men who in England would support another rival to the sovereign; their own conscience; and he exposes the arrogance of the pope who would claim not only a spiritual but a temporal overlordship. He says that there is only a church where there is an authority to compel attendance, and this is only true of a state church (b). A church, he says, is a company of men united together "in the person of one sovereign, at whose command they ought to assemble, and without whose authority they ought not to assemble" (c). The spiritual~~ty~~ is finally banished: "But spiritual commonwealth there is none in the world; but shall be in the next world, at the resurrection ... In the meantime, seeing there are no men on earth, whose bodies are spiritual; there can be no spiritual commonwealth against men that are yet in the flesh ..." (d).

As the civil sovereign is the only law giver in the commonwealth, and makes laws indiscriminately for what are

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(a) E. II. 187

(b) Lev. 252

(c) Lev. 252

(d) Lev. 315

called church and state, it transpires that in a certain sense he is the sole arbiter between good and bad, using good and bad as moral terms. An attempt will be made in a later section to thrash out the complexities of Hobbes's moral doctrine; here we may anticipate by saying that the sovereign is in control of the morals of his subjects, is the arbiter of good and evil, in so far as these consist of outward actions. Just as in the religious sphere a human governor can take no note of inner thought and belief, and is concerned exclusively with external conformity, so in the sphere of morals. Only God can judge intentions; the sovereign can judge only actions and words. Beyond this Hobbes teaches consistently that for morality inner intentions and motives are crucial, and it is these which make actions good or evil. It follows that the sovereign has no jurisdiction to decide questions of absolute value, but only of behaviour. Hobbes considers, on the other hand, that behaviour is related very intimately to inner morality; that according to certain principles of behaviour which he himself lays down it is a close index of the crucial inner state. Disobedience to the sovereign, for example, is prima facie not only a crime against the state but a sin against God: and the law of nature, which is the moral law, enjoins obedience to the civil law.

Many critics of Hobbes in his day failed to appreciate the inwardness and subtlety of his moral doctrine. They interpreted his teaching as discounting



traditional morality, and as placing in the sovereign's hands the authority to make and enforce moral laws to suit his convenience. This, they held, was the sovereign's most drastic prerogative and one fraught with the most far reaching consequences. The Reformation had been fought out over this very question - to what extent is the individual responsible to decide moral issues for himself. As enlightenment progresses so the more does the delicate balancing of values and assessment of right and wrong become a peculiar and individual prerogative, and cease to be arbitrary. The state prohibits gross and obvious crimes; the individual conscience adjudicates upon the infinitely subtle and elusive questions of better and worse, of right or wrong for me now at this moment according to the circumstances.

Now for all this, provision is clearly made in the teaching of Hobbes but the fact was overlooked by his critics. Eachard complained that if the Hobbesian morality was to be accepted, the sovereign would naturally place an interpretation on the terms good and bad purely to suit his own interests (a). Clarke attacked Hobbes and other deniers of religion; and as far as Hobbes was concerned he was held to deny religion in two ways: in that he made the sovereign arbiter on questions of religion and good and bad; and in that

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(a) John Eachard, Mr. Hobbes's State of Nature Considered

he suggested that God proceeded arbitrarily, that is that there were no fixed moral laws which bound not only men and the sovereign, but God himself (a).

In denying that any other authority, but the civil sovereign, has the right to adjudicate on questions relative to good manners and outward religion Hobbes claimed abundant support from the scripture. Some of the scriptural authorisation has been referred to as supporting his general doctrine of absolute indivisible sovereignty and this naturally lends support<sup>s</sup> to the narrower claim to authority over outward morality and religion. We may repeat that the appeals to the Bible <sup>are</sup> ~~and~~ copious. And then some historical evidence is cited to prove that in the Christian era the civil sovereign has from the first enjoyed the right to supremacy in both estates, the temporal and the spiritual, which right and status carries with it the authority to adjudicate upon public morality. The distinction in fact between temporal and spiritual is entirely gratuitous; and any claim inconsistent with the sovereign's prerogatives in both estates is unlawful, and to the extent to which it has been implemented a usurpation.

In pursuing his arguments in support of an all comprehensive absolutism, embracing church and state, outward morality and civil duty, Hobbes gives little consideration to

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(a) Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God.

the susceptibilities of religious leaders. There are various expressions calculated to shock: "The supreme ecclesiastical doctor is he that hath the supreme power" (a). The civil sovereign is called the "chief pastor" (b); his office in the church is said to be to judge doctrine and to be the "supreme pastor" (c). He has authority to preach, administer the sacraments (d); and as to excommunication, the church can excommunicate none without the authority of the sovereign. "Excommunication ... when it wanteth the assistance of the civil power ... is without effect; and consequently ought to be without terror" (e).

Although Hobbes is mainly concerned with the rights of the sovereign, he is not altogether silent as to his duties; and Chapter XXX of Leviathan details for us some of these; they are outlined also in De Cive and the Elements, and we may summarise them briefly. The sovereign must make "good" laws, and good here means "needful, for the good of the people, and withal perspicuous" (f). The perspicuity of the law consists

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(a) E. V. 269

(b) Lev. 253

(c) Lev. 393/4

(d) Lev. 295

(e) Lev. 278

(f) Lev. 185

in the fact that it shows us the meaning of the legislator, and "the meaning of the legislator known, the law is more easily understood by few than by many words". He must establish the welfare of his people and frame laws calculated not only to procure their safety (a) but to keep them happy and contented (b). He must allow as much liberty to his subjects as possible (c); punishments must be as lenient as may be (d), and whenever possible stiff-necked subjects must be coaxed into obedience (e). Excessive legislation is to be avoided (f), the sovereign is to preserve entire his essential rights, and to see that the people are taught the ground and reason of these rights (g); and the sovereign is to provide and administer equal justice (h). As it is the paramount duty of the sovereign to procure the safety of his people, when protection ends, the duty of obedience ends also (i). Any command to a subject to kill or maim himself is invalid (j),

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(a) Lev. 178

(b) Lev. 178 See also Lev. 185, Lev. 131

(c) Lev. 185

(d) Lev. 185

(e) E. II. 175

(f) E. II 179 Lev. 185

(g) E. II. 172

(h) Lev. 184

(i) Lev. 116

(j) Lev. 114

and so is any attempt to take away from a man his right to protect himself (a). There are special provisions for men of feminine courage. If they run away in battle they are not to be reckoned to have acted unjustly, but dishonourably; and so they should not be punished (b). Finally there are detailed provisions about the limits of allegiance, and the most important principle that emerges is that the sovereignty which Hobbes has in mind is de facto, rather than de jure or de divino.

Chapter XXXI of Leviathan commences with recapitulation. Hobbes claims among other things to have proved that "subjects owe to sovereigns simple obedience in all things, wherein their obedience is not repugnant to the laws of God". The sovereign is said in Chapter XXX to be bound to certain duties by the law of nature, which is equivalent to the law of God. Chapter XXXI exempts the subject from obedience in repugnance to the laws of God. Here is a difficulty and seeming contradiction. Firstly the law of nature which binds the sovereign "although evident truth", does not become law until made so by the sovereign power (c). Secondly "the books of

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(a) Lev. 114

(b) Lev. 115

(c) Lev. 203



Holy Scripture, which only contains the law of God, are only canonical, when they are established for such by the sovereign power" (a). Hobbes makes a very clear statement as to the status of law in his dispute with Bramhall: "They that have the legislative power make nothing canon, which they make not law, nor law, which they make not canon. And because the legislative power is from the assent of the subjects, the Bible is made law by the assent of the subjects. It was not the bishop of Rome that made the scripture law without his own temporal dominions; nor is it the clergy that make it law in their diocese and rectories" (b).

What explanation can be offered for the paradox into which Hobbes argues himself? The sovereign is bound by the law of God, and has the exclusive right to declare what that law is. And there is a further difficulty. Many critics have held that on the question of the laws of nature Hobbes is guilty of circularity of argument. He rests his social contract on the laws of nature which enjoin the observance of contracts; and on the other hand claims for the sovereign the sole right to give to these laws or precepts of nature the force of law. To clear Hobbes of this logical aberration it may be pointed out that he says of the laws of nature that before they are

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(a) Lev. 203

(b) E. V. 179

adopted they are in reality theorems or precepts of reason rather than laws; and as all men are endowed with reason, all men, including the sovereign, are bound in their consciences by the laws of nature. By giving these the force of law in the commonwealth, the sovereign has added a sanction; so that what was formerly a sin against God, is now also, so far as it consists of overt acts, a crime against the state.

But what about the proposition that the sovereign himself is bound by the laws of nature and the laws of God, while he himself has the sole prerogative to declare what these are, and to give to them the force of law in the commonwealth? "Because he is a sovereign, he requireth obedience to all his own, that is to all the civil laws; in which also are contained all the laws of nature, that is, all the laws of God: for beside the laws of nature and the laws of the church, which are part of the civil law, . . . there be no other laws divine" (a). The laws of God are in two parts: the laws of nature which are discovered by reason, and the divine positive laws which are discovered by revelation; and both of these are declared to the citizen and made binding upon him by the sovereign's command, who is himself, nevertheless, subject to all the laws of God. I do not think that Hobbes gives us a

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(a) Lev. 328

complete answer to this paradox, but it is not so damaging to his case as might at first sight appear. We may admit to begin with that he was not emancipated from current theological notions, and was much more the child of his age than has been held by some admirers. He accepted the doctrine of divine laws which are immutable and eternal and bind everybody; he accepted, contrary to the opinion of some of his critics, the doctrine of eternal and immutable moral laws; much of the doctrine he weaved around the laws of nature is to be found substantially in the theologian, Hooker, although Hobbes deduced his moral laws, the laws of nature, from premises different from those of Hooker. On the other hand Hobbes was concerned to uphold at all costs the absolute supremacy of the civil sovereign. The sovereign is the mouthpiece of God: the interpreter of the divine will. And although he is undoubtedly subject to the eternal laws of nature and the laws of God, if it is possible for him to commit a breach of them who is to call him to book, since he himself has the right to interpret? Just as in formulating religious doctrines "Christian kings may err", so in their duty to God. But "who shall judge?" (a). God alone might judge, but how could that have any influence on the relation between sovereign and subject? How could God's disapprobation, which would be a

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(a) Lev. 328

personal affair between himself and the sovereign, be a guarantee of good behaviour in the future, or an assurance of redress?

There might be little or no chance of establishing any case against the sovereign, or for a subject who had suffered because of the sovereign's breach of the law of God, of obtaining redress. Nevertheless it is the sovereign's duty to obey the laws of God, so that the paradox remains; and we must consider what can be said to mitigate it. We may note at once that the sovereign declares what the laws of God are, but the laws are prior. Those that are laws of nature, we have seen, are discovered by natural reason. They become known in this way to the sovereign, and to all his subjects. All will agree as to what they are. There are also divine laws which are made known by revelation; and as to the import of these it is a hard fact that disputes can and do arise; and in the opinion of Hobbes it is the sovereign's prerogative to settle such disputes, and to declare what the laws of God are. He does not make these laws as he makes the civil law; so that although the civil law does not bind him, he is bound by the laws of God.

There is the same kind of difficulty, and perhaps a more elusive one, in the understanding of what precisely is the relation between the law of nature and the civil law. In

Leviathan Hobbes says that the law of nature and the civil law contain each other (a); in De Cive, that it is impossible for the civil law to be against the law of nature (b). Are these merely loose expressions of the close liaison between the law of nature and the civil law? In general these are not contradictory and there is no incompatibility between them. If in any state the civil laws were purely arbitrary in the sense of capricious, there certainly would be incompatibility; but in fact the overwhelming probability is that the sovereign will not make capricious laws. Hobbes certainly holds that it would be a breach of the sovereign's duty to God to make capricious laws, and what Hobbes holds to be duty he implies will in almost all cases be carried out, and for a practical reason which we shall consider in a moment. We may note a seeming inconsistency in the expressions used by Hobbes as he defines the relation between the law of nature and the civil law. The civil law is said to contain the law of nature (c); these two are said to contain each other (d); the law of nature is said to embrace the civil law (e). On the face of it there seems good ground to suppose that Hobbes was writing loosely, and simply wished to emphasise the close

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(a) Lev. 141

(b) E. II 190, 191

(c) Lev. 328

(d) Lev. 141



harmony which would nearly always exist between the unwritten and the written law. But it may be that he was writing more precisely than at first sight appears.

There is an illuminating passage in the Elements in which Hobbes defines the relative attributes of the laws of nature. They are dictates of natural reason; they are moral laws because they concern men's manners and conversation one toward another; they are divine laws in respect of their author; Almighty God (a). We may pass over the last item as being an article of faith and outside the scope of any discussion. Let us consider the first item. The laws of nature are said to be dictates of natural reason, and we may consider what this definition entails. That there is need for any law at all is because of the facts of human nature; and it is through an understanding of human nature by introspection or observation that we are led to the discovery of the laws of nature. This set of precepts, our reason concludes, is the only code appropriate to the case. Nothing but a universal observance of these laws can secure peace and co-operation between men. Because the truth of this is apprehended by reason, it is appropriate to call the laws of nature dictates of reason. Our reason takes us further. There can be no universal observance of the laws of nature, which demand a certain amount of self-sacrifice, without a sovereign power to keep men in

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(a) EL. Part I Ch. XVIII (1)

awe. Although Hobbes would agree with Spinoza that "a man who renders everyone their due because he fears the gallows, acts under the sway and compulsion of others, and cannot be called just" (a), yet it is a fact that without such fear many would not voluntarily obey the laws of nature. Reciprocal observance of these laws must be guaranteed. Reason discovers the laws of nature and commands obedience to them; reason informs us of the necessity of a sovereign. The sovereign's raison d'etre is to insure obedience to the laws of nature, because <sup>unless</sup> there is obedience society will be dissolved. All this is incontrovertible and will be understood by everyone who reasons well. It will certainly be understood by the sovereign, unless he is unreasoning. He enjoys his overlordship to guarantee universal observance of the laws of nature; unless there is such observance the commonwealth, his commonwealth, the commonwealth of which he is head and representative, will fall apart. The reasoning sovereign, therefore, prompted by the most elementary regard for self-interest, will incorporate the laws of nature in his civil code. In this sense the civil law can be said to contain the laws of nature. It is in this sense that Hobbes is able to assert <sup>that</sup> the sovereign's reason, like the sovereign's conscience, has a vicarious function (b). There is no abstract common measure by which controversies arising from the difference of private judgment

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(a) T.T.P. IV 58 .

(b) E. II 196, E. III 225

may be settled, so that "the reason of some man, or men, must supply the place thereof; and that man or men is he or they that have the sovereign power" (a). We may assume that, just as in the interpretation of religion, where the right is indisputably the sovereign's, he is guided by, and ought to be guided by, ordained experts, so in interpreting the laws of nature he would take advice. And as we have seen Hobbes himself gives a good deal of advice as to the kind of laws the sovereign ought to make. The gist of this is that in making laws and interpreting them the sovereign must be judicious and not arbitrary or oppressive.

It is because of the indispensable function of the sovereign to ensure mutual observance of the laws of nature and so maintain the commonwealth<sup>in</sup> being, that Hobbes will concede no right even of passive disobedience except in the most extreme circumstances. "The will of doing or omitting ought depends on the opinion of the good and evil of the reward or punishment which a man conceives he shall receive by the act or omission: so as the actions of all men are ruled by the opinions of each, wherefore by evident and necessary inference we may understand that it very much concerns the interest of peace, that no opinions or doctrines be delivered to citizens, by which they may imagine that either by right they may not obey the laws of the city .... or that it is lawful to resist

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(a) E. IV 225

him (the sovereign), or that a less punishment remains for him that denies, than him that yields obedience". If, for example, anyone holds out a threat of eternal death to incite to disobedience, and is followed, "the city itself is altogether dissolved" (a). "There is so much obedience joined to the absolute right of the chief ruler", Hobbes says a little later in *De Cive*, "as is necessarily required for the government of the city, that is to say, so much as that right of his may not be granted in vain ... But the obligation to perform this (simple obedience) grows not immediately from that contract by which we have conveyed all our right on the city, but immediately from hence, that without obedience the city's right would be frustrate, and by consequence there would be no city constituted"(b).

We have assumed that the sovereign will enforce observance of the laws of nature in his dominions; he will himself also honour those laws in his dealings with his subjects. Hobbes makes it clear that he holds this to be true even of an infidel sovereign. There is the argument, for example, in Chapter 43 of *Leviathan*, that no infidel king would be so unreasonable as to persecute or to put to death a Christian subject; and in *Behemoth* it is argued that no sovereign (and this includes Christians and infidels) would be so unhuman

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(a) E. II 78

(b) E. II 82

as to make a general, or even a particular, law commanding patricide (a). The tenor of these and other passages is that the sovereign will be reasonable; just as reason and common sense will prompt him to embody the laws of nature in his civil code, so they will insure that he will observe these precepts in his treatment of his subjects, and this because of the demands of elementary self-interest.

The second part of the definition, describing the laws of nature as "moral laws because they concern men's manners and conversation one towards another", as far as it has a bearing on the status of the laws of nature in the commonwealth, must be understood in the light of the distinction we have drawn between the regulation or regulations between subject and subject on the one hand, and the relations between sovereign and subject on the other. This second part of the definition informs us that the laws of nature are in general terms, and it is the civil law which fills in the details. "Theft, murder, adultery, and all injuries are forbid by the laws of nature; but what is to be called theft, what murder, what adultery, what injury in a citizen, this is not to be determined by the natural, but by the civil law. For not every taking away of the thing which one possesseth, but only another man's goods is theft; but what is ours and what another's, is a question belonging to the civil law" (b). The

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(a) E. VI 227

(b) E. II 85



laws of nature lay down general principles; the sovereign makes laws to apply them in particular circumstances and conditions. We may note that in passing his laws the sovereign must see that they are "good" as defined by Hobbes, and the laws must also be general laws in the sense that they apply impartially to all citizens and not only to a particular individual or group. Hobbes gives no right to the oppression of minorities. "It belongs to the same chief power to make some common rules for all men, and to declare them publicly, by which everyman may know what may be called his, what another's, what just, what unjust, what honest, what dishonest, what good, what evil, that is summarily, what is to be done, what to be avoided in our common course of life" (a).

Although Hobbes may be taken as assuming that the sovereign will both incorporate the laws of nature in his civil code, and obey these laws in his treatment of his subjects, he does make provision for the case of civil laws which are in variance with the laws of nature, and for the case of the sovereign's violation of the laws of nature in his dealings with his subjects. We have seen that it is within the province of the civil law to define what kind of actions constitute theft, adultery and the like. The law of nature prohibits theft and adultery, and the civil law keeps in line and prohibits the actions which it has defined as constituting

theft and adultery. The civil law making this prohibition must, we have noted, be a general law applicable to all citizens. The distinction between general and particular laws of the sovereign is noted in Behemoth (a). Every command of the sovereign, whether general or particular, which accords with the laws of nature must be obeyed. In this context it is further asserted that general laws which are at variance with the laws of nature, as a general law commanding patricide, must be obeyed; although it is argued that no sovereign would make such a law. As the passage is worded an implication is that special laws at variance with the laws of nature, as a special command to commit patricide, need not be obeyed. In De Cive, also, Hobbes had expressed himself on the subject of civil laws which are at variance with the laws of nature, and the ruling appears to apply to both general and special commands. He has been writing of the necessity of obedience, but he proceeds, "it is one thing if I say, I give you right to command what you will; another if I say, I will do whatsoever you command. And the command may be such as I would rather die than do it" (b). Such are commands to kill oneself, or to execute a parent. The fact is that a sovereign who makes general laws which are at variance with the laws of nature will find himself in trouble, as it is only by observance of the laws of nature that society can hold together.

The natural punishment for negligent government, Hobbes

(a) E. VI. 227

(b) E. II 82

asserts in Chapter 31 of Leviathan, is rebellion; and the risk of rebellion will certainly be run if the sovereign makes general laws which are oppressive or which violate the principles of natural law. On this point Spinoza is more explicit than Hobbes, whose inclination was to say little about rebellion. Spinoza argues in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Chapter XX, that it may be doubted whether the sovereign has any right to do anything which cannot be done without extreme peril to himself and the state. The sovereign's right is limited by his power (a); so that general laws which may provoke rebellion and prove <sup>ny</sup> obligatory, are outside the sovereign's right.

The threat of rebellion may well restrain the sovereign who reasons, so that he will make the laws of nature statutory in his realm, and submit himself to the dictates of these laws in his treatment of his subjects as a whole. Self-interest, the motive for all human behaviour, will guarantee this much. But there is still the possibility of mistreatment of individuals and of minorities, and Hobbes certainly allows for this possibility and seeks to make provision for it. In an interesting article, *"The Law of Humanity and the Limits of State Power"*, ~~in the Philosophical Quarterly of~~ *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1953, Ebbinghaus suggests that oppression of all the subjects, although it tends strongly to defeat the purpose for which the individuals submitted to one sovereign power -

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(a) T. T. P. XX

namely that there should be a guarantee of observance of the laws of humanity - "does not overpass the competence of the supreme power as such"; and because absolutism is inseparable from sovereignty, if one is to enjoy the security which a sovereign affords, one must not complain of any inconvenience which may flow from the wielding of unfettered power. So much for general oppression; but Ebbinghaus thinks that oppression or persecution of a minority violates the laws of humanity in a way that is not permissible even for an absolute sovereign; but he does not suggest how the sovereign is to be checked in such an abuse of his authority, nor does he suggest in what way the persecuted minority is to obtain redress. These views are in partial agreement with Hobbes. We have seen that according to some statements of Hobbes all general laws of the sovereign, that is laws made binding on all the citizens impartially, are to be obeyed whether or not they are oppressive. But Hobbes does not think any reasoning sovereign will make oppressive general laws because of the fear of rebellion. Hobbes would also agree that any discrimination against a minority, or an individual, would be a breach of the laws of nature, which are often spoken of as rules of equity. But from this point Hobbes goes further than Ebbinghaus. Hobbes lived long before the age of mechanised oppression, and also at a time when the executive was far



less efficient than it is to-day. Nobody, he thought, who was ordered to injure or kill either himself or a near relative, could be expected to obey; and he seems to have envisaged escape from the reach of authority as a means of self-protection against such an order. If a man were arrested rightly or wrongfully he could scarcely be expected to go quietly, although his imprisonment would be an injustice, and perhaps a "wrong", in respect of which in the nature of things there could be no redress. On the other hand Hobbes appears to have had more faith in common sense self-interest as an insurance against the persecution of minorities or individuals. At any rate he certainly held, as we have seen, that even an infidel king would not be so stupid as to persecute or put to death a Christian subject. If one argues that persecution is a fact, Hobbes seems to shrug his shoulders. The Christian's duty is not to resist, but to accept a martyr's death. And in the most unlikely event of the sovereign ordering any particular subject to kill himself, or execute a parent - such a command as the subject "would rather die than do it" (a) - the subject may disobey, but must accept the consequences with fortitude.

One other case must be considered. When the subject is ordered to do something against his conscience, or to commit an immoral act, he must <sup>in general</sup> obey, and is exempt from culpability.

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(a) E. II 82



As for the subject's faith which may seem to be outraged "it is internal and invisible; they have the license that Naaman had, and need not put themselves in danger for it". If they do refuse to obey "they ought to expect their reward in heaven, and not complain of their lawful sovereign; much less make war upon him" (a).

Let us now consider the passage in De Cive to which we have referred, the text of which is as follows:- "No civil law whatsoever, which tends not to a reproach of the deity, (in respect of whom cities themselves have no rights of their own, and can not be said to make laws), can possibly be against the law of nature" (b). This is an extremely difficult passage, and it must be admitted that little can be added to the words themselves by way of removing the difficulty. We have perhaps to elucidate as far as we can by reference to the context, and confess that we have not reached a full understanding of Hobbes. It is clear that Hobbes refers to logical, and not causal, impossibility. "For the law of nature", he writes, ".... commands us to keep contracts; and therefore also to perform obedience, when we have covenanted obedience ... But all subjects do covenant to obey his commands that <sup>hath</sup> both the supreme power, that is to say the civil laws ..." (c). It is our duty under the law of nature to honour the agreement we are deemed to have made one with another, and to obey <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~.

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(a) Lev. 328 (b) E. II 190, 191  
(c) E. II. 190

sovereign's law. "By the virtue of the natural law which forbids breach of covenant, the law of nature commands us to keep all the civil laws" (a). It is on this ground that the sweeping assertion which we have quoted, is made. Our interpretation of Hobbes's doctrine of the status of the laws of nature in the commonwealth, up to this point, may be stated thus: there is a very large degree of empirical certainty that the reasoning sovereign, prompted by enlightened self-interest, will both incorporate the laws of nature in his civil code, and consider himself bound by these laws in his relations with his subjects. The laws of nature, it is accepted, are immutable eternal rules of conduct, as well as intention: of "manners and conversation" as well as the thoughts of the heart. This interpretation of Hobbes's doctrine seems most inharmony with his many statements; but in the passage before us a different principle seems to be asserted. The duty of obedience is paramount, so that whatever kind of behaviour is enjoined by the civil law (with one accepted class of conduct) this cannot be against the law of nature.

It might be inferred from this that the laws of nature are observed simply by good intentions, whatever our behaviour is like, and this view is supported by some statements of Hobbes. "If the civil law command us to invade anything", he writes, "that invasion is not theft, adultery etc." (b). and as to

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(a) E. II 190

(b) E. II 191

commands of the sovereign which might be thought to belong to the excepted category - to those that do in fact violate the laws of nature - he writes: "But what (may some object) if a king, or a senate, or other sovereign person forbid us to believe in Christ? To this I answer that such forbidding is of no effect; because belief and unbelief never follow men's commands". To the further question, "what if we be commanded by our faithful prince to say with our tongue we believe not; must we obey such a command?" Hobbes replies, "Profession with the tongue is but an external thing, and no more than any other gesture whereby we signify our obedience; and wherein the Christian holding firmly in his heart the faith of Christ, hath the same liberty which the Prophet Elisha allowed to Naaman the Syrian" (a).

The view, however, that mere intention satisfies the laws of nature is plainly denied by most of the teaching of Hobbes on the subject. Let us confine ourselves to a limited inference from the De Cive passage asserting the impossibility of civil laws being against the laws of nature. We may agree simply that the laws of nature enjoin obedience to the sovereign as being a cardinal virtue. It is in view of this duty of obedience laid upon us by the laws of nature that they can be said to embrace the civil law. So that when Hobbes writes in an apparently contradictory way of the civil

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(a) Lev. 270

law containing the laws of nature, and of the law of nature embracing the civil law, he can be interpreted in different sense as emphasising <sup>n</sup>ow one, and <sup>n</sup>ow another aspect of the doctrine he asserts. This is stated in Leviathan as follows: "There can therefore be no contradiction between the laws of God, and the laws of a Christian commonwealth" (a).

As to the accepted category of civil laws - those which tend to a reproach of the deity and which are implied to be against the laws of nature - it is not easy to get a clear idea as to what kind of laws Hobbes has in mind. We have seen that he concedes that there are some laws (presumably either general or particular) which a man would rather die than obey, and which he may decline to obey at his own risk - that is to say he does not break the law of nature by disobedience. It is possible that such obnoxious civil commands are included in the category of civil laws regarded as a reproach to the deity; but on this point it is not possible to go beyond conjecture. In a moment we shall consider a little further the very limited right to disobedience which Hobbes allows to the subject, and the limited restrictions which he places on the rights of the sovereign; but first it may be worthwhile to close our immediate discussion of the relation between the laws of nature and the civil law, by setting out briefly in one paragraph the distinction which Hobbes draws between them.

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(a) Lev. 142



There is in Hobbes a radical antithesis between the law<sup>of</sup> of nature and the civil law (in spite of statements seeming almost to identify them). The law of nature is unwritten (a), and ignorance of it excuses no one (b). It is inscribed in human hearts (c) and all are to be taken to know what it is (d). The civil law on the other hand, is written law (e); and has no force at all unless duly promulgated, and brought to the notice of the subject (f). The law of nature binds in the court of conscience, and a breach of it is a sin against God. Breach of civil law is crime against the state for which punishment is meted out in the public courts of justice. The logical connecting link between the two kinds of law is in the fact that the law of nature enjoins obedience.

We have seen that the individual subject, while enjoying protection from fellow subjects and foreign enemies, is without redress for any suffering incurred through the sovereign's breach of the laws of nature. We have seen also that the sovereign may be expected to be judicious both as legislator and administrator. We have referred to Hobbes's provision for the possibility of improper acts of the sovereign as they affect the subject. We may now consider these in more detail. Certain not very clearly defined limits are set, in theory at any rate, to the sovereign's rights, in addition to the

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(a) Lev. 144  
(c) Lev. 281  
(e) Lev. 145

(b) Lev. 155  
(d) Lev. 144  
(f) Lev. 143, 156



general consideration that the sovereign's rights are natural rights, and any use or abuse of those rights "otherwise than right reason requires" is "sin against the laws of nature, that is against God" (a). That the sovereign has duties we have seen, though for non-performance it is difficult to see how he could be called to book by an injured individual, although from any general injury or oppression he will naturally be restrained by the fear of rebellion. There are also certain things he may not do, and we shall now try to sift the statements of Hobbes to find out what these are.

To begin with we shall refer again to the vexed question of morality. This is defined in De Cive as "justice and civil obedience, and observance of all natural laws" (b); and as justice really means the same thing for Hobbes as civil obedience, his definition would seem in fact to have two parts. Morality is obedience to the civil sovereign, coupled with observance of natural laws. But we have seen that the laws of nature, to the extent that they are concerned with outward behaviour are not at variance with the civil law, and as they enjoin obedience in almost all circumstances they amount to a sanction for most kinds of behaviour which are dutiful and obedient. Outward morality, then, is observance of the laws of the country, whatever their origin, whether simple commands of the sovereign, or natural laws deemed to be incorporated in

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(a) ~~E. II. 14~~ E. II. 83.

(b) E. II. 269.

the civil laws. We may add that according to Hobbes the subject owes a duty of obedience to an infidel sovereign, as well as to a Christian, which obedience constitutes moral action. This he considers to be proved by the indulgence granted to Naaman when escorting his master into the House of Rimmon (a). But does simple and unqualified obedience to the civil overlord express the whole duty of the subject, and embrace for him the beginning and ending of morality? Has he no separate and overriding responsibility to God? It is a fact that, whatever his desire and intention, Hobbes does not maintain complete consistency on his account. In both sides of his doctrine, in his materialism and in his Erastianism, he is forced to yield some ground.

One of his most remarkable departures from the all round creed and at that a departure in principle and not in detail, is in his admission in some contexts of a distinction between spiritual and temporal, notwithstanding his assertion that "temporal" and "spiritual" are words invented to make men mistake their lawful sovereign (b). By spiritual he tells us are understood those things "which have their foundation on the authority and office of Christ, and, unless Christ had taught them, could not have been known; and all other things are temporal" (c). In his elucidation of this definition it

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(a) Lev. 270, 328

(b) Lev. 252

(c) E. II. 270

transpires that to the temporal (since it is reason's acquisition) belongs the definition of what is spiritual, and what temporal. The effect of this is to relegate to the spiritual only what the temporal authority defines as a "mystery of faith" (a). Hobbes never denies that there are such objects of thought or concepts, but his language tends always to disparage them, and to direct us away from them at once to more important considerations. The spiritual sphere, according to his account, is severely limited; but it does exist and is an anomaly in his creed.

Since all definition belongs to the temporal, it is the business of the temporal authority to define the laws of nature; and not only to define, but to interpret and enforce. It is, however, accepted that the laws of nature were there before definition, interpretation, or civil enforcement; and we are to discuss the various passages, some of which have already been referred to, in which Hobbes admits that by certain kinds of breaches of the laws of nature the sovereign is not only guilty of sin against God, but creates a situation in which the subject is absolved from his duty of obedience. The sovereign expresses his will and gives commands by means of civil laws, and there is the admission in some contexts of the possibility of conflict between the civil law and the law of nature, in spite of the statement in *De Cive* already quoted,

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(a) E. II. 271

that it is (logically) impossible for the civil law to command anything against the law of nature.

As all sovereigns are bound in the sight of God by the laws of nature, it is the duty of all sovereigns to obey them (a). The laws of nature tell the sovereign, for example, how to act and what to avoid in his relations with other sovereigns; and the sanction for behaviour on this plane is his own conscience, as there are no courts of natural justice, "but in the conscience only; where not man but God reigneth" (b). Hobbes gives an example in *De Cive* of a possible breach by the sovereign of the law of nature as it has a bearing on his relations with his subjects: "If they cause not such doctrine and worship to be taught and practised, or permit a contrary to be taught and practised, as they believe necessarily conduceth to the eternal salvation of their subjects" (c). In these circumstances he considers that "it is manifest they (sovereigns) act against their conscience", which means that they sin against the laws of nature. He prefers, however, in this place to leave the difficulty in suspense. There is again in *De Cive* the dictum which we have had before us already: "No civil law, which tends not to the reproach of the deity ... can possibly be against the laws of nature" (d). For the moment we may simply emphasise the saving clause.

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(a) Lev. 173  
(c) E. II 168

(b) Lev. 189  
(d) E. II. 190



Referring to all civil laws, and bearing in mind the possibility that <sup>they</sup> may offend against the laws of nature, Hobbes lays it down that subject to certain principles of interpretation, the law must be obeyed unless obedience imperils life or limb; or if obedience is genuinely against the subject's conscience, he must accept a martyr's death. Disobedience, whenever the right is conceded, must in all cases be passive. In no case has the subject a right to complain of injury, and allowing for the right to sue the sovereign for debt, conceded one might say as a technicality, I do not think he has any other redress for loss or suffering he may incur. Hobbes cites the case of Uriah the Hittite with the comment that although David sinned against God he did no injury in the sense of injustice to Uriah. It is in fact impossible for any civil law that is properly interpreted to be unjust to the subject, in one sense of the word unjust. An outwardly just man is one who obeys the civil law, and the judgment of just and unjust, as these terms refer to actions, belongs to the sovereign. In this sense justice and injustice have come into being with society, and had no existence in the state of nature. There is of course <sup>the</sup> other kind of justice and injustice, to which references are found in the works. There is justice which is a "rule of reason" (a), and injustice which is a "disposition or aptitude to do evil" (b), there is justice

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(a) Lev. 76

(b) Lev. 77



which is a "proneness and inclination" (a) and a "constant will and endeavour"(b), and injustice which is the so-called righteousness performed by a man "for fear of the punishment annexed unto the law", and unrighteousness committed "by reason of the iniquity in his mind" (c). But these do not come within the purview of the sovereign, and except as they issue in action are no concern of the civil power. But the sovereign, of course, may be guilty of such inner injustice. He would be guilty if he were to make a law contrary to the laws of nature (d).

Although the civil law is concerned with actions and not thoughts, in the interpretation of the law the intention of the legislator is an essential consideration. There is a presumption that the intention was equity. Hobbes stresses the importance of reason in understanding civil law, that reason is the guide in interpretation, and that judges must apply the rules of reason and equity to the letter of the law. In the Hobbesian state the judges have a very important function to perform. Over the whole sphere not explicitly covered by law - and Hobbes holds it to be a duty of the sovereign not to multiply legislation: laws should be few and economical - the law of equity, or the law of nature prevails.

We come now to a consideration of those civil laws which

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(a) *HL. Part I, XVI, (4)*  
(c) *E. II. 33*

(b) *HL. Part II, VI, (10)*  
(d) *E. II. 33*

are both contrary to the laws of nature, and which the subject has a right to disobey. It must be emphasised that the field of these laws is much narrower than the field of civil laws contrary to the laws of nature; and many of the latter are still binding on the subject who must obey; just as in the Jewish state every law had to be obeyed whether it was equitable or not, unless it commanded a denial of divine providence or idolatry. "And if a king or priest having the sovereign authority, had commanded somewhat else to be done which was against the laws (of God), that had been his sin, and not his subject's; whose duty it is not to dispute but to obey the commands of his superiors" (a). It is a repeated assertion of Hobbes that the sovereign may sin against God, and in fact does sin every time he commits a breach of the law of nature, but that in general this does not affect the obligation of the subject. Now for the exceptions. Mention has been made already of the category of laws and commands which purport to override the subject's absolute right to bodily protection and safety, and which the subject is not obliged to obey. No subject may be ordered to kill or maim himself (b); no subject may be deprived of his right to protect himself (c); and there are the provisions in Leviathan exempting men of feminine courage, unless they are volunteers, from culpability

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(a) E. II 249

(b) Lev. 114

(c) Lev. 116

for showing cowardice in battle. In this case because of the intractability of the human material punishment would not do any good, so that a law prescribing punishment for cowardice could not rightly be enforced against excessively timid men.

In addition to these provisions for the citizen's elementary right to protection, for which in fact he surrendered all other rights, Hobbes refers in various ways to much less precise and clear cut limitations to the sovereign's legislative prerogative. These all have a bearing on the subject's faith and duty to God. We may say to begin with that although the subject has a right to disobey, he has no right to resist. His duty is single and severe, and presumably out of harmony with his paramount right to self-preservation. He must accept if need be a martyr's death (a). Hobbes perhaps feels that the prospect will be too much for most would-be dissenters, although he allows that bodily martyrdom is to be preferred to eternal damnation (b).

In his cautious submission of a very restricted case for civil disobedience, Hobbes refers to the Jewish polity under Abraham and his successors. Commands to deny the existence or providence of God, or to do somewhat expressly contrary to his honour, as to commit idolatry, might be disregarded. "In all other things they (the Jews) ought to obey their princes" (c).

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(a) E. II 299, 315      EL. Part II, VI (14)

(b) EL. Part II, VI, (14)

(c) E. II 249

Generalising from this Hobbes asserts the principle that disobedience is unjust whenever obedience is "without hazard of eternal salvation" (a). The reason is obvious: if the sovereign "command us to do those things which are punished with eternal death, it were madness not rather to choose to die a natural death, than by obeying to die eternally" (b). In the Christian dispensation there are, says Hobbes, only two things necessary to salvation. These are faith and obedience (c). Faith he maintains is always confidence in somebody, or belief in the truth of a proposition (d). The faith necessary to salvation is assent to the proposition, Jesus is Christ (e). This necessary article carries with it certain subsidiary points of doctrine, assent to which is implied in acceptance of the single necessary article. Belief in the existence of God, for example, is implied; and conversely denial of God's existence amounts to a denial of the necessary article (f); and in like manner if the sovereign claims to be worshipped as a god, or commands a direct affront to God (g). In this way Hobbes shows that there is no real difference between the old dispensation and the new in respect of what kind of faith is, and what is not, necessary to salvation. It should be noted that Hobbes admits in De Cive that it may be the Christian's duty to

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(a) E. II 299  
(c) Lev. 322  
(e) Lev. 322

(b) E. II 299  
(d) Lev. 31  
(f) Lev. 326

(h) Lev. 361. E. II 222, 223



assent outwardly to other articles of the Christian religion, and performance or non-performance of the duty has a direct bearing on his salvation; but a consideration of this comes under the heading of obedience about which something will be said in a moment (a).

The necessary article of faith, then, the Anum necessarium, is, Jesus is Christ; and in a Christian commonwealth a command of the sovereign to deny <sup>this</sup> article must be disobeyed. Beyond this, other points may be true but not necessary; and yet it is a fact that controversies of religion are altogether about points not necessary to salvation (b). The case of Hobbes is that it is not only a danger to the state and therefore subversive for these controversies to continue, but it is also fruitless. The disputants condemn themselves. It is the sovereign's right to decide all subsidiary doctrine, and even though he makes mistakes, even though he makes "some superstruction of hay and stubble", it is the subject's duty to accept the doctrine and to conform at least outwardly (c). As for the single case in which disobedience is held to be the subject's duty, Hobbes is of the opinion that no Christian sovereign would command a denial of the fundamental tenet of the Christian religion, and even an infidel sovereign, as we have seen, would not be so unreasonable as to martyr a

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(a) E. II 307

(b) E. II 316

(c) Lev. 328



Christian subject for refusing to deny his faith. An infidel king would neither put the Christian subject to death nor persecute him, because a Christian is bound by his religion to obey the sovereign's laws in all other respects (a). A Christian, in fact, is a law-abiding citizen. To complete the picture Hobbes has something to say about the <sup>conversion</sup> ~~conversion~~ to Christianity of a subject of an infidel sovereign. The gist of his remarks is that in spiritual matters which concern the worship of God, some Christian church is to be followed, so that disobedience may be the convert's duty. But it is made clear that his course, as of all others who on grounds of faith have a duty to disobey, is to accept a martyr's death (b).

It remains briefly to say something about obedience. Obedience, like faith, is necessary to salvation; and the obedience thought about is obedience to the laws of God, which Hobbes divides into <sup>two</sup> categories: there are natural laws which are discovered by reason; and there are revealed laws (c). The latter are made known directly to prophets whose commission it is to publish them (d). No-one, however, is obliged to believe a prophet unless he can show his credentials, that is work miracles (e). As miracles have now ceased (f), it is implied that prophecy as a means of discovery of God's laws is

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(a) Lev. 328  
(c) Lev. 151  
(e) Lev. 201

(b) E. II 315  
(d) Lev. 152  
(f) Lev. 202

obsolete. Since apostolic times the revealed law of God has been that contained in holy scripture, and there have been no additions. According to Hobbes we must accept as divine law the interpretation of scripture made with the authority of the sovereign by properly ordained clergymen (a). For us, this is part of the law of God obedience to which is necessary for our salvation. I will quote here a passage from the Elements which is in complete harmony with later expositions: not only is faith necessary to salvation "but also the observations of the law of nature which is that for which a man is called just or righteous (in that sense in which justice is taken not for the absence of all guilt, but for the endeavour and constant will to do that which is just)" (b). Obedience necessary to salvation is more than mere outward conformity. God looks at the heart where the sovereign's writ does not run. And just as faith without works is dead; so also works without faith are dead also. "And by those dead works is understood, not the obedience and justice of the inward man, but the opus operatum, or external action, proceeding from fear of punishment, or from vain glory and desire to be honoured of men" (c). Outward conformity certainly is the Christian's duty, but although the state can constrain obedience, it cannot alter opinion: and because of the transmuting effect of the just

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(a) Lev. 203, 209. E. II 296, 297

(b) EL. Part II, VI (10). See also Lev. 281

(c) EL. Part II, VI (10)

intention there should be neither compunction nor cavil over the duty of following the civil rule in all that concerns the outward worship of God. But the Christian should never neglect that obedience to God, which is an attitude of mind and "which must concur to our salvation" (a).

As Hobbes discusses his Erastian principles an impression is created unavoidably that he attached very great importance to religion in the state. It was perhaps inevitable that he should as he wrote in the middle of the seventeenth century. But the weight he attached to religion was not because of an appreciation of its peculiar value and special function as traditionally conceived. He has been almost universally held to be a detractor of religion in the normal sense. He conceded to religion, his critics have agreed, a subordinate status, and that grudgingly; he allowed it no independence, no autonomy. And although he did not deny the existence of spirits - such a denial in fact is very near to direct atheism (b); he taught - he allowed their existence only in some kind of material form, "be it never so subtile" (c). He restricted thus drastically the freedom of faith which Christian theologians have always felt it necessary to claim. There is no sense in which a spirit could be here and there and everywhere at the same time. Being body like everything else they have location in space,

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(a) Bl. Part II, VI. (11)  
(c) Lev. 211

(b) Lev. 39

just as the scripture speaks of the Spirit of God as abiding in men (a). Many incomprehensible tenets of Christian theology were thus disposed of. In fact for Hobbes what is incomprehensible - unless it be an admissable mystery of faith - must be false, because the truth can always be grasped by reason.

What Hobbes calls religion, in fact, is a body of dogma of the same texture as the dry bones of his civil science. There is no immortal soul, he argues; there is no soul that can exist independently of the body. The scripture teaches no such thing. Nor is any man immortal otherwise than by the resurrection on the last day, (except Enos and Elias) (b). The admission of the resurrection, and the special case of Enos and Elias, was unavoidable as these are taught and recorded in scripture in such a way as to preclude special interpretation. But he is able to explain the <sup>meaning</sup> of Christ's words that the departed patriarchs live in God, who "is the God not of the dead but of the living". "Though at that time", say Hobbes, "the patriarchs and many other faithful men were dead, yet as it is in the text, they lived in God; that is they were written in the book of life with them that were absolved of their sins, and ordained to life eternal at the resurrection" (c).

Human beings are solely physical bodies, which die, and are miraculously revived at the resurrection; and although the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom inhabited by spiritual

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(a) EL. Part I, XI (5)

(b) Lev. 243

(c) Lev. 243



bodies, the meaning of spiritual, like that of spirit, is such that we are restricted in our imagination to corporeal beings inhabiting a corporeal city, not less material if perhaps less gross, than the men and cities of our sense experience here and now. Certainly the kingdom of God, to begin after the resurrection, will be an earthly kingdom, where Messiah will rule in his human nature as king of his elect by virtue of pact. The name, kingdom of God, Hobbes declares, refers to "a real not a metaphorical kingdom; and so taken not only in the Old Testament but the New": so that the sublime metaphor of St. Paul, the temple not made with hands, refers to something not different in kind from the temples of stone or wood that he could see in any city of his time. And having "established" this, by his exegesis, as Clarendon complains, he proceeds to place hell as well as heaven on earth (a). This also is "proved" from scripture. In the earthly kingdom of heaven to be set up after the resurrection Christ will act as God's viceregent on earth, like any other sovereign. "He - Christ - is to be king then, no otherwise than as subordinate or viceregent of God the Father, as Moses was in the wilderness; and as the High Priests were before the reign of Saul; and as the kings were after it" (b). With these words Hobbes seems to stray into the Arian heresy. The important

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(a) Lev. 244

(b) Lev. 244



implication of all this doctrine most liberally "proved" from the Old and New Testaments, is seen in Chapter XLII which is of power ecclesiastical. Here we see that since the setting up of Christ's kingdom is to be deferred till after the resurrection, and now Christ exercises no authority, so his ministers can now exercise no more authority than their master.

It seems appropriate here to discuss Hobbes's views of religion. He has different things to say in different contexts, and although these seem to be widely different in character, they have it in common that in all of them religion is regarded as intimately involved in the art of government or the inculcation of obedience. In the explicit statements of Hobbes it is possible to distinguish three seemingly inconsistent approaches. There is the approach which concerns itself with the natural seeds of religion. Secondly there is the approach naturally dictated by his doctrine of sovereignty and the state. In this religion is regarded as law. Thirdly there is the egoistical approach, in which religion, and especially worship, its outward manifestation, are treated as natural expressions, or gratifications, of deep seated desires.

Hobbes suggests that in man belief in God is innate and ineradicable. The "opinions of a deity, and powers invisible and supernatural ... can never be so abolished out of human nature, but that new religions may again be made to spring out

of them" (a). And Hobbes considers the opinion or belief in a deity is justified; "it is impossible to make any profound enquiry into natural causes without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal" (b). And he makes use of a version of the argument from design: "by the visible things of this world, and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God" (c). It is in fact, necessary to enquire, in this respect, into natural causes, so that the innate belief, or credulity, may be rightly canalised, and the propensity to create innumerable sorts of Gods according to the innumerable variety of fancy, be frustrated (d). He sets out in Chapter XII of Leviathan, his views of the natural origin of religion. "In these four things, opinion of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion of what men fear, and taking things casual for prognostics, consisteth the natural seed of religion" (e). He goes on to suggest that these seeds of religion have been cultivated both by founders of commonwealths, and by men under the commandment of God, and for the same purpose, to inculcate obedience; although conjointly God instituted the true religion by means of Abraham to overcome superstition. Religion, then, even when it is divine politics, is a means to an end.

The first seed, opinion of ghosts, is the animistic

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{a} Lev 60  
{c} Lev. 53

{b} Lev. 53  
{d} Lev. 53, 54

{e} Lev. 56

propensity of primitive man at work, who, Hobbes declares, has called almost everything a God or a devil. The second seed, ignorance of second causes, is a condition for operation of the first. The animistic Gods, created in man's image, have generally been made capricious, angry and revengeful, and such as to inspire fear, (designedly so by the wily legislators of the gentiles) and have been accorded by the ignorant the worship of abject appeasement. This is what he styles "devotion to what men fear". Lastly, the authors of the religions of the gentiles, have "added innumerable other superstitious ways of divination". So arises religion. It is not a noble picture, but we must remind ourselves that here Hobbes talks of the religion of the gentiles.

God himself has, on the other hand, by supernatural revelation, planted religion (a). Hobbes argues somewhat as follows: The religions of the gentiles were specifically inculcated as a part of policy, to induce obedience by trading on natural fear and creating a range of bogus sanctions. God also has made for himself a kingdom, has given it laws and has implanted religion; the laws are concerned with the relation between man and man, and between man and God, and are part of the religion (b). The religions of gentiles and the religion of God are alike in this respect; both are Erastian. Both also have their roots in human nature; only in the one case it

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(a) Lev. 60

(b) Lev. 60

is ignorant, and in the other enlightened by supernatural revelation.

Secondly there is the approach appropriate to one holding Hobbes's view of the state. Religion is simply law, law with peculiar sanction, and is an adjunct to government. Founders of states have traded on natural animism, or superstition, to keep the people in obedience. They have impressed on people's minds that the precepts concerning religion which they, the founders, have enjoined; do not come from their own fancy, but are the dictate of some God; that what their law forbids is also displeasing to the Gods; that there are certain ceremonies to be gone through by which the anger of the Gods may be appeased. "There is no nation in the world", he declares in Behemoth; "whose religion is not established, and receives not its authority from the laws of that nation" (a). The true religion, also, which comes from God is an integral part of the state. "In the Kingdom of God, the policy, and laws civil, are part of religion; and therefore the distinction of temporal and spiritual domination hath there no place" (b). Spinoza argues similarly in <sup>the</sup> Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, Chapter VII, that the mosaic law was simply the civil law of the Jewish state. The object of religion, false and true, according to Hobbes, is to make men outwardly obedient; since the state can constrain obedience but not alter opinion (c), but opinion is

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(a) E. VI. 221

(b) Lev. 60

(c) E. VI 242



of little consequence as long as it is kept to itself.

Thirdly and briefly, the egoistical approach. The outward expression of religion is worship, and the object of worship is power. The worship we do to God "proceeds from our duty, and is directed according to our capacity, by those rules of honour, that reason dictateth to be done by the weak to the more potent men, in hope of benefit, for fear of damage, or in thankfulness for good already received from them" (a).

All religions other than the true religion, according to Hobbes are superstition. And there is, he believes, a powerful tendency in mankind to superstituion; and this tendency is the more dangerous and irresistible among the ignorant. "Ignorance of natural causes", he says, "disposeth a man to credulity, so as to believe many times impossibilities" (b). And so he places us on our guard even against supernatural appurtenances of the true faith. A man may not have revelation of anything against natural reason, though truths above reason may be revealed (c); and granted reluctantly that God may reveal himself supernaturally to some, this must be guaranteed by some "probable token", and in our approach to supernatural revelation we are not to renounce our sense and experience, any more than our natural reason (d); for these three, sense, experience and reason, are talents put into our

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(a) Lev. 193

(b) Lev. 53

(c) Lev. 61

(d) Lev. 199



hands to negotiate, and not "to be folded up in the napkin of an implicit faith". Our duty to God and man may, in fact must, be learned from scripture by "wise and learned interpretation" and by "careful ratiocination": this is God's final revelation, and post apostolic claims to personal divine revelation may be discounted (a).

In all this, of course, Hobbes has not denied that there is, or has been, direct divine revelation to certain people. And along with the admission of prophets as special agents of God, he has allowed the fact of miracles. He could scarcely do anything else without a point blank repudiation of many Bible stories, and this he was not prepared to do; but how the fact of miracles can be reconciled with his doctrine of second causes remains unexplained. This part of the question will be considered in the next section; here we shall examine what Hobbes has to say about miracles in relation to prophecy and as credentials of prophets.

Hobbes is justifiably inclined to deny in general that anything against reason can exist. A man, for example, may have revelation of things <sup>above</sup> ~~about~~ natural reason, but not against it (b), and it is a neglect of the power of reason which leads to credulity. It is the unreasoning and ignorant man who is likely to interpret strange events, like the appearance of a rainbow or an eclipse, for which there are readily assignable

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(a) Lev. 202

(b) Lev. 61

natural causes, as miracles (a). In his discussion of miracles Hobbes appears sometimes to beg the question. He is concerned mainly with prophets, and claimants to inspiration and the power of prophecy. The performance of miracles, he asserts, is a criterion of the authenticity of the prophet's claim. No claim to prophecy is valid unless two conditions are fulfilled. The alleged prophet must work a miracle, and his teaching must be in agreement with established religious doctrine (b). The second condition is very important; no revolutionary doctrine may be taught. Hobbes defines a miracle as a strange occurrence which is not the production of natural causes (c); and this rules out unusual occurrences which may be wonderful but are not miraculous (d). Now it is easy to see how the two criteria he has named cut away the ground from the multitude of self-styled prophets among his contemporaries who in his opinion bedevilled church and state. He objects to these "prophets" because they teach a private interpretation of scripture, and a private doctrine. His answer is to make conformity of teaching with established and public doctrine a mark of true prophecy. As for miracles, he asserts roundly, "miracles now cease" (e). I take this statement to mean that he has not come across any case of a miracle in his own experience, he does not know of any

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(a) Lev. 236  
(d) Lev. 235

(b) Lev. 201  
(e) Lev. 202

(c) Lev. 235

authentic case in the experience of other people, and he does not believe any of the stories of miracles which have been recorded and handed down since the time of the apostles. Claims to prophecy, therefore, are bogus. I am not sure how far this argument is legitimate. Would-be prophets are objected to because they teach unauthorised doctrine, and so the teaching of authorised doctrine is declared to be the mark of the true prophet. Another mark is the performance of miracles, which are carefully defined (with the fact that they are the mark of the true prophet incorporated in the definition) and then declared to be obsolete. Nevertheless, the argument shows up the dilemma in which Hobbes was placed.

No Christian can possibly make an outright denial of the possibility of miracles, because the Christian faith is founded on a miracle - the resurrection, Hobbes therefore (who I cannot help feeling was highly sceptical) bent his discourse with liberal adaptations of scripture to limit the province of miracles. There have been no miracles since the apostles; and such miracles as have been performed have been performed by the immediate hand of God, and not, for example, by a created spirit (a); so that the magic and enchantment by which the magicians of Pharoah seemed to turn their rods into snakes, were in reality a clever deception (b). In fact there was no miracle then, such as God had performed when Moses threw down

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(a) Lev. 237

(b) Lev. 238

his rod which was really and not only apparently transformed into a serpent (a). But what logical ground there could be for holding the one to be deceptive appearance and the other authentic reality it is hard to understand. The effect of Hobbes's discourse undoubtedly is to disparage miracles and promote doubt in the possibility of such occurrences.

Hobbes asserts without qualification, as an empirical fact, that miracles have ceased. There are many, however, who still believe in miracles and he is obliged to take note of this circumstance. Nothing can be done to alter the opinion of the persistently credulous, and in fact it is neither lawful nor desirable for the state to attempt to enforce scepticism, because "thought is free" (b). If private reason is disposed to give credit to "those acts which have been given out as miracles" (as for example the act of a priest allegedly transforming bread into the body of Christ) a private man is at liberty to believe (c). "But when it comes to confession of that faith, the private man must submit to the public; that is to say to God's lieutenant" (d). Anyone who hears of a miracle must "consult the lawful church, that is to say the lawful head thereof" (e) (the sovereign) who will pronounce on the authenticity of the reported event. Hobbes's treatment of what for him must have been a difficult question

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(a) Lev. 238  
(d) Lev. 240

(b) Lev. 240  
(e) Lev. 239

(c) Lev. 240



was characteristic. Out of it the authority of the sovereign emerges unimpaired.

Hobbes's passive scepticism is reflected in his discussion of demons, which he places in the same category as other "idols of the brain". He denies, as we have seen, that there are any non-spatial existences; and the use of the term "incorporeal spirit" implies a contradiction, and is to say in effect that there is no angel or spirit at all. Similarly "ghosts, fairies, hobgoblins, and the like apparitions" are "no part of the subject of natural philosophy" as they have no real existence but are the imaginary inhabitants of men's brains (a). The whole of Chapter XXXIV of Leviathan on the signification of spirit, angel and inspiration seems to reflect the outlook of the complete sceptic. The word "inspiration" in the scripture, he says, is used metaphorically only; and when the graces of God are said to be poured in or infused, it does not imply that the graces are "bodies to be carried hither and thither and to be poured into men, as into barrels" (b). Plainly he is sceptical of a face value interpretation of the Old Testament when God is said to speak to Moses and other prophets. "In what manner God speaks to them is not manifest" (c) and again it is "not intelligible" (d); and he proceeds with relief: "In the time of the New Testament there was no sovereign prophet, but one Saviour; who has both God that

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(a) E. VII. 58  
(d) Lev. 231

(b) Lev. 218

(c) Lev. 231



spake, and the prophet to whom he spake" (a). Forstalling the answer of the enthusiast: he declares that Christ and the scripture were not concerned with natural science; and when dubious terms are employed, as "spirit" and "devil", or other language of the sectaries, it was to accommodate current belief (b). He does not confine his disparagement to certain terms and the interpretation which is placed on them by some people, he also casts doubt on accepted doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity is undermined as we have seen. There may be truth in it however incredible, but it certainly can have no counterpart in the government of men (c). There is a passage in Leviathan on the Christian religion which in its tone reflects the mind of the scoffer: "Shall whole nations be brought to acquiesce in the great mysteries of the Christian religion, which are above reason; and millions of men be made believe, that the same body may be in innumerable places, at one and the same time, which is against reason; and shall not men be able, by their teaching and preaching, protected by the law, to make that (the principles of reason) received, which is so consonant by reason, that any unprejudicated man, needs no more to learn it than to hear it?" (d).

Hobbes's remarks on religion, superstition, and worship, in spite of qualifications in favour of the true religion, have

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(a) Lev. 231  
(c) Lev. 176

(b) Lev. 39  
(d) Lev. 180

the tendency to disparage the Christian faith and Christian worship. Whatever their credentials religions true and false are alike in that they are primarily instruments of policy. Upon analysis ~~of~~ religion has been found to be three parts superstition, a mixture of fear and selfish egoism, and as far as it is acceptable a legitimate means at the disposal of the sovereign power in the state to stimulate obedience, and as to doctrine and practice embedded in the civil law; and superstition also has been found more and more to encroach even upon the most sacredly orthodox domain of religion. In his classical utterance already referred to Hobbes declares that worship, the overt expression of religion, has for its object, power (a). This is characteristic. It is because men worship power, that the religious impulse has been, can be, and ought to be utilised by the state to induce obedience. To this end, also, worship is claimed by the Almighty; for this is the plain inference from a passage in Chapter XII of Leviathan that the natural seeds of religion, including fear, have been cultivated by men "by God's commandment and direction ... with a purpose to make those men that rely on them, the more apt to obedience" (b): and this view can be maintained in spite of an assertion in Chapter XXXI that "God has no ends; the worship we do him proceeds from our duty" (c). In De Cive there is a very clear, dispassionate, almost

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(a) Lev. 193

(b) Lev. 57

(c) Lev. 193

cynical statement of the purpose behind the ordering of worship: "Because men believe him (God) to be powerful, whom they see honoured, that is to say esteemed powerful by others; it falls out that honour is increased by worship; and by the opinion of power true power is acquired. His aim therefore who either commands or suffers himself to be worshipped, is that by this means he may acquire as many as he can, either through love or fear, to be obedient unto him" (a). It is with some surprise that we see love mentioned as an alternative motive for obedience, and an alternative incentive for worship.

As to the manner of worship, Hobbes comes out in the main as a supporter of the established church, although he is by no means consistently on the side of the bishops. He is very strongly in favour of uniformity, but then so were the Presbyterians. All signs of worship, he holds, must be "the most significant of honour". Words and prayers must be "not sudden, nor light, nor plebeian; but beautiful and well composed; for else we do not God as much honour as we can"(b). With these words he defends the Anglican liturgy, and there is a very striking resemblance between the wording of his defence and that of Richard Hooker. What Hobbes demands are the signs of a mind yielding honour to God; that a man speaks warily to God (c); that his prayers are beautiful and well composed; that worship is in public as well as privately; that the laws

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(a) E. II 213

(b) Lev. 195

(c) E. II 216

of God are observed; (obedience is more acceptable than all other sacrifice); that public worship proceeds according to the appointment of the state (a). Hobbes naturally favours uniformity without reservation. Before the constituting of the city the manner of honouring God "was to be fetched from every man's private reason". But now, since the city is established, "if each man should follow his own reason in the worshipping of God, in so great a diversity of worshippers one would be apt to judge another's worship uncomely, or impious". Again, whatever "concerning the manner of honouring God" as well as "concerning secular affairs" is commanded by the civil authority, "is commanded by God himself" (b).

We shall be considering later and more generally the attitude of Hobbes to the Church of England. He took it upon himself to criticise a great deal in the church, which is perhaps surprising as it was established by law, and performed its various offices under the supreme governorship of the civil sovereign. His attitude is fairly reflected in his views on tithes, and in the derogatory imputations of Chapter XLVII of Leviathan. Here he accuses the bishops of clinging to advantage and privilege.

As to the tithes he argues that the right to them, which some hold to be a divine ordinance "was constituted by the civil power" (c), and that until after the time of Constantine

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(a) E. II 218

(b) E. II 220

(c) Lev. 291



the Great, pastors of the Christian church were supported by voluntary contributions. There are plain symptoms of a desire to pauperise the hierarchy; to reduce it to a condition of dependence on charity. He is uneasy and distrustful of the tendency of elements in the Episcopal church to hanker after the privileges and immunity of the old corrupt hierarchy. One would have thought that in all those churches which had removed the authority of the pope, the civil sovereign would have recovered his rights and jurisdiction. "In England", he says, "it was so in effect; saving that they, by whom the kings administered the government of religion, by maintaining their employment to be in God's right, seemed to usurp, if not a supremacy, yet an independency on the civil power" (a). Papists and Presbyterians go a great deal further, and the question to ask in all these cases is cui bono? Hobbes is opposed to the diluted Erastianism of many churchmen, for example of Bishop Bramhall. In his Castigations the latter admits that the King of England is supreme governor in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as civil, but utterly denies that "true religion doth consist in obedience to sovereign magistrates". He goes on to say of bishops: "They have their holy orders by succession from the apostles, not from their civil sovereign. They have the power of the keys by concession of Christ ... none can give to another, which they

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(a) Lev. 377



have not themselves. Where did Christ give the power of the keys to the civil magistrates?" (a). This was representative opinion in the church, but it did not go nearly far enough for Hobbes. And so although the church was the sovereign's church, and had its standing within the Constitution, he directed against it many fierce attacks, and was guilty of self-condemning inconsistency.

Hobbes's criticisms of the universities, of the sects and the papacy, all flow from his doctrine of sovereignty and its Erastian corollary. The universities formerly supported the pope against the king. The sects composed of democratical men stirred up rebellion against the sovereign and held the right of private judgment in matters of religion. The Papacy is stigmatised for its great usurpation of civil prerogatives.

As to the universities, Hobbes regards these as strongholds of the spirit of independence, and great champions and inculcators of the belief in divided authority. "Towards the latter end of Henry the eighth, the power of the pope was always upheld against the power of the commonwealth, principally by the universities; and ~~that~~ the doctrines maintained by so many preachers against the sovereign power of the king, and by so many lawyers and others, that had their education there, is a sufficient argument that though the universities were not authors of those false doctrines, yet they knew how

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(a) Bramhall's Castigations on Hobbes's Animadversions  
(1638) P. 439

to plant the tree. For in such a contradiction of opinion, it is most certain that they have not been sufficiently instructed; and 'tis no wonder if they yet retain a relish of that subtle liquor wherewith they were first seasoned, against the civil authority" (a). In Behemoth he writes that he despairs of lasting peace among us till the universities shall bend their efforts to teaching absolute obedience to the laws of the king, "and to his public edicts under the great seal of England" (b).

Hobbes's objection to the sects rests on his disapproval to their attitude to the state/church problem. In the beginning of Part I of Behemoth he asks the question: "Who seduced the people to fight against Charles?" The answer is, Presbyterians and Papists, fifth-monarchy men; "besides divers other sects, as quakers, adamites, etc. whose names and peculiar doctrines I do not well remember" (c). These, he declares, rose against the king's majesty "from the private interpretation of scripture, exposed to every man's scanning in his mother tongue". To keep the scripture out of the hands of ignorant people is a policy advanced by Hobbes, and as to which he finds himself in agreement even with the pope. He complains in Behemoth of the "divers English scholars" since the time of Henry VIII who have been much taken with the government of the church by presbyters, set up at Geneva and

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(a) Lev. 183

(b) E. VI 233

(c) E. VI. 167

other places; and ever since, claiming not only divine right but divine inspiration, they have endeavoured, "to the great trouble of the church and nation", to introduce that method of church government here, so that they might domineer. It was men such as these, who in their pride and ambition instigated the rebellion against the king.

All the troubles in the world, Hobbes declares in Chapter XII of Leviathan, are attributable to displeasing priests, not only among the catholics, "but even in that church that hath presumed most of reformation", the presbyterian church (a). In Behemoth again, he argues, that the Scots, on their own admission, refused a union with England, because it would involve a subordination of church to state in religious matters. In one place in Leviathan he writes in favour of non-ordained preachers and ministers in the church, provided the law of the land expresses no explicit prohibition of this. He is here arguing against the enormous pretensions of the papacy to control<sup>the</sup> consciences of men, and he says: "If the state give me leave to preach, or teach; that is, if it forbid me not, no man can forbid me" (b). It is hard to reconcile this with his other arguments against private interpretation, and private preaching. The saving clause is: "If the state give me leave". The crux of the matter seems to be the recognition of the inviolable sovereignty of the civil

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(a) Lev. 62

(b) Lev. 374

authority. So long as this is recognised, other theological and doctrinal credentials are unimportant. But against this must be considered the disparagement of prophets in Chapter XXXVI of Leviathan. While prophets pretend to teach men the way to felicity, they "pretend to govern them; that is to say to rule and reign over them; which is a thing that all men naturally desire" (a).

Hobbes's assault on the papacy is more copiously planned, and carried out with more thoroughness, than objections to sects and universities. There are four stages in the denunciation. He shows in the first place that the pope's claim to temporal power has no authority. Secondly he argues that no foreign power, whether the pope or any other, has any authority in the king's realm. Thirdly it is shown that this disability refers to spiritual as well as temporal authority. Lastly the doctrines and practice of the church of Rome are denounced. The last part of the argument is directed to undermine the prestige of the papacy, and any trust that might be reposed in its spiritual primacy. We need concern ourselves only with the first three stages of his assault, as the last part does not concern the matter under consideration.

The pope's claim to temporal power Hobbes holds to be wholly fraudulent, in spite of the subtle restriction which is admitted to the power of judging and punishing actions done

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(a) Lev. 233



against the civil laws. The pope claims to exercise the power not directly, but indirectly; that is to say "so far forth as such actions tend to the hindrance or advancement of religion and good manners;" and this is what they mean when they say the power is theirs "in ordine et spiritualia" (a). What power, Hobbes demands, is left to kings and other civil sovereigns which the pope may not pretend to be his "in ordine et spiritualia"? The claim to temporal power first began to be made, according to Hobbes, at the time of the northern people's inundation; and the fathers knew nothing about it; much less did the apostles. But when the empire was crumbling, the people went to their bishop for protection, the emperor being far away at Constantinople. Owing to the prestige of Rome, and the special position of the Bishop of Rome, his leadership came to be recognised, he became a rallying point of what was left of western civilisation, he treated with the barbarians, and was recognised by them as representative and leader of the west. Hence the growth of the idea of temporal as well as spiritual jurisdiction; and moreover of temporal overlordship beyond his own territorial jurisdiction. Hobbes goes on to dispose of an arguing point used by catholics, and declares that although the pope crowns the emperor, this has no significance; so also "the popes themselves receive the papacy from the emperor". Calixtus I excused himself from being

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(a) E. VI. 171



forced by the people and clergy of Rome to accept the papacy without the consent of the Christian Emperor Lotharius. "You see by this the emperor never acknowledged this gift of God was the gift of the pope, but maintained the popedom was the gift of the emperor; but in process of time by the negligence of the emperors, (for the greatness of kings makes them that they cannot easily descend into the obscure and narrow minds of an ambitious clergy) they found means to make the people believe there was a power in the pope and clergy, which they ought to submit unto, rather than to the command of their own kings"(a).

We turn now to the proposition that no foreign power, whether the pope or any other, has any jurisdiction in England. In De Cive Hobbes argues that all those who have not submitted to the sovereign of one state, are in a hostile state; and the fact that they are not always at war does not contradict this truth. He draws a sombre and gloomy picture indeed. Although there are truces between enemies, it is sufficient for a hostile mind that there is suspicion. "For the frontiers of cities, kingdoms, empires, strengthened with garrisons, do with a fighting posture and countenance, though they strike not, yet as enemies mutually behold each other". How foolish then, to suppose that a city or sovereign would "commit the ruling of his subjects' conscience to an enemy" (b). For if the pope has authentic temporal power, then he is an enemy at

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(a) E. VI

(b) E. II 294

least potentially if not for the moment in fact. Hobbes shows in a variety of ways how dangerous and pernicious in his view is the papal claim. Subjects may be freed from allegiance, if by this court of Rome their king is judged to be a heretic (a). All Christian monarchs become private persons subject to be judged, deposed and punished by a universal sovereign of all christendom (b). This is the logical outcome of allowing the pope's claim, because in the church of Rome the principal virtue is to obey their doctrine though it be treason (c).

Lastly Hobbes disposes even of the pope's claim to spiritual jurisdiction. His thesis is that neither the pope, nor any other "spiritual" dignitary, has spiritual jurisdiction by which he is entitled to claim the subjection of people's consciences, or to punish by excommunication. Just as every foreign state is a potential enemy, and no foreign power has temporal jurisdiction in another state, so no foreign power has jurisdiction in spiritual matters (d). And if the claim is allowed, enforced under pain of eternal death, and the alleged authority be exercised contrary to the command of the civil sovereign, innocent citizens become by right punishable, and the city itself is dissolved (e). In any case, Hobbes argues early in Behemoth, in examination of the pope's claim to

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(a) Lev. 62

(d) E. II. 294

(b) Lev. 210

(e) E. II. 78

(c) E. VI. 219

inflict eternal death by excommunication, that the claim is empty. He casts ironical aspersions on the sanction, suggesting that people would rather obey the master who has real power to make laws and to punish. Hobbes's view is well expressed in Chapter XLII of Leviathan. "All governments, which men are bound to obey, are simple and absolute. In monarchy there is but one man supreme; and all other men that have any kind of power in the state, have it by his commission, during his pleasure; and execute it in his name: and in aristocracy and democracy, but one supreme assembly, with the same power that in monarchy belongeth to the monarch, which is not a mixt, but an absolute sovereignty" (a).

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(a) Lev. 299

P A R T    I I

THE    DOCTRINE    OF    NECESSITY



OUTLINE OF THE DISPUTE WITH BRAMHALL

In 1654 a statement with the title "Of Liberty and Necessity", drawn up by Hobbes, was published without the author's consent. The statement contained Hobbes's views in a controversy with Bramhall, and the latter published his own account of the dispute. Hobbes then printed Bramhall's argument with his own animadversions thereon, and this publication was answered by Bramhall's "Castigations of Mr. Hobbes his last Animadversions". At this point, as far as records go, the dispute ended. Stated very briefly Hobbes's view is that all events in the universe are determined by what he calls antecedent necessity; and by this he means in the first place that any event could not be other than it is because of the operation of second causes, which dovetail logically and produce their inevitable effects; secondly that the whole pattern of events is such as it is because of a decree of God. God is the first cause in Aristotle's sense; and is also an omniscient and omnipotent intelligence, ordering to the minutest detail all things which constitute the universe. He is the God of the mechanistic philosopher and of John Calvin. "I ascribe all necessity", Hobbes says, "to the universal series or order of causes, depending on the first cause eternal"

(a). Such a God might be little more than a metaphysical abstraction useful to the mechanist philosopher with a

proneness to scepticism. Hobbes declares, however, "that all external causes depend necessarily on the first eternal cause, God Almighty, who worketh in us both to will and to do, by the mediation of second causes" (a). The second part of this declaration elaborates the metaphysical abstraction of the first. God is an intelligence who puts into effect his divine will by a certain method, the operation of second causes; and to Bramhall's contention that such a doctrine renders the exercise of intelligence by creatures unnecessary, that planning and precaution and consultation are nugatory, Hobbes answers, "I deny that it (necessity) makes consultation to be in vain; it is the consultation that causeth a man and necessitateth him, to choose to do one thing rather than another" (b). In other words, consultations, plans, precautions, whenever they occur, are among the second causes ordained by God and necessitating the event. There is necessity of the means as well as of the event (c).

The admittance of God into his scheme is in line with Hobbes's policy in the rest of his speculations. He claims consistently to hold the protestant faith established by law in England; and further in his animadversions on the bishop's replies, he is rebutting an imputation of atheism. But, as we shall see, John Calvin's God, if not the abstract first cause, is an inconvenience in his system, which would be tidier

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(a) E.V. 450

(b) E.V. 153

(c) E.V. 16

and simpler, as well as more acceptable, without him. Hobbes is led into inconsistency and the kind of verbal quibble which he denounces in his opponent, in maintaining that God is the cause though not the author of sin. There are ostensible contradictions, nice distinctions, paradoxes, samples of the argumentative subterfuges: which in characteristic vein the author holds in contempt, and indeed denounces in his opponent. " ... if God own an action, though otherwise it were a sin, it is now no sin" (a), and "to say that God hath so ordered the world that sin may be necessarily committed, is not blasphemy". The elucidation of this most paradoxical assertion is the quibble which might have shamed the detractor of schoolmen and all obscurantists: "It cannot be said that God is the author of sin, because not he that necessitateth an action, but he that doth command and warrant it, is the author" (b). God, it seems, may necessitate (by second causes) the action which he forbids (by revelation). Although God is the cause of all sinful actions, he is not the author of sin. The fact that he has issued commands enjoining righteousness and expressly forbidding sin, clears him of such an imputation.

It follows from Hobbes's doctrine of absolute necessity, that there is no such thing as free will; in fact the term is meaningless, since it suggests a faculty or power in man, even perhaps a mysterious entity, which enjoys freedom of

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(a) E.V. 139

(b) E.V. 138, 139

choice and action. Hobbes in fact goes further than denying that there is free will; he denies that there is any such thing as the will at all: there are only particular volitions and each volition has a cause. When Bramhall talks of the will being free, Hobbes thinks he is talking nonsense. According to Hobbes it only makes sense to talk of bodies as free. "To be free is no more than to do if a man will, and if he will to forbear; and consequently ... this freedom is the freedom of the man and not of the will" (a). Interpreted in the light of Hobbes's materialism this statement means that to say Mr. X is free is to say that a certain live physical body, which other people call Mr. X, is free; that is to say Mr. X is not in prison, or handcuffed, or in the stocks. Hobbes does in fact make another use of the word, free. A man is free who has not done deliberating. This is hardly consistent with his common usage, but here also it must be pointed out that the word does not denote freedom from necessity, as every stage in deliberation is necessitated. Hobbes has a use for both the terms "free" and the term "will," but not for the two together. "Free" in general denotes the absence of physical impediment to action. "Liberty is the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature, and in the intrinsical quality of the agent. As for example, the water is said to descend freely, or to have liberty to descend by the channel of the river, because there is no impediment that way;

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(a) E. V. 450



but not across, because the banks are impediments: And though water cannot ascend, yet men never say it wants the liberty to ascend, but the faculty or power; because the impediment is in the nature of the water and intrinsic"(a).

Bramhall argued that by defining liberty as the absence of extrinsic impediments to action, Hobbes had contradicted his main thesis that all things are necessitated by a chain of extrinsic second causes; and that "whatsoever is not done, is therefore not done, because the agent was necessitated by extrinsic causes not to do it" (b). Extrinsic second causes, Bramhall argues, are the same as extrinsic impediments; and to assert the absence of extrinsic impediments, is to assert the absence of extrinsic second causes. Hobbes replies that by an impediment he means an opposition to endeavour, whereas second causes operate to determine endeavour. Whether, in view of his materialism, it was legitimate for him to draw this distinction between impediments and second causes, is a question. We may perhaps interpret him in this way: all events are necessitated by second causes. Volitions are necessitated, and so are actions. If no action follows the volition, the second cause operating to hinder it is called an impediment. If there are no such impediments we are said to have liberty to carry out our volitions, or to act freely.

The term "will" is used to denote the last desire, or the last passion, before action; and this follows sometimes upon

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(a) E.V. 367, 368

(b) E.V. 77



deliberation, for which term Hobbes has his own interpretation, and is sometimes spontaneous. According to Hobbes there is no essential difference between deliberate acts and spontaneous acts, and both are necessitated. Deliberate acts follow the last dictate of the understanding: "The truth in general is that it (will) followeth the last opinion of the goodness or evilness of the object, be the opinion true or false" (a). Spontaneous acts are responses to the momentary desire or appetite; but there is no significant difference between a dictate of the understanding and an appetite. The former is the name given to desires which are preceded by deliberation; that is by a debate as to the probability of good result from an action. For Hobbes good in this context has an egoistical connotation. It describes whatever is the object of a man's desire. Both deliberate acts and spontaneous acts have a selfish motive, but in the former the circumstances and chances of resulting advantage or pleasure have been more carefully considered. As for this process of deliberation, this "following of ones hopes and fears" (b) and "considering of good and evil sequels" (c) it "is an act of imagination or fancy; nay more, reason and understanding are also acts of the imagination, that is to say they are imaginations. I find it so by considering my own ratiocinations" (d). Deliberation and understanding are compounded by those phantasms that have

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(a) E. V. 77  
(c) E. V. 389

(b) E. V. 72  
(d) E. V. 401

their origin in sense and physical motion, and are "in the brain itself nothing but tumult" (a). The explanation is materialistic, and it is here, in Hobbes's materialism, that is to be seen the foundation of his doctrine of necessity.

Hobbes doctrine of necessity, into which God is admitted without hesitation, but also without evident conviction, commits him of course to the theological doctrine of predestination. God, we have seen, works out his will in human beings. According to the radical forms of predestination, and also according to Hobbes, God's will, that is his intention, was fixed, to use a Bible phrase, "before the foundation of the world". Having this doctrine in mind Bramhall asks to what purpose was the power to will "if it be precisely and inevitably determined in all occurrences whatsoever, what a man will and what he shall not will?" (b). Hobbes might have replied, as he often did, with definitions. He did not understand the term will in the same sense as Bramhall; and if my "power to will" exists, it is not what Bramhall supposes it to be. But in this context, Hobbes gave a prompt answer, without directly disputing his opponent's terminology. "It (the power to will) is to this purpose, that all those things may be brought to pass, which God hath from eternity predetermined. It is therefore to no purpose here to say, that God and nature hath made nothing in vain". Hobbes is in effect applying his definition to Bramhall's term. Bramhall's "power to will" can

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(a) Lev. 211

(b) E. V. 51

mean nothing more than the capacity to arrive at particular volitions; and these are determined both mediately and immediately by God. Each was decreed before the foundation of the world, and each is the effect of a long chain of causes. Each, moreover, is itself one of the second causes by which God is working out his purpose. No-one can question God's method. He has ordained and brought about volitions, as he has ordained everything else, as inter-related parts in his master design. In some ways Hobbes goes even farther than the most determinist of the ~~of the~~ reformers, and in the direction of Spinoza, who held God to be immanent in all nature, and that all things viewed sub specie aeternitatis would be seen to be perfect and in place. Hobbes sometimes uses language appropriate to immanence, but officially retained Calvin's transcendent God. He was thus saddled with reprobation as well as predestination.

In company with the great body of protestant reformers, Hobbes rejects the explanation of predestination in terms acceptable to advanced Arminian opinion; namely that God foresaw what use men would make of their free will, and framed his decree touching election accordingly. In other words that the prescience of God is separated from his decree. In one of his earliest arguments of the dispute Hobbes makes a clear statement on this question; "For whatsoever God foreknoweth shall come to pass, cannot but come to pass, that is, it is impossible it should not come to pass, or otherwise come to pass than it was foreknown. But whatsoever was impossible

should be otherwise, was necessary; for the definition of necessary is, that which cannot possibly be otherwise" (a). The argument is that God's prescience and his decree are one and the same act: "And as for the distinction of foreknowledge from decree in God Almighty, I comprehend it not. They are acts co-eternal and therefore one" (b). Again; "God foreknoweth nothing that can possibly not come to pass". There is further the statement: "If God had made either causes or effects free from necessity, he had made them free from his own prescience; which had been imperfection" (c). It is interesting to note that Samuel Clarke, in criticism of Hobbes's doctrine, makes the observation that free-will, the antithesis of necessity, is a perfection, and not imperfection. Hobbes's argument is that if God had made either causes or effects free from necessity, he would not be able to foreknow them and would therefore not be omniscient. Lack of omniscience is the imperfection he refers to.

Not only is it nonsense, according to Hobbes, to speak of free will, and will itself a term which describes simply the last state of mind of a man before action, but the terms contingent and contingency are defined in a way that is not consistent with their ordinary use; and this of course follows from the initial assumption. "It is all one to say it is contingent, and simply to say it is; saving that when

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(a) E.V. 19

(b) E.V. 19

(c) E.V. 424



they say simply it is, they consider not how or by what means; but in saying it is contingent, they tell us they know not whether necessarily or not" (a). "From which it followeth, that free causes, and contingent causes, are not causes of themselves, but concurrent with other causes, and therefore can produce nothing but as they are guided by those causes with which they concur" (b). By ordinary usage to say that an event is contingent, is to say that the event might not have occurred, all the relevant circumstances remaining just as they are, but happens to be. In this sense the term contingent is synonymous with accidental. According to Hobbes, no event can be accidental, or contingent, in that sense; but the relevant circumstances, or concatenation of second causes, being what they are, the event cannot possibly be other than it is. To say it is contingent is simply to say that we do not know what the second causes are (c).

Bishop Bramhall represents a body of Church of England divines whose doctrine and outlook is said to be Arminian. The description is not strictly accurate, as Bramhall's views of the power of freedom of the "rational will" go much further than those of Arminius, who held far more closely to the doctrine of grace as it was accepted by other protestant reformers. The third of his Articles declares that "man hath not saving grace of himself", and that "of the energy of his

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(a) E.V. 49

(b) E.V. 50

(c) See Spinoza Ethics I, XXXIII, Schol. I

free will" he can do nothing acceptable to God. He must be born of the Holy Spirit, and renewed. Bramhall admits that the compulsion of bad habits may make it impossible for some men to do good, but this is not the same as antecedent necessity. Bad habits were formed by repeated voluntary acts which a man freely chose to do, just as he might have chosen to do well. Bramhall's doctrine, as it is to be extracted from his replies to Hobbes, and from his Castigations on Hobbes's Animadversions, <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ that in the mind or soul of each man there is a power or faculty called the will; and it is the dominant faculty, and is also free or self-determining. As to its dominance (a view held also by Descartes) Bramhall asserts: "It is the will, which affecting some particular good, doth engage and command the understanding to consult and deliberate what means are convenient for attaining that end" (a). As against Hobbes Bramhall maintains a distinction between free and spontaneous acts. "It behoveth us", he says, "to know the difference between these three, necessity, spontaneity, and liberty". "Necessity consists in an antecedent determination to one; spontaneity consists in a conformity of the appetite, either intellectual or sensitive, to the object; true liberty consists in the elective-power of the rational will" (b). Hobbes of course complains of "the vanity of such words as these, intellectual appetite, confirmity of the appetite to the object,

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(a) E.V. 73

(b) E.V. 39, 40

rational will, elective power of the rational will" (a), but it is easy enough to gather what Bramhall means even if we do not agree with him. Bramhall uses the word voluntary as a synonym for spontaneous, in a discussion of the quality of acts of the will. These are not all free. "A free act is only that which proceeds from the free election of the rational will after deliberation; but every act that proceeds from the sensitive appetite of man or beast, without deliberation or election, is truly voluntary" (b). Freedom then is grounded in reason: "The elective power of the rational will".

Bramhall considers the kinds <sup>or</sup> ~~of~~ categories of events which may occur, and presents us with a fourfold scholastic division. "For a clearer understanding of these things ... let us consult awhile with the schools" (c). Events in the universe are:

- (1) Those due wholly to extrinsical causes, as a stone thrown upward.
- (2) Those which proceed from intrinsical causes, but without any knowledge of the end, as a falling stone.
- (3) Those that proceed "from an internal principle, with an imperfect knowledge of the end, where there is an appetite for the object, but no deliberation nor election; as the acts of fools, children, beasts, and the inconsiderate acts of men of judgment. These are called voluntary or spontaneous acts".
- (4) Those that "proceed from an intrinsical cause, with a more perfect knowledge of the end, which are elected upon delibera-

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(a) E.V. 47

(b) E.V. 363

(c) E.V. 83

tion. These are called free acts. So then the formal reason of liberty is election. The necessary requisite to election is deliberation. Deliberation implyeth the actual use of reason". He adds that "deliberation and election cannot possibly subsist with an extrinsical determination to one".

Hobbes's doctrine, therefore, is an attack upon sovereign reason; and this Bramhall considers to be one of his cardinal errors and crimes.

In a discussion of contingency Bramhall is weak. His task is to defend free will, and he rather hedges the question of contingency as being irrelevant (a). He admits that as far as we know certain events may be contingent, and in one place makes a statement which accepts the fact of contingency. The motions of brute beasts "are contingent and therefore not necessary". Elsewhere, by way of illustration, he considers the question as to whether or not it will rain tomorrow, "the prognostics, or tokens, may be such ... that it may become probably true to us that it will rain tomorrow ... But

ordinarily it is a contingent proposition to us; whether it be contingent also in itself that is, whether the concurrence of causes were absolutely necessary ... is a speculation which no way concerns this question" (b). The speculation may not be relevant to Bramhall's case, as he is simply defending the liberty of will; but it is certainly relevant to Hobbes's

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(a) E.V. 409

(b) E.V. 411



doctrine of second causes which, following logically from his radical materialism, is the corner stone of his whole theory. Even events like thoughts, being somehow physical manifestations, <sup>and</sup> the explicable in physical terms, are strictly determined in the pattern of second causes, all of which are some form of motion in matter. In such a scheme of course there is no place for contingency, and to assert or deny it would certainly be relevant. Bramhall, however, does not join issue with Hobbes over this question, perhaps because the argument could get no further than bare assertion, or bare denial, being wholly a question of assumption. And in fact because of the fundamental incompatibility of their respective positions in the debate, the protagonists are constantly at deadlock, when each merely insists on his own point of view. Much later, in 1704, Clarke took up the issue and attempted to prove from reason the fallacy of Hobbes's position. In spite, however, of this divine's lengthy arguments, it must still remain a matter of opinion.

Bramhall, of course, did not deny the doctrine of predestination, since it is plainly taught in scripture, but held that it was based on God's foreknowledge; as St. Paul declared: "Whom he foreknew, them he also predestinated"; and to meet the metaphysical objection to any separation of God's decree from his foreknowledge, and to a subordination of the first to the second, he argued that strictly God does not fore-know, because for God there is no before and after. In the

mind of God all things are timelessly present. "The readiest way", he argues, "to reconcile contingency and liberty with the decrees and prescience of God ... is to subject future contingents to the aspect of God, according to that present-ality which they have in eternity" (a). He is appealing here to the scholastic doctrine of nunc stans, or the ever abiding now, and he elucidates as follows:- "The infinite knowledge of God, encircling all times in the point of eternity, doth attain to their future being, from whence proceeds their objective and intelligible being. The main impediment which keeps men from subscribing to this way, is because they conceive eternity to be an everlasting succession, and not one indivisible point". He expatiates upon God's perfection: "That which is infinitely perfected cannot be further perfected"; and introduces some pure Platonism: God is not wise, but wisdom itself; not just but justice itself, and the like (b). All of which is intended to make intelligible a doctrine which, in the opinion of Hobbes, cannot possibly be understood or even seriously entertained - eternity, which is simply an infinity of time, not successive but an infinite point (c).

It has been suggested that in identifying God's fore-knowledge with his decree Hobbes takes the only view consistent with his doctrines of omnipotent first cause and of

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(a) E.V. 327

(b) E.V. 328

(c) E.V. 328, 329

second causes. Bramhall does not of course subscribe categorically to any of these assumptions; but there is a question as to what extent, on a final logical analysis, he was committed to them. Sometimes in the throes of argument he makes statements which give his whole case away, as for example in the discussion of this dangerous Arminian tenet separating God's foreknowledge and his decree. "Things are not therefore because they are foreknown"; he says, "but therefore are they foreknown, because they shall come to pass" (a). Surely a deterministic statement. Half a century later Samuel Clarke was to argue in the same way: "The certainty of foreknowledge does not cause the certainty of things, but is itself founded on the reality of their existence" (b). He is supporting the contention that bare foreknowledge has no influence on the course of events, and succeeds in asserting the very theory he is attacking, that the necessity that entails in one sense the reality (Clarke's words) of existences is prior to, or at the least contemporaneous with, foreknowledge of them in the mind of God. It is a simple matter for Hobbes to expose the fallacy of the Arminian doctrine of foreknowledge, especially as in proposing it his opponent is guilty of shifting his ground. Other views he has expressed are antagonistic. If predestination is based on foreknowledge, since the omniscience of God extends to every event in the universe,

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(a) E. V. 430

(b) Samuel Clarke, Being and Attributes of God, P. 104

presumably every event is predetermined. This is not consistent with a belief in contingency, even so uncertain a belief as Bramhall's. He does not know whether any events are contingent in themselves, but they may be so. He ought to know that they cannot be. God foreseeing all things, the Arminian might argue, has endorsed the whole by a decree. In these circumstances how can anything be accidental.

Elsewhere Bramhall admits another kind of necessity; not one dating from the foundation of the world and in the mind of God; but necessity upon supposition; necessity arising only after the concurrence of all the causes, including the last dictate of the understanding in reasonable creatures. So that the issue and in particular Bramhall's case is greatly confused. He appears to have in view at least three kinds of necessity: the absolute necessity of Hobbes; necessity in the theological sense, that is predestination, founded upon God's foreknowledge; and necessity upon supposition, which we take to be the necessity discernible in the concurrence of events from the human point of view. And there are, as we shall see, additional versions of the principle: necessity of immutability, and necessity of infallibility, and so on. And this is the state of Bramhall's opinion after a bold approach to the argument placing the issue in clear-cut alternatives: either I am free to write this treatise, or I am not free to write. Hobbes was on secure ground when, with some impatience, he met his opponent's complexities with the assertion that there is



only one kind of necessity (a).

In order to understand the dispute between these two men, and especially the point of view of Hobbes, it is necessary to understand the philosophical and religious background to their famous quarrel. Ever since the seventeenth century the much discussed antithesis between liberty and necessity as principles governing human and earthly affairs, has been approached from two very different starting points. Some have considered the problem from the point of view of religion, and others have been concerned only with a principle of science. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the question of determinism has been thus differently considered, and as its antithesis, according to predeliction, some have held free-will, and others a doctrine of contingency or accident. Few have thought out a comprehensive system, embracing science and religion. As Hobbes is one of the few to take in both science and religion in his speculations, it is appropriate to discuss determinism in science, and determinism in religion, and to relate the doctrine of Hobbes to both.

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(a) E. V. 241

SCIENTIFIC MECHANISM

The theory of scientific mechanism, which is the name of the doctrine of determinism as it is held by scientists to apply to the physical world, dates from Kepler and Galileo. It was accepted by all the great philosophers and physicists of the seventeenth century. At this time and by these thinkers it was for the most part, and with notable exceptions, applied only to the physical world, using that term to describe what it would normally be held to describe by anybody accepting a dualist theory of reality. Kepler and Galileo were the High Priests of scientific mechanism, but in the background of course there was Copernicus. Copernicus stood at the threshold of the speculative and scientific renaissance, which was launched into full-blooded activity because of what he said and did; just as Luther threw open the gate of the Reformation because of what he said and did. Both these changes in thought, or revolutions, had of course been heralded for some time before. For the best part of a century the Italian renaissance had been working radical changes in outlook; and Wycliffe was born two centuries before Luther. It is, however, true to say that Copernicus and Luther respectively, were the instigators of the new scientific and religious movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were the sparks which set the world alight. It is interesting to note that both the new kinds of thought were determinist: the

new religion arbitrarily and from a polemical motive, to sweep away uncertainty of salvation and the church's machinery of grace. Science on the other hand was to evolve gradually and securely a determinist conception of the physical universe, to which it has committed itself faithfully for several centuries, and is only in comparatively recent times less certain of its premise.

The new religion came in with the new science, but these tended to pursue each an independent course. There seems to have been almost no liaison between them. What was the attitude of the champions of the old faith? The answer is that both these novelties of thought, the scientific and the religious, roused their bitter antagonism. Although the new thought might constitute no direct challenge to any of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, it was radically out of harmony with the tone as well as the opinions of scholastic theology. To the leaders of the old faith in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries it was absolutely essential to uphold the prestige of the great formulators of catholic doctrine, and these men had laboured against the background of a conception of the universe anciently conceived, universally accepted, never questioned. This conception coloured all their doctrine. It was picturesquely complex and fixed. Heaven was God's throne and earth his footstool. The sun, the moon, the stars, had a status of subordination and strict

obedience; and their function, one of utility, was regular subject to the overriding will of God, who might, for example, order the moon to stand still in the Valley of Ajalon. The most zealous champions of the old faith, had no positive theory or speculation to offer to meet the challenge of the times, the fact of a changing and expanding universe. They were known, and were content to be known, for a negative virtue; they were anti-Copernican.

It was as anti-Copernican that catholic leaders applied themselves to the undoing of Galileo. Copernicus had not been persecuted, as he took Europe and the church by surprise when his disruptive theory was advanced. And then almost exactly half way between Copernicus and Galileo were the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, which changed nothing, and confirmed everything; confirmed in particular the sanctity of authority, and that doctrine held in contravention of authority is heresy. When therefore, more than a century after Copernicus, Galileo was busy, the church was ready for him. It had purged itself of many abuses and girded up its loins; and it was with absolute sincerity, and absolute devotion, that Cardinal Bellermino and others determined that if Galileo would not recant his mouth must be stopped; and the ground for this devout and unshakeable determination was because Galileo was held to revive the doctrine of Copernicus, and to express opinions that were against the Council of Trent. What had Galileo done? He had developed a telescope; he had made



certain empirical observations; in short he had confirmed in a manner sufficient to satisfy scientific minds, the brilliant hypothesis of his great predecessor. The earth and other planets do travel round the sun. Beyond this he had proved that there is a discoverable order in the universe; that it conforms to a certain pattern, and follows certain laws of motion. He had shown also that the laws of motion of the planets are unalterable. From this vision to thorough-going determinism as a physicist's axiom was a direct step.

Galileo was persecuted and Copernicus reprobated by the catholics, but of course both these men were devout catholics all their lives. And for the rest of that considerable body of experimenters and speculators, astronomers, doctors, mathematicians, philosophers, who made the seventeenth century so remarkable, all accepted the vision of Galileo, and almost all were members of one or other of the recognised Christian communities. Robert Boyle, who endowed a course of sermons to be preached for the confirmation and propagation of the protestant faith in England, and was one of the pioneers of the atomic theory, is typical of them. The point to which we are working is that the principal exponents of scientific mechanism subscribed to a religious faith which may well be held to be fundamentally inconsistent with this theory. Even the most advanced Calvinist doctrine, while it held strictly to a thoroughly determinist conception of time and the universe, based this doctrine on a premise other than the immutability of

physical laws; so that while all events are determined they are not even in principle predictable, as the original decree of God was essentially arbitrary in nature. And of course all shades of Christian opinion believed staunchly in the existence of "spiritual" entities, of mind, of the immortal soul, to say nothing of angels and demons and the like. And such beliefs committed them at the least to the conception of a duality such as beset the speculative career of the great Frenchman, Descartes, with intractable difficulty.

Certain thinkers of the century were greatly exercised by this question, and others closely associated with it; in general with the harmonising of religion and science. I know of no thinkers of note who, from a starting point of Calvinism, dovetailed scientific mechanism with their theology; although these two doctrines might have been considered fairly congenial. Two great thinkers combine religion and science in a thoroughgoing determinism. One of course is Hobbes, who from the starting point of an enthusiastic acceptance of scientific mechanism made religion conform. The other, Spinoza, spread out his fervid philosophy to embrace everything. Hobbes started from mathematics, or rather geometry, and arrived at predestination. Spinoza also started from geometry and evolved a system which was thoroughly determinist, but in which there was some mitigation of the hopeless dilemma which confronts the determinist philosopher who clings officially to orthodox opinions about the Godhead. Hobbes

denied that there are two kinds of substance: material substance and immaterial substance. In fact to speak of the second was to talk nonsense. Spinoza went farther; the one substance included the Godhead; in fact the one substance was the Godhead, all pervading and all informing. It is interesting to note that these two architects of a synthesis of the world of matter and the world of spirit, were singled out by Clarke in his series of sermons for the Robert Boyle foundation in which he denounced among other things the doctrine of necessity.

Rene Descartes in himself embodies the cleavage in thought and the divided loyalties of the century. He was by education a mathematician, and in love with the spirit of mathematics, its clarity and its certainty; and he felt moreover that the whole story of the world, saving one vital ingredient, might, with patience and the use of the right method, be unravelled like a mathematical problem. And that all the multitudinous parts of phenomena would then be found to be related with a logical consistency. In this respect he accepted without doubt or question the vision of Galileo. He even held, for instance, that animals are automatic machines, and that given all the data it should in principle be possible to deduce all their future activities. And it is interesting to note that Descartes like Hobbes based his determinism on a double premise. Not only do phenomena obey fixed laws of motion, and conform to a pattern which is logical in its articulation,

like the pattern of Hobbes's second causes; but the fixed laws themselves, together with all eternal truths including the truths of mathematics, are themselves dependent on the unconditioned will of God. In the same way Hobbes argued that the decree of God is behind the coherence of second causes.

There was, however, as we have observed, in Descartes' view but not that of Hobbes, one ingredient in the total story exempted from the universal law. There was mind. Mind Descartes held to be a second kind of substance, wholly different from matter. The essence of material substance is extension; the essence of mind is thinking. And in thinking he includes experiencing, feeling, reasoning, understanding, and above all willing; because to will is the highest or dominant faculty or power of mind (a). To the human will Descartes assigned complete autonomy. Belief in free will, he held, is one of those common notions that are born with us. That we have freedom of will is a truth we are unable to doubt, and as such "is as self-evident and clear as anything we can ever know" (b). As the executive of mind or thinking substance the will may act to change the direction of motion in extended substance, though not to initiate motion, as the quantity of motion in the universe is fixed unalterably. For the exercise of his free will Descartes held that a man was, and could justifiably be held, responsible. Descartes believed

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(a) Descartes, Principles I, XXXV; XXXVII. Meditations IV.  
(b) Descartes, Principles I, XXXIX



in free will, and also in predestination. It would be sinful, he held, to imagine that we could do anything which had not been foreordained by God; but we should make no attempt to harmonise the unquestionable truth of God's predestination with the "self-evident" truth of free will. Any attempt to do so would simply land us in difficulties. The two truths may be reconciled without being explained if we remember that the human mind is limited, and the power of God is unlimited. "It would be absurd to doubt of that of which we are fully conscious, (free will), and which we experience as existing in ourselves, because we do not comprehend another matter (God's omnipotence) which, from its very nature, we know to be incomprehensible" (a). Descartes reconciliation in fact, is of the same sort as Beza's apology for reprobation. The ways of God are outside the scope of human understanding, but the consequences flowing from God's omnipotence must be accepted, together with the truth that God is wholly good and the decrees of God are wholly just. A comprehensive attempt was made by Spinoza to resolve this contradiction which Descartes left unexplained. Locke, on the other hand, confessed himself defeated as Descartes had done (b).

The doctrine of Descartes of the two distinct substances which divide the universe between them was a special and novel version of the dualism which had held sway in human thought for

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(a) Descartes, Principles I, XLI  
(b) Locke, Letter to Molyneux, 1693

centuries, certainly for the whole of the Christian age. And to apply the doctrine to the human entity it is simply that each man is comprised of a mortal body, and an immortal soul, which of course is the most fundamental Christian doctrine. Descartes gave support consistently to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and may be regarded as genuinely determined that they should be upheld; and his whole work may be looked upon as a grand but unsuccessful attempt to harmonise orthodox theology and scientific mechanism.

The dualist view of Descartes was attended by two major difficulties, which the great philosopher was never able to overcome. Since mind, the substance which thinks and wills, is known only to self-consciousness, it is impossible ever to get beyond one's own mind. That is to say it is impossible ever to have direct knowledge of any other minds. This part of the doctrine leads to subjectivity and isolation. There is also, since the system embraces bodies as well as minds, the insoluble problem of the relation between these two totally dissimilar kinds of substance. Descartes, for instance, holds that minds may operate to change the direction of matter. How could this possibly be? How could such totally dissimilar substances as mind and matter possibly interact? Where could be the point of contact? All Descartes's efforts to dispel the trouble by introducing vital fluids and the pineal gland, rarified and as it were pseudo substances, simply postpone the issue. In one place in the Meditations he suggests a

solution which to some extent anticipates an obiter dictum of Hobbes. The opinion of Philosophers, Hobbes argues, "that all bodies are endued with sense" cannot be rejected "if the nature of sense be placed in reaction only" (a). With this we may compare an assertion of Spinoza: "all bodies are animate in their degree" (b). The suggestion of Descartes is that mind and matter may in some way be intermingled (c); but if his account of the dissimilar essences of mind and matter, the one thinking and the other extension, is to be maintained, the suggestion leaves us as baffled as does the problem it is designed to meet. It is as impossible to conceive how thinking substance can intermingle with extended substance, as to understand how they can interact.

This suggested solution of Descartes, however, is a step in the direction of the monistic theory of Hobbes. Hobbes did not hold that mind and matter are intermingled. In fact he wrote off mind as either the name of some types of motion in certain material media, or on the other hand as the name of purely superfluous accompaniments to such motions. Perhaps the latter he would call consciousness, which he might be taken to regard as a succession or process of phantasms which he dismisses as mere idols of the brain. According to Hobbes the reality is that a thought is in the brain nothing but tumult, that is motion. His answer to the dualism of

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(a) E. I. 393  
(b) (c) Descartes, Meditations VI

Descartes, with all its difficulties, was to proclaim a thorough-going materialism, or epiphenomenalism. The special and intractable problems which this kind of theory brings with it, he made no attempt to solve, and in fact gave no indication that he was aware of their existence. The materialism he propounded has an obvious affinity with his clean-sweeping habits of thought, and his acquired devotion to geometry, a science which can have no bearing on supposed mental substances. To admit a philosophical impasse such as the acceptance of traditional dualism would seem to involve was impossible for Hobbes. For him there could be no insoluble mind/body problem.

In a Chapter of Leviathan "Of the Signification of Spirit, Angel, and Inspiration in the Books of the Holy Scripture" Hobbes begins by definition. I will quote in full what he has to say about body. "The word body in the most general acceptation, signifieth that which filleth, or occupieth some certain room or imagined place; and dependeth not in the imagination, but in the real part of what we call the universe. For the universe, being the aggregate of all bodies, there is no real part thereof that is not also body; nor anything properly a body that is not also part of that aggregate of all bodies, the universe. The same also, because bodies are subject to change, that is to say to variety of appearance to the sense of living creatures, is called substance, that is to say, subject to various accidents; as sometimes to be moved; sometimes to stand still; and to seem to our senses sometimes



hot, sometimes cold, sometimes of one colour, smell, taste or sound, sometimes of another. And this diversity of seeming, produced by the diversity of the operation of bodies on the organs of our sense, we attribute to the alterations of the bodies that operate, and call them accidents of these bodies. And according to the acceptation of the word, substance and body signify the same thing; and therefore substance incorporeal are words which when they are joined together destroy one another, as if a man should say an incorporeal body" (a). Here is an unequivocal manifesto, and we must investigate other pronouncements of Hobbes to see how far they are consistent with it.

We have observed earlier (b) that Hobbes's theory of the passions is the link between his politics and Erastianism on the one hand, and his doctrine of necessity on the other. And an implicit claim of this theory is to abolish dualism, and so to remove the problem of interaction. In the process of his elucidation of the theory which begins with an account of perception, phenomena are referred to as mere fancy. We may observe in passing that to refer disparagingly to phenomena in this way is not to dispose of them. The theory says that all our experiences, of the sense and also of thought and feeling, however differentiated they may seem, are really the same thing: they are movements of bodies. As for sense experiences like

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{a} Lev. 210, 211

{b} Part I. Hobbes's Doctrine of Sovereignty and the Church

"the appearance or apparition of a certain light", these have no reality; all that is real in the case of the light being" the concussion or motion of the parts of that nerve" (the optic) (a). In the first chapter of Leviathan there is a discussion of the qualities of an object called sensible. All of these, we are told, are "in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter, by which it presses our organs diversely". Likewise in us they are nothing else "but divers motions". "Their appearance to us is fancy." For instance the "pressing, rubbing, or striking the eye makes us fancy a light" (b). As for the experiences which are called mental Hobbes declares, "understanding, reason, and all the passions of the mind, are imaginations ..." and again "all conception is imagination and proceedeth from sense (c). Imagination is another name for memory, which is "nothing but decaying sense" (d). As sense is a motion of body so is imagination, and so are mental experiences. There is a further exposition of the true nature of the emotions we experience and these also are of the same kind. They occur when there is a continuation of motion from the sense to the organs of the heart (e). All emotions are variations of appetite and aversion which are occasioned as there is corroboration or hindrance of the vital motions (f). This,

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(a) EL. Pt. I. II (7)  
(d) Lev. 5

(b) Lev. 1  
(e) Lev. 25

(c) EL. Pt. I. XI (5)  
(f) Lev. 25

it may be submitted, is the theory, and little thought will discover the enormous difficulties which are raised by it.

In the first place, as already noted, to refer to an experience as mere fancy does not dispose of it. The apparition of a certain light is an event just as real as a block of granite, and must be accounted for. Hobbes in effect admits this, although the account he gives of phenomena is to discount them, not so much as unimportant, but as unreal; and this is surely to take up a self-contradictory position. "The object of sight", he says, "properly so called, is neither light nor colour; but the body itself which is lucid, or enlightened, or coloured. For light and colour, being phantasms of the sentient, cannot be accidents of the object" (a). Very well, but he still has to account for light and colour, the phantasms. Here we have in our minds surely some of the mental existents which give the lie direct to his sweeping materialism. As for the corroboration or hindrance of the vital motions, "it is the appearance or sense of this which we call delight or trouble of mind" (b). It will be recognised that by his language he admits a dualism as he distinguishes between physical occurrences and the conscious experience of them, whether they are sensible, of the understanding, or of the emotions.

In his discourse in Leviathan, of speech, (Chapter 4)

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(a) E. I. 404

(b) Lev. 25

there are many expressions which make nonsense unless we presuppose a distinction between physical and mental occurrences. "There must be images or conceptions in the mind", he declares, "answering to the words we speak". In this Chapter, and in Chapter 5 of Part I of the Elements he refers continually to conceptions in the mind answering to the words we use; and there is no suggestion that the conceptions, or images, are unreal. Again we may ask, having read the statement, "by the sense we take notice ... of the objects without us ... but we take notice also some way or other of our conceptions" (a), is this consistent with the virtual identification of seeing, hearing, smelling, etc, with understanding, as being both the motions induced in sense organs, at the instant of stimulation, or as a decaying continuation later. Clearly in this passage sense experiences are treated as irreducibly distinct from thought, both as to the objects of apprehension, and the modes of apprehension. So that we have not merely a dualism but a much more diversified picture of reality. In fact this statement suggests that a common factor between divided and distinguished worlds is whatever is signified by the pronoun "we"; and we may well ask what this pronoun can possibly stand for in the universe of bodies Hobbes has described.

Reference has been made to an obiter dictum of Hobbes partly anticipated by Descartes in the Meditations. Descartes

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(a) EL. Pt. I. III (6)



suggested that mind and matter may be intermingled in bodies; and the suggestion of Hobbes was that sensation may be a power of perception or consciousness naturally and essentially inherent in all matter. It was argued by Clarke that Hobbes was driven "to have recourse to that prodigious absurd supposition", so as to render more acceptable his incredible theory that sensation itself, as opposed to the cause of sensation, is bare figure and motion. We have seen that Hobbes did put forward this theory as an official account of perception and without any apparent misgiving. And although other pronouncements were out of harmony with the theory, there is no doubt that the latter was fundamental doctrine. The fact that Hobbes could not maintain consistency even in language simply emphasises the unacceptable character of his monistic materialism. He had not answered the dualism of the centuries and he had not escaped its toils.

The doctrine of scientific mechanism was the natural product of the kind of thinking pursued by scientists from Galileo to Newton. In their speculations about the universe philosophers had abandoned authority in so far as it was purely arbitrary, and were resolutely basing their theories upon observation as Galileo and Bacon had taught them. They sought to interpret the facts, and felt that these were interpretable, in terms of fixed laws; the pattern of events was logical and not capricious. Whatever their religious views they did not seriously consider the possibility of omnipotent interference

<sup>in/0</sup>with the course of events, and had they been as thorough and ruthless in their thinking as Hobbes they would have realised that this conception of the world was hardly consistent with the belief in free will in men. By this admission caprice enters to upset the pattern, and the difficulty is not answered by postulating fixed laws for inanimate nature, and liberty and choice as the primary principle in human behaviour. Hobbes almost alone recognised the full extent of the demands which scientific mechanism made upon old accepted doctrine and belief. To be credible its application must be completed. It must be admitted to dominate human and animal behaviour, as well as the behaviour of lifeless bodies. To hold otherwise is either to believe that certain physical bodies, for example human bodies, are outside the general physical pattern, as they are endowed with a power of self-motion; or to believe that these bodies are controlled, each of them, by something else, an entity or faculty or power which is not physical, but which has an altogether inconceivable propensity to interact with a physical body. Either belief allows a principle of disorder to be operative in the universal order; or if not disorder, then the vaunted freedom of the will is wholly nugatory, and this faculty, whatever it is, simply conforms to the mechanistic pattern.

Recognising the incompatibility of scientific mechanism with free will, Hobbes denied the latter. And holding further that scientific mechanism to have any meaning must be held to

apply universally, and that no kind of event can be exempt from it, he was led to deny the existence of non-material entities as these would be beyond the reach of laws relating to bodies and motion. The fact that he was unable to give any convincing account of reality along these lines, or even to maintain verbal consistency in his arguments, does not so much condemn his reasoning as the mechanistic doctrine he was attempting to substantiate.

### THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Among theologians the doctrine of predestination was far more strenuously discussed than many another vital question raised by the revolution in religious thought and the break with the Roman tradition in the sixteenth century. Many questions which to modern opinion seem of more practical importance, and certainly occasioned more widespread practical effects, questions of church property and church government, and more fundamentally the tendency to democracy and equality latent in reformed doctrine, were the questions to concern the political protagonists of two sides. But among theologians, at any rate protestant theologians, this seems not to have been generally the case. They directed the fiercest of their polemical fire to thrashing out this one question: the rights and wrongs and pros and cons of God's eternal predestination. An especially sombre side is imparted to the dispute when we recall that the doctrine implied for many, God's eternal reprobation of those not favoured by grace.

Why did the theologians concentrate so much of their energies on this question? An answer to the question can only be suggested. It was the sale of indulgences which ignited the fire of Luther's indignation; the enormity of the lie that the favour and dispensation of God was something to be bought and sold. And to counteract the inroads of such a travesty of the gospel the Reformers developed the doctrine of grace



which they had from Augustine, but pushed it to its logical conclusion in a way that Augustine had not done. The Reformers were determined to rebut the pretensions of Rome and to proclaim once for all the certainty of the salvation of the elect; and to this end their doctrine of predestination cut away the root of that vast and worldly system, as they conceived it, in which the favour of the church, and the favour of God, were to be bought and sold. God is omnipotent, and everything comes from God gratuitously. Man has nothing to pay for favour, because there is no currency with which he could pay. Man is destitute. It is impossible for the natural man to please God.

Hobbes claims the support of the Reformers for his own point of view on the thorny question of free-will and predestination; and he mentions particularly, Luther, Melancthon, Zanchius, Bucer, Calvin, Beza, and the Synod of Dort (a). Between them these cover a variety of shades of protestant opinion. In answer Bramhall attempts to explain away the apparent support which the Reformers give to Hobbes; but the answer is not very convincing. It seems to me that the Reformers support Hobbes to a considerable extent and Bramhall scarcely at all. It might be said in fact that the most radical of the Reformers are in almost complete agreement with Hobbes except over the question of a will faculty, which,

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(a) E. V. 266, 298, 299

as we have seen, Hobbes treats contemptuously as a bogus entity. Although in many cases it is difficult to see what possible function it could perform, because even the will of Adam, sometimes called free, was ordained by God to make the choice it did make, all Reformers take for granted the existence of something, some entity, some faculty, called will.

There is a good deal of disagreement over the question as to how far if at all the wills of fallen men have any freedom, and we must be careful. We shall consider the opinions of some of the Reformers, but here we may anticipate by saying that the most extreme view is that there is not now, and never has been any such thing as free will in the creature, as being inconsistent with God's eternal will; and the Reformers are almost unanimous in holding that the fallen will is powerless to please God. On the other hand some of them hold that the fallen and corrupt will is free to choose this rather than that evil. Some even go further and hold with Augustine (a) as quoted by the formulators of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XVIII: "We confess that there is in all men a free will, which hath indeed the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby fitted, without God, either to begin or to perform anything in matters pertaining to God, but only in works belonging to the present life, whether they be good or evil". The name given by the confessors, headed by Melancthon, to this

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(a) Augustine, Hypognosticon, Lib. III

kind of good works is "civil righteousness" which the will "hath some liberty to work, and to choose such things as reason can reach unto". It may be noted further that the Reformers are almost unanimous in rejecting as Romish the doctrine that God's predestination is founded upon his prevision of grace in the creature.

An important point to be mentioned in connection with Hobbes's claim to the support of many Reformers, and Bramhall's answer, is that all the inconveniences listed by Bramhall as following on the doctrine of Hobbes, follow also from the doctrine of the majority of the Reformers. And since this argument is the strongest one Bramhall can produce in defence of liberty it would have been better if he had conceded the Reformers to his opponent. His opinion, after all, was derived from Arminius, who considered himself to be in opposition on the question of predestination and free will, to the body of reformed doctrine up to his time. Hobbes called in the Reformers to counterbalance Bramhall's repeated appeals to the schoolmen. The Reformers, almost to a man, rejected scholastic theology, and their attitude is well summed up by Melancthon in a passage quoted by Hobbes: "It is known that that profane scholastic learning, which they will have to be called divinity, began at Paris; which being admitted, nothing is left sound in the church, the gospel is obscured, faith extinguished, the doctrine of works received, and instead of Christ's people, we are become not so much as the people of the

law, but the people of Aristotle's Ethics" (a). Bramhall's attitude is the reverse of this: "It is strange to see with what confidence now a days, particular men slight all the schoolmen, and philosophers, and classic authors of former ages, as if they were not worthy to unloose the shoe strings of some modern authors, or did sit in darkness and the shadow of death, until some third Cato dropped down from heaven, to whom all men must repair, as to the altar of Prometheus, to light their torches" (b). Bramhall did not do his case much good by attempting to deprive Hobbes of the Reformers, whose doctrine obviously lends Hobbes substantial support; while he, Bramhall, at the same time clung to the schoolmen.

A study of the writings and creeds of the Reformers discloses a considerable variety of opinion on the question of free will and predestination. On the one hand there is the extreme view which has been called supralapsarian predestination such as was held by Beza, Calvin's disciple; and on the other hand there is the very moderate view of the formulators of the Saxon Visitation Articles, and of course of Arminius. In between are many shades of opinion. Again some reformers, like Luther, appear to have changed their views, or to have held inconsistent doctrines at different times. It is logical as well as convenient to give precedence to the first reformer.

In his famous letter to Erasmus Luther makes certain unequivocal statements on this question. There is for example

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(a) E. V. 64

(b) E. V. 58



this: "God foreknows nothing contingently, but foresees, and purposes, and accomplishes everything, by an unchangeable, eternal, and infallible will. But by this thunderbolt free will is struck to the earth and completely ground to powder". He continues: "Hence it irresistibly follows, that all which we do, and all which happens, although it seems to happen mutably and contingently, does in reality happen necessarily and unalterably, as far as respects the will of God" (a). In this connection may be noted an admission of Bramhall, damaging to his argument, that contingency may be simply a matter of appearance (b). Luther concludes his section as follows: "Since his (God's) will is not thwarted, the work which he wills cannot be prevented; but must be produced in the very place, time, and measure, which he himself both foresees and wills". After this uncompromising statement Luther goes on to complain, somewhat illogically, of the use which has crept into the dispute of the word "necessity". "It has," he says, "too harsh and incongruous a meaning for the occasion" (c); and it is interesting to note that the complaint was omitted from the Nieustadt edition, 1591, of his letter. In Part V, Section XXXIV, there appears another unequivocal statement, that nothing is done without God's will, and that there is "no such thing as free will in man or angel or any creature". In a passage which closely anticipates the view of Hobbes on reward and

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(a) Luther, Letter to Erasmus, Pt. I, X  
(b) E.V. 411  
(c) Luther, Letter to Erasmus, Pt. I, XI

punishment, Luther argues that merit and reward may consist with necessity: and shows how misplaced was Bramhall's contention that Luther's necessity being a "necessity of immutability", was of a different kind from the necessity of Hobbes. Luther's argument is that touching the question of human worthiness both merit and reward are of grace only; but from the point of view of "the consequences of actions, there is nothing either good or bad, which has not its reward" (a). With this we may compare Hobbes's statement that "he<sup>that</sup> doth evil willingly, whether he be necessarily willing, or not necessarily, may be justly punished" (b).

Bramhall puts forward two arguments to deprive Hobbes of the support of Luther. In the first place he maintains that Luther recanted the doctrine of necessity. With Melancthon he grew wiser, Bramhall declares, and retracted whatsoever he had written against free will (c). Secondly the necessity which Luther speaks of is a necessity only of immutability (d). Hobbes points out the hollowness of the second contention: "Luther says we act necessarily: necessarily by necessity of immutability, not by necessity of constraint: that is in plain English, necessarily, but not against our wills" (e). The position of both Luther and Hobbes may be put in this way: we are responsible for whatever we do willingly and not from com-

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- (a) Luther, Letter to Erasmus, Pt. III, XXXVII  
(b) E.V. 181  
(c) Bramhall, Castigations on Hobbes's Animadversions, No. 20  
(d) " " " " "  
(e) E.V. 298

pulsion; and for whatever we refrain from doing willingly and not from some physical impediment. This interpretation it is claimed is all that is implied by Luther's necessity of immutability; and fits precisely Hobbes's doctrine of the will and of liberty.

Bramhall claims, as we have seen, that Luther changed his mind. Certainly in other writings he seems to ignore or to have forgotten the unequivocal doctrine of the Letter to Erasmus; and inconsistency occurs before and after the classic declarations of opinion, so that the explanation would seem to be that Luther held different opinions in different contexts, and for different purposes. In his letter "Concerning Christian Liberty" to the most blessed Father Leo, for instance, he writes of the regenerate man who, seeking to please God, "comes into collision with that contrary will in his own flesh, which is striving to serve the world and to seek its own gratification". This was written early in Luther's reforming adventure, and before the letter to Erasmus, but he had already made up his mind about the cardinal tenet of justification by faith, and not by works. The "contrary will" here referred to again shows itself in the Augsburg Confession, and has attributed to it, as we have seen, the power to work a "civil righteousness". Luther presumably sanctioned the doctrines set forth in the most important of the early Lutheran confessions, and these show already a latitude on the question of modified free will which is wholly inconsistent

with the letter to Erasmus. Nevertheless this letter remains an unambiguous statement of the extreme doctrine and Hobbes was entitled to point to the similarity between his own views and those at one time expressed by the first reformer.

The Formula of Concord of 1576, and the Saxon Visitation Articles of 1592, have moved still farther away from the doctrine of the Letter to Erasmus. The Formula repudiates contemptuously "the madness of the Manichaeans, who taught that all things which come to pass take place of necessity, and cannot possibly be otherwise" (a). This reads like a prophetic denunciation of Hobbes. These confessors, in fact, set their course between the Scylla of Manichaeus, and the Charybdis of Pelagius, and produced a doctrine which has come to be accepted by most Christians, evangelical and otherwise, since the fierce fires of original controversy died down. The motto of the theme might be expressed in a sentence found in the Formula: "man's will in conversion is not idle, but effects somewhat" (b); although to be thus active it must be quickened by the Holy Ghost (c). Article XI of God's eternal predestination makes a distinction between God's foreknowledge and his predestination, which the Letter to Erasmus had identified as a single divine act, and which Hobbes was to declare are inseparable (d). The same Article XI asserts that

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(a) Formula of Concord, Art. II, Negative (1)  
(b) " " " Art. II, Negative (8)  
(c) " " " Art. II, Negative (9)  
(d) E. V. 19



God is not willing that any should perish and that the cause of the damnation of the ungodly is either because they stop their ears against the Word of God, or having heard it cast it aside. It is affirmed that the predestination and election of God extends only to the good and beloved children of God; and it is rejected utterly that some men are destined to destruction. The Saxon Visitation Articles confirm the moderate trend of the Formula, and add the doctrine, to be the subject of much controversy after Arminius, that some men fall from grace. In general the trend of the Lutherans, on this question as on others, was away from radical dogma toward a compromise.

In the opening chapters of "Institutes of the Christian Religion" Calvin places it on record that the mind of man is naturally endued with the knowledge of God; that "some sense of divinity is inscribed on every heart" (a). Although the divine knowledge is extinguished or corrupted, partly by ignorance, partly by wickedness, it is surprising enough that Calvin, the stern apostle of reprobation, should discover "some sense of the divinity" in every heart. The main thesis of this part of the Institutes is that God has ordained, supports and controls every single thing in the universe, and to this end makes use of "the agency of the impious, and inclines their minds to execute his judgments, yet without the least stain to his perfect purity" (b). Men can effect

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(a) Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Bk. I Ch. III

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(b) Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion Bk I, XVIII

nothing but by "the secret will of God". They can "deliberate on nothing but what he hath previously decreed and determined by his secret direction is proved by express and innumerable testimonies" (a). Whatever is attempted by men, or even by Satan "God still holds the helm" (b). The decree of God, further, is positive, not permissive, and to substitute a bare permission for the providence of God is nugatory and insipid; "as though God were sitting in a watch-tower, expecting fortuitous events, and so his decisions were dependent on the will of men" (c).

Hobbes also was scornful of the term permission; "I find no difference between the will to have a thing done, and the permission to do it, when he that permitteth it can hinder it" (d). Hobbes here answered Bramhall's assertion, "that God Almighty does indeed punish sin sometimes ... he also foreknoweth that the sin he permitteth shall be committed; but does not will it nor necessitate it" (e). Bramhall was concerned about the problem of sin, and the utmost that he would concede was that omnipotent God permits it. Even Hobbes was lured into verbal quibbles over this problem, as to which we shall have something to say in a later section. Calvin, for his part, performed feats of circumlocution: "In a wonderful and ineffable manner that is not done without his will, which

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(a) Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion Bk. I, XVIII (1)  
(b) " " " " " Bk. I, XVIII (1)  
(c) " " " " " Bk. I, XVIII (1)  
(d) E. V. 116  
(e) E. V. 116

yet is contrary to his will; because it would not be done if he did not permit it: and this permission is not involuntary but voluntary: nor would his goodness permit the perpetration of any evil, unless his omnipotence were able even from evil to educe good" (a). "How can these things be reconciled?" he asks at large about the unrighteous Jeroboam who did not reign by the will of God, and yet was appointed by God to be king.

The question is not answered, but blanketed in a cloud of words, and we are led on to the assertion: "we see then how God, while he hates perfidy, yet righteously and with a different design decrees the defection" (b). We may conclude that to the ordinary intelligence, and accepting the Calvinistic premises, the problem of sin is insoluble. That the righteous God decrees unrighteousness is according to his doctrine true, and no amount of verblage can soften the truth; and yet on the face of it, it is self-contradictory; since to ordain and decree sin must surely be the supremely sinful act.

Did God ordain the Fall? It is understandable that Calvin does not express himself clearly on this question; but if we accept as unequivocal doctrine that nothing happens "but by the secret will of God" (c), and that God's providence is positive and not merely permissive, and that in a wonderful way what "is contrary to his will, is not done without his will",

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(a) Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion Bk. I, XVIII (3)  
(b) " " " " " Bk. I, XVIII (3)  
(c) " " " " " Bk. I, XVIII (1)

it seems to follow that Adam's sin was not committed without the will of God. In Book II, in which Calvin treats of original sin, the emphasis all the time is on the guilt of Adam, and the imputed guilt of his descendants. Some statements suggest that Adam had freedom of choice; others revert to the main thesis that nothing is done without the will of God. There is for instance this statement in Chapter I of Book II: "Adam had never dared to resist the authority of God, if he had not discredited his word" (a). The wording here suggests that Adam made a free choice. The subject title of the next chapter also suggests that at one time man had free will: "Man in his present state is despoiled of freedom of will, and subjected to a miserable slavery". On the other hand the statements of belief in the chapter on "Eternal Election" are hardly compatible with free will in any man at any time, whether in Adam before the Fall, or in the most depraved of his descendants after it. "In conformity, therefore, to the clear doctrine of the scripture, we assert, that by an eternal and immutable counsel God hath once for all determined, both whom he would admit to salvation, and whom he could condemn to destruction". To certain men the gate of life is closed "by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgment"(b).

As to the will of fallen man there is no ambiguity. In the Castigations Bremhall quoted with approval a passage from

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{a} Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion Bk. II. I. (4)  
{b} " " " " " " Bk. III. XXI (7)



the Institutes in which Calvin by verbal manipulation sought to iron out certain inconsistencies in his account. It is Bramhall's argument that Calvin like Luther did not hold the Hobbesian doctrine of absolute necessity; but that some autonomy was left by him to the human will even after Adam's fall (a). Nothing of this, as far as I have been able to discover, can be extracted from the Institutes. The apparent belief of Augustine in modified free-will is explained away conclusively. We are left in no doubt. "If the whole man be subject to the dominion of sin, the will, which is the spiritual seal of it, must necessarily be bound with the firmest bonds" (b).

In an important chapter Calvin launches "a refutation of the objections commonly urged in the support of free-will". Here he refutes the imputation of "some absurdities" made to render the doctrine of predestination odious, as if it were abhorrent to common sense. He also rebuts the attacks upon it which make use of the testimony of scripture (c). Here he anticipates the answers to one of Bramhall's attacks upon the Hobbesian necessity. Bramhall purported to prove from reason and scripture that Hobbes was mistaken; and he introduced among other data, the question of punishment. Hobbes's reply is in effect that the metaphysical question of ultimate and proximate causes is not relevant to punishment, which in general

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(a) Bramhall, Castigations on Hobbes's Animadversions  
(b) Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion Bk. II. II (27)  
(c) " " " " " " Bk. II. V.

serves a utilitarian purpose. It is a deterrent to other potential offenders. To some extent Calvin's view of punishment is in agreement with this. "For what importance is it, whether sin be committed with a judgment free or enslaved, so it be committed with the voluntary bias of the passions"? Punishment is deserved and just, while rewards are in no way merited, but depend wholly on divine beneficence.

On a reasonable interpretation of Calvin's Institutes it is submitted that two features only distinguish the doctrine of predestination taught by Calvin from the absolute necessity of Hobbes, as applied by the philosopher to christian theology. In the first place Calvin has no teaching to correspond to the Hobbesian doctrine of second causes. The Reformer does not concern himself with the means adopted by the deity for working out his absolute will in the temporal universe. Secondly there is in the system of Hobbes some mitigation of the full meaning of reprobation, which is of course as much included in his system as election. Calvin allows reprobation its complete horror, but according to Hobbes punishment of the reprobate is not to be eternal; and he places hell, as he places heaven, on earth. In fact, quite pointedly he robs hell of its terror. We may add that Calvin's opinion was held, not because of any theory about the nature of reality and causation, but on the ground which Hobbes also professed, in addition to his sweeping materialist premise, that in the origin God decreed all things just precisely as they should be.

To Beza also must be attributed the same opinion, although in his expressed doctrine there is contradiction. In the Treasure of Truth, Aphorism III, he declares that Adam, having been created by God, not in sin but in God's image, "afterwards, constrained by none at all, and driven also by no necessity of concupiscence or lusts, as concerning his will (for as yet he was not bound under sin) of his own accord, and freely rebelling against God, bequeathed himself unto sin, and unto both deaths, that is of body and soul". Adam according to this acted freely in his choice in the Garden of Eden.

Aphorism V, however, while a show of consistency is attempted by sheer verbal gymnastics, plainly conveys an opposite view: "It doth therefore remain that the fall did in such sort issue from the willing motion, or stirring of Adam, as that yet it happened not against the will of God, whom after a certain wonderful and unconceivable manner it pleaseth, that even the same thing, which he doth not allow in that it is sin, cometh not to pass without his will; and that, as we have said before, that he should show the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy; and declare his wrath and power in those vessels which he hath made therefore, that he might set forth his glory by their just damnation". The godly and learned Father J. Foxe put the case decisively: "Election, depending upon God's free grace and will, excludeth all man's will, blind fortune, chance, and all peradventures".

It is sometimes said that the common view of the Calvinistic creeds is infralapsarianism, as opposed to

supralapsarianism, and we may consider whether the distinction is important. To begin with it must not be thought that infralapsarianism teaches that God's predestination rests upon a decree which was after Adam's fall. No Calvinist creed of course teaches any such thing. God's decree was before the foundation of the world. In his treatise on predestination W.H. Copinger expresses the difference between the two views. According to supralapsarianism "we ought to conceive of God as first decreeing to manifest himself by saving some men and consigning the rest to misery, then in sequence and subordination to this decree, resolving to create man and to permit him to fall into sin". It is the teaching of the infralapsarians, on the other hand, that "we ought to conceive of God as first decreeing to create man and to permit him to fall, and then as resolving to save some men out of this fallen condition and to leave the rest to perish". The difference according to this account is simply as to the timing of various decrees, and neither one view nor the other makes any more comprehensible or less obnoxious the stark implication that God is responsible for the sin and misery, and the eternal perdition of the vast majority of his creatures.

The distinction between high and low predestination is very closely linked with the other question we have touched upon: did Adam really have freedom of choice or was his choice just another of the events decreed by God? The most basic doctrine of all the strictly Calvinist creeds is that God



decreed every single event in the universe, including the choice to be made in the Garden of Eden, "before the foundation of the world". The Belgic Confession of 1651 declares that "nothing happens in this world without God's appointment; nevertheless God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed." And if this seems paradoxical to us we are told "as to what God doth surpassing human understanding we will not curiously enquire into ..."

The Scotch Confession of 1560 stresses that God's election was "before the foundation of the world", that is prior to Adam's defection. The Thirty Nine Articles, the Lambeth Articles, and the Irish Articles, all contain statements of the same sort. The Thirty Nine Articles refer to "the everlasting purpose of God" in the matter of predestination to life, "whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind.."

The Lambeth Articles state that "God from eternity hath predestinated certain men unto life; certain men he hath reprobated". The Irish Articles declare that "God from all eternity did, by his unchangeable counsel ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass". The fact that in the opinion of the confessors by this doctrine "no violence is offered to the wills of ~~the~~ reasonable creatures, and neither the liberty nor the contingency of the second causes is taken away, but established rather", would simply require us to supply

definitions of these terms "liberty" and "will" similar to those of Hobbes.

The influence of Arminius on religious thought in this country and in America has been profound. The Five Articles of the Remonstrants were published in 1610, and within a very short time the doctrine, new to protestant theology, had been accepted by a large body of leaders in the Church of England. Bramhall accepts, and goes further. Although champions of strict Calvinism have not been wanting, the creed of Arminius has been the basis, on the question <sup>in</sup> of dispute between Hobbes and Bramhall, of almost all official creeds, high and low, formulated since the seventeenth century. The Quakers accept it, the Methodists, the Congregationalists, the Baptists; it is even the ground for amendments to the creed of the Reformed Dutch Church, as it is accepted in America. We may go further and suggest that even in churches where the official creed is still Calvinistic, it is doubtful whether Calvin's doctrine of predestination would ever be taught from the pulpit. It may fairly be claimed that Dr. Arminius of Leyden was one of the most influential of all protestant theologians, and the reason is fairly obvious. His creed is so much more acceptable to the ordinary sense of justice and righteousness, and permits of a conception of God which most Christians would cling to - that of a being endued with love for all his creatures, and providing the means for all to avail themselves of his favour.

The doctrine of Arminius goes back to Aquinas who taught

a mild Augustinianism, hinging on two apparently incompatible heads of doctrine. (1) God is supreme and absolute master of his grace. (2) Man remains free under the action of grace. The second head is staunchly preserved, but proves itself in fact a hollow affirmation, as the will of man is seen to be without causal efficacy. It was the concern of Aquinas to show that God, the first cause of all things, was not the author of sin; and to this end he makes use of an argument which anticipates the verbal juggling of some of the protestant theologians, of Bramhall, and on this question, we must admit, of Hobbes. A distinction should be drawn, he says, between the act of sin which God decreed together with every other positive event in the universe, and the want of conformity of the act with the law of God. The latter is a negation and therefore not something that God could decree. This kind of argument, which is doubtless part of the "angelic sifting" referred to by Maritain, is evidence of the recognition by Aquinas of the antithesis between view points, neither of which he can reject completely.

The doctrine of predestination had been the subject of protracted dispute throughout the Middle Ages, and it is a fact that none of the schoolmen could bring himself to express opinions as extreme as those of Calvin. The most that would be accepted was a conditional necessity such as Arminius was to teach. God's decree is absolute as it concerns his own actions, but conditional as it concerns the actions of men;

so that the sovereignty of God is compatible with the liberty of men. Such was the gist of scholastic opinion, and Aquinas himself <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ much nearer to it than he was even to Augustine. There <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ many evasions of harsh logic. John Scotus Erigena, for example, found an escape from paradox on metaphysical grounds. The concepts of predestination and foreknowledge, he argued, were meaningless as applied to God, who had no before and after. This notion was reproduced by Bramhall who argued the timelessness of God's being and actions, which are always and simply now.

The creed drawn up by the supporters of Arminius, after the death of the master, affirms in Article I the truth of God's eternal election, but declares that it was of "those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe ... etc." Article III declares that man has not saving grace of himself, or of the energy of his will; Article IV says that "this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good... But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace it is not irresistible ..." The doctrine is a justification of punishment, the reality of which no Christian reading his Bible could deny, rather than to make a case for the freedom of will. In this respect Bramhall and other theologians of his school, went well beyond the intentions of Arminius. They overstressed the freedom of the will, which Arminius did not do. Indeed on this question the latter appears to leave us in much the same position as Calvin, with the human will in



bondage. Of the energy of his own free will man can do nothing pleasing to God. He can however resist the grace of God, which gives some ground for his punishment.

There are two departures in the doctrine of Arminius which were hotly debated at the time. There is the possibility, he believed, of sinless perfection in this life; and it is possible also for the regenerate to fall from grace. The latter point of belief had the emphatic support of Milton whose views on predestination were Arminian rather than Calvinist. Milton considers the fall of Adam separately from the question of predestination of the elect. As far as the Fall is concerned, although God undoubtedly knew that the event would happen, Adam and Eve sinned willingly. "Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault" (a). The will of Adam was really free, together with the wills of all created beings including Satan; for if

"not free

. What proof could they have given sincere.

Of true allegiance"?

But God knew that the Adversary would pervert Adam, and that Adam would "hearken to his glozing lies". After the Fall God's eternal purpose concerning fallen man comes into operation:

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(a) This and following quotations from Milton are from Bk. III of Paradise Lost

"Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will;  
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me  
Freely vouchsafed".

The lapsed powers of men would be renewed, but whether or not free grace would operate upon all is not certain.

"Some I have chosen of peculiar grace,  
Elect above the rest; so is my will:  
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warned  
Their sinful state, and to appease betimes  
The incensed deity, while offered grace  
Invites".

The effect on the rest of this timely warning is not disclosed, but there is no clear statement that none but the elect will be saved. There is no hint of reprobation. On the other hand the possibility of lapse is clearly taught. It is only those "to the end persisting" who shall "safe arrive".

Milton, who states eloquently the case of Arminius, evades the issue: How can the absolute sovereignty of God be reconciled with liberty in men. The views of Milton were not reached by logical process, but because of the moral revulsion with which strict Calvinism inspired him. For him to deny free will was to deny reason, for "reason also is choice". And like Milton Arminius evaded the issue as did the schoolmen he followed. If God is really the omnipotent creator, he must be held responsible for the bad as well as the good in the world. No other opinion seems possible. Calvin and his

disciples faced up to this and produced a creed which is intolerable; while Arminius withdrew in face of the dilemma, and covered his retreat with charitable words. Perhaps his course was the better, as it was certainly the more human and acceptable, if the traditional conception of a transcendent deity was not to be radically revised.

The Canons of the Synod of Dort, which answered the Remonstrant challenge to strict Calvinism, seized on the Arminian justification of punishment in the very first article of the first head of doctrine. "God would not have been unjust in leaving all to perish". For the most part these canons reiterate the doctrines we have already discussed in considering the earlier <sup>Calvinist</sup> creeds, and so also does the English Westminster Confession of 1647, which repeats the qualifying statement in the Irish Articles, that "God's unchangeable ordination offers no violence to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away". In Chapter IX, of Free-Will, the Confessors affirm categorically that in a state of innocence man had free-will, that is a "natural liberty", "neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined ... etc." This Confession, and the Synod of Dort, are held to be the principal organs of Infralapsarian Calvinism; and it may be that the distinction between this doctrine and supralapsarianism is not that

outlined by W.A. Copinger (a), but lies in the fact that the former doctrine denies that Adam was necessitated by nature to sin, while the latter implies, though there may be no expression of the implication, that God not only decreed the fall but actually created Adam with a depraved nature. That, as Hobbes might say, not only the end was determined, but the means also.

It is clear that the Hobbeian necessity, on its theological side, is satisfied by nothing short of unqualified predestination and reprobation. It is also clear that Hobbes has the substantial support of the Protestant Reformers as he claimed, and that Bramhall's attempts to refute his claim are simply quibbling.

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(a) See W.A. Copinger, A Treatise on Predestination Election and Grace.



BRAMHALL'S DEFENCE OF LIBERTY AND  
HOBBES'S REPLIES

We have seen that Hobbes faced up to the true meaning of the mechanistic philosophy and formulated definitions which marked a breach with traditional belief. Viewing his contribution to thought from the standpoint of religion it is enough to say that he had no use for the word spiritual in anything like the traditional sense. It was natural that his doctrine should have been felt to be an attack on religion. But of course his arguments were read and denounced without comprehension. He was in fact offering an entirely new definition of the term religion, so that any injury done by him to religion in the traditional sense was in some way privileged. His doctrine of necessity, which went no further than Calvin or Beza, though it took away the very ground of traditional Christian belief and sentiment which is bound up with the love of God and love for God, is absolutely demanded by his premises, and absolutely in keeping with his revolutionary thought. Calvin covered his affront to the religion of love and the spirit of charity by the language of piety, but the offence he committed was more deadly to the true religious sentiment than anything that came from the pen of Hobbes, who should have been clearly recognised for what he was, not a wolf in sheep's clothing, but a philosopher much salted with scepticism though not an atheist, adjusting himself to the outlook and feeling of a hyper-religious society, and adapting

its language to his argument.

At the commencement of his discourse Bramhall places alternatives before the reader: "Either I am free to write this discourse for liberty against necessity, or I am not free. If I be free I have obtained the cause, and ought not to suffer for the truth. If I be not free, yet I ought not to be blamed, since I do it not out of my voluntary election, but out of an evitable necessity" (a). If I am not free how can I be blamed? It is an undeniable fact that people are blamed for their actions, and are also punished for them. If the doctrine of Hobbes is true, how can such censure and such punishment possibly be just. On the view of Hobbes, Bramhall is asking, what becomes of the notion of desert? The question for him is not so much one of logic as of morality?

Hobbes's answer to this challenge can be gathered from various parts of his discourse. In effect he argues that the question of desert is not relevant to the question in dispute, which is: Are all actions determined by antecedent necessity? Hobbes says that they are, but the truth of necessity does not in any way affect the quality of our behaviour, its commendability or reprehensibility. Although voluntary actions are predetermined, they are none the less voluntary; and for what a man does voluntarily he is justly punished or rewarded. Hobbes is able to support this view, paradoxical as it appears

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(a) E. V. 29

at first sight, by the special definitions he gives of such terms as voluntary, free, election, spontaneous and the like; and as a secondary support he could put forward his doctrine of good and bad. Why do we say some kinds of behaviour are bad, that is morally bad? The answer is because they please us not, or because in our opinion they are noxious or harmful to our interest. We are not concerned with the causes of behaviour, or the states of mind of delinquents; and we censure such "bad" behaviour, and punish those who are guilty of it, either as a corrective to them, so that for the future they will not behave in a way that may harm us, or as a warning to others who might be tempted to do the same. We shall see that when he is expounding ethical doctrine, and writing as a sociologist and moralist, rather than as an exponent of mechanist philosophy, he expresses opinions which seem much closer to traditional views and to those of Bramhall. He stresses so much the importance of motive and intention in ethics, that<sup>it</sup> is hard to reconcile what he says with the radical materialism underlying his doctrine of necessity. In his discourse on necessity, however, he does make allowance in his own way for the notion of desert. He would say simply to Bramhall that if his (Bramhall's) act of writing his discourse was necessitated, then so is an act of censure of a person holding an opposite opinion. Hobbes does not deny that mistakes are made, that those mistakes are censured by others, or even that they are justly censured. What he does do is to

place these acts and all others in the universe in a pattern of cohesive second causes, all of which he claims are determined by antecedent necessity.

The opening challenge of Bramhall, and the answer of Hobbes which we can reconstruct, serve clearly to underline the difference in approach of these two men to the problem they are debating. Bramhall strays sometimes into the deep water of metaphysics, but he is concerned mainly with practical aims. He is horrified by the doctrine of Hobbes, and denounces it because of the moral consequences which he believes must flow from it. Hobbes, on the other hand, writes principally as a logician, and develops his argument from axioms and definitions. At the points where his doctrine impinges on ethics to many it would hardly be acceptable. Because of the wide divergence in approach it is easy to understand why the protagonists failed so often really to come to grips in their dispute. They were not always thinking or writing about the same thing.

Both Hobbes and Bramhall admit, either directly or by implication, the futility of the dispute in which they are engaged if its object is to persuade the opponent to change his mind. It is not clear to what extent they anticipated that their views would be made public. Hobbes more than once half-apologises for some of his "paradoxes" (the word is his own) and expresses the hope that they will not be published. But unless they were consciously writing to the public, or at least



to a wide circle of educated people, it is difficult to see how they could escape feeling that they were wasting their time. They started their arguments from opposite premises and were bound to differ fundamentally. To what extent did either or both of them appreciate that the views they were expressing rested upon suppositions which might be true and equally might be false. Hobbes appeals to general usage to support his definitions, but this of course is not proof; and he admits that "arguments seldom work on men of wit and learning, when they have once engaged themselves in a contrary opinion". Bramhall, for his part constantly underwrites in effect the soundness of his position by surrendering argument to persuasion and exhortation. "I am in possession of an old truth, derived by inheritance or succession, from mine ancestors"; whereas Hobbes's opinion is "an innovation, a strange paradox, without probable grounds, rejected by all authors, yea, by all the world" (a). Again, "My assertion is most true, that we ought not to desert a certain truth, because we are not able to comprehend the certain manner". And the certain truth, that liberty is consistent with the omnipotence and prescience of God, is "a truth demonstrable in reason, received and believed in all the world", and he (Bramhall) "ought to adhere to that truth which is manifest" (b). Hobbes's reply to this is worth quoting: "But why should he adhere to

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(a) E. V. 331

(b) E. V. 330

it, unless it be manifest to himself? And if it be manifest to himself, why does he deny that he is able to comprehend it? And if he be not able to comprehend it, how knows he that it is demonstrable? Or why says he that so confidently, which he does not know" (a). Bramhall's arguments, in so far as he attempts to make them logical, are not very strong, because his premises are not the kind from which any deduction can be drawn. If there is liberty in his sense, then literally anything may happen; the future is unpredictable and the present and past indecipherable. For Hobbes of course the position was the exact reverse; the only leap in the dark he had to take was over his first premise.

In this dispute, then, Hobbes had the easier task, as granted his premises, and allowing for certain inconveniences in his system on the side of a strained and artificial conformity to certain aspects of current theology, and saving knotty problems touching the morality of God, he had simply to appeal to logic. Bramhall's task was not so straightforward because, like Arminius and all the opponents of theological determinism before him, he presented a doctrine which was not logically sound. The theologian may perhaps retort, so much the worse for logic; but Bramhall attempts repeatedly to dispute with Hobbes on the latter's own ground; and his task is accordingly the more difficult. His strongest appeal is

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(a) E. V. 537

to "the horrid consequences which flow from" Hobbes's doctrine, in that it "destroys liberty and dishonours the nature of man" (a). To this kind of argument Hobbes retorted that "the question is not what is fit to be preached, but what is true".

We have seen that Hobbes began his argument with definitions, and thenceforth he was able to proceed, making use of the traditional vocabulary. The will, for instance, is the last appetite in deliberation, or the single immediate appetite prefacing spontaneous action. Spontaneous acts are voluntary acts done without deliberation and not through fear. Voluntary acts are acts done wilfully, including those induced by fear. Liberty is the absence of physical impediments to action. Deliberation is a succession of appetites and aversions as an object appears more or less desirable. And so on. Hobbes attempts to support and justify his definitions of terms with the observation that "to prove they are well defined, there can be no other proof offered, but every man's own experience and memory of what he meaneth by such words. For definitions being the beginning of all demonstration, cannot themselves be demonstrated, that is, proven to another man" (b). In the first place it might be pointed out that the Hobbesian interpretation of these terms almost certainly does not answer to the usage of the ordinary man; and secondly Hobbes resorts to Bramhall's expedient of issuing challenge, and this underlines

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(a) E. V. 111

(b) E. V. 397

again the real nature of his argument. It is a priori. According to his theory based on a supposition, he has defined certain terms. The definitions of course presuppose the original premises; and the definitions themselves might serve as the starting point for further argument. Nevertheless, like all definitions, they are undemonstrable; and there is no argument to be made against an opponent who does not accept the original supposition. Bramhall does not accept the supposition, and challenges Hobbes's definitions at every point.

Like his opponent Bramhall was guilty occasionally of question-begging. In the long run this could scarcely be avoided. To support his contention that accidents are not any more necessary than free acts, Bramhall submits an illustration: "A man walking through the street of a city to do his occasions, a tile falls from a house and breaks his head. The breaking of his head was not necessary, for he did freely choose to go that way without necessitation" (a). And this, Hobbes comments, "is as much as taking the question itself for a proof" (b). But the logical fault perhaps, and the criticism, are not important in view of the nature of Bramhall's case. Just as Hobbes founds his argument on assumption, so the doctrine of Bramhall rests upon an inner conviction for which there could be no proof. "That there are free actions which proceed merely from election, without

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(a) E. V. 408

(b) E. V. 418



any outward necessitation, is a truth so evident as that there is a sun in the heavens; and he that doubteth of it may as well doubt whether there be a shell without the nut, or a stone within the olive" (a). The empiricist could point out that for the existence of the sun in the heavens we have the evidence of our senses; and to discover whether or not there is a nut inside the shell, or a stone inside the olive, we have only to crack the shell of the one and bite into the other. Our senses will then inform us of the facts. But for the truth, or even probability, of the doctrine of free will, there can be no such evidence. To meet Hobbes's assertion that "it is out of all controversy" ... "that of voluntary actions the will is a necessary cause", Bramhall supplies his own interpretation of the words. "That which the will wills", he says, "is necessarily voluntary, because the will cannot be compelled". This statement indeed "is out of all controversy" (b). To this Hobbes's immediate and instinctive reaction is to seize on a point of terminology. For the time being he ignores the main contention, as this he could traverse only by simple denial, and, as Bramhall claimed, it really was out of all controversy. Hobbes says (relevantly to his own definition) that to say that the will wills is to talk nonsense (c).

Hobbes was ready enough to jump on the logical lapses of his opponent; but as already observed he was by no means free

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(a) E. V. 407

(b) E. V. 375

(c) E. V. 379

himself from question begging. "It is true that the will is not produced but in the same instant with the last dictate of the understanding; but the necessity of the will and the necessity of the last dictate of the understanding, may have been antecedent". So far the assertion is properly hypothetical and tacitly allows that the whole theory is assumed; but the next instant he has plunged: "For the last dictate of the understanding was produced by causes antecedent, and was then necessary though not yet produced".(a).

Both Bramhall and Hobbes acknowledge in different ways that their respective positions cannot be proved. As far as Hobbes is concerned there can be no proof beyond his definitions; a circumstance which his argument shares with all deductive theories; and as far as Bramhall is concerned there can be no proof at all. Hobbes may point to the logical coherence of his system; Bramhall, though he attempted proof, should have been content simply to appeal to the concurrence of opinion, sense of justice, and so forth. But the fact that this was his only real argument does not necessarily tell against his thesis and in favour of Hobbes. The issue is a very old one, and in the last resort the decision can be nothing other than personal and a matter of choice. In fact, as Bramhall keeps reasonably clear of metaphysics, and as his plain man's thesis that everybody has free will certainly may

be true, and is certainly believed by a great many people, he is entitled to use all the persuasion at his command. The weakest parts of his argument are not when he uses persuasion, exhortation, challenge, but when he attempts to meet his opponent on his own ground. He had placed alternatives before the reader: either I am free to write, or I am not free. Take your choice. If he thought that his own opinion that a man is free (in the traditional sense of free) to write or not to write needed support to be acceptable, his best line of argument was from this very standpoint, the acceptability of his opinion. On practical and pragmatic grounds he could have shown, as indeed he did for part of the time, that his opinion was greatly to be preferred to his opponent's. This kind of argument should have sufficed. It was his strongest, and it was very strong indeed; and to Hobbes's contention that the question is not what is fit to be preached but what is true, Bramhall could have answered that there could be no certainty of either opinion as both were based on unprovable assumptions.

In spite of Hobbes's explanation that God wills the means as well as the end, Bramhall insisted with much plausibility that the doctrine of antecedent necessity makes nonsense of exhortation and persuasion. The argument of Hobbes might be put like this: The fact that X happens to utter persuasive words to Y, for the purpose of influencing Y, and which do in fact influence Y, is just another second cause. And he would define persuasion, which is in two parts, the act

of persuading and the resultant effect of being persuaded, in materialistic terms. We must remember that all second causes are some form of motion in or of matter. And although the process of uttering words, and the process of hearing the words can probably be defined in purely materialistic terms, this is not true of the totally different kinds of occurrences; intending to convey a certain meaning by the words, and understanding the meaning. However meaning is defined, and philosophers seem to agree that it is a difficult word to define, it is still something that has to be understood; and Bramhall was on very strong ground indeed when he argued in effect that exhortation and persuasion, at any rate as far as the significant elements in such occurrences are concerned, the conveyance and understanding of meaning, are outside the interconnected pattern of second causes which Hobbes alleges, which are all of them material causes, and which operate mechanistically. Hobbes was of course entitled to his materialistic determinism, but as an all round theory it falls short of explaining understanding, and also of explaining motive, intention, and teleological experience and behaviour generally. How far this weakness in his position must be attributed to his materialism, and is not part of a thorough going determinism however explained, we shall discuss in a moment.

Just as Bramhall argued that Hobbes's doctrine of necessity took all meaning from exhortation and persuasion, so he maintained that it robbed moral behaviour of its



traditional value and sanction. If the doctrine were true, he claimed, no one could logically be commended for doing well, and no one could be held morally culpable for behaviour as to which he had no choice. Clarendon argued in his Brief Survey of Leviathan, that Mr. Hobbes was without a "conscience made and instructed like other men's"; that his judgment was "fixed under philosophical and metaphysical notions", so that his conscience was never "disturbed by religious speculations and apprehensions" (a). The observations seem partly to be well founded.

The blow to morality which Bramhall conceived to have been dealt by the doctrine of necessity, was certainly one of the most serious in his estimation; and it angered and exasperated him the more as he pondered "the horrid consequences which flow from" the Hobbesian thesis (b). These compose a catalogue of unspeakable affronts to human nature, to say nothing of the divine. The doctrine "destroys liberty, and dishonours the nature of man" (c). Man's nature is dishonoured in that the doctrine renders meaningless and unnecessary the use of reason; it denies election, makes nonsense of consultations (d), renders care and precaution and the taking of remedies nugatory. "If I shall recover, (that is, if I am necessitated to recover) what need I this unsavoury potion? If I shall not recover, what good will it do me?" (e). It makes a mockery of

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(a) Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan. Survey of Ch. 29  
(b) E. V. 111 (c) E. V. 111 (d) E. V. 169  
(e) E. V. 76

repentance, and prayer, and does away with piety (a), is capable in short of overthrowing all societies and commonwealths in the world (b), and "man hath no remedy but patience and to shrug up the shoulders. This is the doctrine that flows from this opinion of absolute necessity" (c).

With these criticisms Bramhall has given Hobbes a good deal to answer and Hobbes I feel sometimes treats his opponents arguments with less seriousness than they deserve. It is worth repeating that fundamentally they are objections based on pragmatic considerations and their scope is practical. If we accept the doctrine of Hobbes, Bramhall would demand, what will be the result? We shall be committed to a point of view in which the use of sovereign reason is in practice denied; and in which good works, even those most acceptable to God, the expressions of piety and the dependence and faith of prayer, are robbed of all meaning, and so inevitably discouraged. Hobbes failed to recognise the nature of the objections and countered them with logic. "Though it be a good form of reasoning to argue from absurdities (self-contradiction), yet it is no good form of reasoning to argue from inconveniences; for inconvenience may stand well enough with truth" (d).

The positive retort of Hobbes to the argument from inconveniences has been referred to already. All these things said to be rendered nonsensical and nugatory by his doctrine,

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{a} E. V. 199, 200  
{c} E. V. 168

{b} E. V. 150  
{d} E. V. 432

consultations, precautions, remedies, repentance, prayer, are provided for by that doctrine. In his system they appear, together with all other events and existences, as second causes. Necessity is overriding and universal; there is necessity of the means as well as of the end. Some of the objections and inconveniences which Bramhall has listed, Hobbes would say are not in fact inconveniences. The medicine, for instance, may well be the cause of recovery; and as for piety, Hobbes declares that this is evinced by worship which consists in an inner acknowledgment of God's power, and outward signs of the inner state of mind. To declare that all events in the universe are determined by the omnipotent decree of God is certainly not to undervalue his power. Bramhall believes that in worship our minds go out to the love of God as well as to his power, but Hobbes may well claim to have mitigated this inconvenience. There is still however, in the indictment of Bramhall, a great deal to be answered, and the question is, does the doctrine of second causes meet the objections. Bramhall might well claim that the doctrine serves only to underline the nature of the objections, and to leave them as starkly challenging as ever.

It has been suggested that Hobbes's efforts at materialistic analysis of his thesis present great difficulties; and so let us for the moment disregard this side of his account. Does the assertion that every volition is caused take all meaning from exhortation and persuasion or rob moral behaviour of its

meaning? We may consider the question by examining possible alternative suggestions about the nature of volitions. There could be no cause of a volition other than events in the experience of the person making the volition, and it might be asserted that some or all volitions are completely dissociated from former and contemporaneous events in the life of that person. This seems hardly credible. Again it might be asserted, and this seems to be Bramhall's case, that whereas all volitions are in some way related to and influenced by the experience of the person who wills, there are certain volitions in which a true original choice is made. This would be where the influences from experience are genuinely conflicting. Bramhall would say that reason decides the issue and that a volition which follows is a free choice. We may quote what Bramhall says; "True liberty consists in the elective power of the rational will"; and "Reason is the root, the fountain, the original of true liberty, which judgeth and presenteth to the will, whether this or that be convenient". Hobbes quarrels with the terminology, but again I think it is fairly easy to see what Bramhall means. Now this doctrine is being asserted as an alternative to the dogma that every volition is caused; and a question at once presents itself. In what way does Bramhall's account of choice made by the "rational will" differ from Hobbes's account of deliberation?

Bramhall holds that there is a reasoning faculty, and also a willing faculty, apart from particular volitions. Hobbes of



course denies this, and holds that will is the last appetite: every last appetite, or every singular appetite, is a particular volition. This view is characteristic of his economical mode of thinking, which is in harmony with the dictum that entities ought not to be multiplied. Even Hobbes, however, cannot be cleared absolute of the objectionable practice.

The question to consider now is: Is the will faculty of Bramhall truly autonomous; or is choice always unconsciously determined one way or the other? The hypothesis of a will faculty does not affect the question of the freedom of the will. Hobbes admits that appetites are framed this way and that as objects seem to us more or less desirable; he also says that a man is free who has not done deliberating. Bramhall says that the will is free; Hobbes, that the man is free, during the process of deliberation. But Hobbes also has in mind some existent, signified by the pronoun "us", capable of assessing probable advantage or disadvantage of actions. We can only repeat that here he has surely an entity as objectionable as Bramhall's will faculty. If we accept the thesis of Hobbes that there is no autonomy, that all appetites and aversions are determined and follow each other until one is realised according to determinist principles, what would happen in the case of exactly balanced claims for and against a projected course of action? Does Hobbes allow for such a possibility; for the case of Buridan's ass? Bramhall, it seems, makes provision for this possibility, and Hobbes does

not. Nevertheless Hobbes's account of deliberation, in particular as it is related to the question of morality, seems to make little sense unless we assume that a man has the capacity to discriminate and to choose between conflicting possibilities. The deliberation of Hobbes, therefore, must be taken as much the same kind of mental process or occurrence as Bramhall's election of the rational will.

We have reached the view that Hobbes does not follow through convincingly with his determinism, but is forced to use language more than once which is more appropriate to the view of Bramhall. Nevertheless his doctrine is that all events in the universe, including all volitions, are necessitated, and we can now return to the real import of Bramhall's main criticism. Bramhall is concerned about the "horrid consequences" which would flow from a general acceptance of this doctrine. The doctrine, he thought, would be bound to have a disastrous effect upon conduct. Was Bramhall's fear justified? Is the fatalistic outlook, for example, more detrimental to behaviour, or more conducive to good behaviour, than the outlook of those who hold that it is in the power of man to mould his own destiny. This is the moral issue, in effect, which Bramhall would place before the reader, and for our purpose it must remain undecided. Bramhall's argument is that for anybody holding the view that consultations are systems of events predetermined and necessitated, consultations become a mockery. And it is the same for prayer and repentance and piety. If a

man sincerely believes that all these actions and attitudes are necessitated, what possible meaning can they have for him? "And for repentance ...", Hobbes had argued, "though the causes that made him go astray were necessary, yet there is no reason why he should not grieve, though the causes why he returned into the way were necessary, there remain still the causes of joy" (a). And again "Prayer is the gift of God, no less than the blessings; and the prayer is decreed together in the same decree wherein the blessing is decreed" (b). In the system, Hobbes declares, absolutely nothing is overlooked, nothing is omitted; and Bramhall's objection to the claim to comprehensiveness is that a genuine resort to consultation, sincere repentance, real prayer, and honest piety, are really free or really spontaneous, and not only in name: and they presuppose a state of mind in which these actions and movements and aspirations, are held to be really free or really spontaneous. The doctrine of Hobbes, Bramhall declares, destroys the very ground for prayer and repentance, since it takes away belief in their efficacy per se, rather than as predetermined in a clock-work of second causes. It is worth noting that to meet this moral objection which Bramhall has raised, Hobbes goes back finally to a favourite theme: Morality is obedience (c); and the sovereign has power to compel obedience; to make it worth while. Morality is thus taken out of the discussion. It is

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(a) E. V. 200

(b) E. V. 200

(c) E. V. 436

arguable, however, that by dodging the issue in this way Hobbes admits the cogency of Bramhall's objections, as he does also by his half-apologies for the doctrine of necessity, and his nervousness lest it should be made public to those not able to understand it. Bramhall objects to the doctrine of necessity on grounds of public policy, and Hobbes who in the advocacy of other doctrine was a passionate champion of the claims of public policy, might well have been brought to pause.

One of the strongest of Bramhall's arguments against the doctrine of necessity was simply to assert the fact of sin, and the scriptural certainty of punishment for sin. First as to sin. Bramhall declared: "... Take away liberty and you take away the very nature of evil, and the formal reason for sin"; and that because "... this opinion of the necessity of all things, makes sin to be very good, and just, and lawful; for nothing can flow essentially by way of physical determination from the first cause, which is the law and rule of goodness and justice, but that which is good and just and lawful" (a). Bramhall gave an account of the nature of sin. "These things are required to make an act or omission culpable. First, that it be in our power to perform it or forbear it; secondly, that we be obliged to perform it or forbear it, respectively; thirdly that we omit that which we ought to have done, or do that which we ought to have omitted. No man sins in doing

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(a) E. V. 232



those things which he could not shun, or forbearing those things which never were in his power" (a). Hobbes would profess agreement with this, but would give a different account from Bramhall of what is, and what is not, in a man's power. Everything is in a man's power, Hobbes would say, that he is not physically prevented from doing, or is not physically incapable of doing. The fact that volitions are determined antecedently has no bearing on the question as to whether an act or omission is in a man's power. A man is responsible, says Hobbes, for what he does without compulsion of physical force or fear, or for what he omits and was physically capable of doing. Bramhall adds a further condition: the man must have been free to will otherwise than he did. It follows from necessity, Bramhall argues, "either that Adam did not sin, and that there is no such thing as sin in the world, because it proceeds naturally, necessarily, and essentially from God; or that God is more guilty of it and more the cause of evil than man, because man is extrinsically, inevitably determined, but so is not God" (b). "It was better", he declares, "to be an atheist, to believe no God; or to be a Manichee, to believe two Gods, a God of good and a God of evil; or with the heathen, to believe thirty-thousand Gods; than thus to charge the true God to be the proper cause and the true author of all the sins the evils which are in the world" (c).

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(a) E. V. 45

(b) E. V. 111

(c) E. V. 112

To find some explanation of the fact of sin which does not outrage every Christian preconception of the Godhead, is hardly possible for the strict Calvinist; and as for Hobbes, by clinging to a show of orthodoxy, including in his system the Calvinist God, and acknowledging Calvinistic predestination to be the interpretation <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ the doctrinal side of his mechanistic philosophy, he assumes the obligation of meeting somehow Bramhall's cogent criticism. There is no escaping the fact that Hobbes's doctrine makes God the cause of sin. Hobbes, as we shall see, when brought face to face with the issue, tried various inconsistent methods of evading it; but to the unprejudiced critic this most serious consequence of the Hobbesian necessity remains. But what about the other side. If God is not the cause of sin as of everything else in the universe, what becomes of his omnipotence? Bramhall tries to get round this difficulty by drawing a distinction between what God permits and what he ordains; and also by an argument which recalls exactly the subterfuge of Aquinas: God wills the act, but not the sin of the act. These evasions of course will not do, but Bramhall is to be commended, I think, for retreating from logic. He clings staunchly to free will, and the Christian can somehow agree with him in spite of omnipotence. The God who punishes sin can still claim his respect, and even perhaps his love. It would seem that so long as belief in a transcendent God is maintained, either logic must be sacrificed, or the traditional Christian conception of the God

of Love must be abandoned. By making God immanent Spinoza avoided some of this difficulty.

In a later section we shall be considering Hobbes's doctrine of sin from the point of view of what constitutes sin, and its relation to the separate doctrine of good and bad. While it may be unavoidable to anticipate a little, we shall be concerned immediately with the doctrine of sin as it is related to and affected by the doctrine of absolutely necessity. Hobbes states his views on the nature of sin as follows: "The nature of sin consisteth in this, that the action done proceed from our will, and be against the law". As for the first part, that the action proceed from our will, he says: "Every act of the will and purpose of man has a sufficient and therefore a necessary cause" (a), and if this disturbs us, especially in view of the certainty of punishment for sin, he has nothing to comment except that "the law regardeth the will, but not the precedent causes of action" (b). The law which is broken when sin is committed is of course the law of nature, which in a Christian commonwealth is deemed to be incorporated in the civil law; and it should be noted that the laws of the state do in themselves provide a motive for non-transgression, since they are commands backed by sanctions. So that we have, as it were, second causes ready to hand to produce the effect that all would consider desirable. Disobedience, which is sin or wrong-doing, is nevertheless a stubborn fact, and the

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(a) E. V. 229

(b) E. V. 15

ultimate authority and the one ultimately responsible according to the doctrine of necessity, both for the law, and its transgression, is God. Bramhall keeps to this implication. For God, he urges, to prescribe laws which it may be impossible for a man to keep is unjust (a); and Hobbes's answer is simply a verbal quibble: "No law could possibly be unjust" (b).

As we have seen the question of good and bad is strictly for Hobbes a separate one from the question of sin; but in the dispute with Bramhall the two questions become entangled, and it is not really possible to keep them apart. As far as morality is concerned, this is treated in the dispute with Bramhall as a personal question, as though good and bad are relative terms, having a meaning in any context only as related to the desire or aversion of the person using them. And desire and aversion in turn are generated exclusively by present belief as to personal advantage. In a later section we shall discuss how the Hobbesian morality is developed elsewhere and carried much nearer to traditional doctrine; but in the present context things are good or bad according as they seem to be "for or against a man's interest" (c). The terms, good and bad are purely relative. "Nothing is good or evil", says Hobbes; "but in regard to the action that proceedeth from it, and also the person to whom it doth good or hurt. Satan is evil to us, because he seeketh our destruction, but Good to:

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(a) E. V. 150

(b) E. V. 151

(c) Eachard, Hobbes's State of Nature Considered.



God, because he executeth his commandments" (a). "Why do we blame other men"? Bramhall demands, since all actions are necessitated; and Hobbes's reply is "Because they please us not" (b).

Bramhall's answer to this positivism is to assert that "The moral goodness of an action is the conformity of it with right reason" (c). A more characteristic theological refutation would have been that launched by Clarke: "The grounds of all moral obligations are eternal and necessary" (d). There is necessity, but of the one thing which the purely egoistical assertions of Hobbes seem to deny. As for laws, Clarke says, these are only wise and good if they tend to the good of mankind, from which "'tis manifest they (the things toward which they tend) were good, antecedent to their being confirmed by laws" (e). We may repeat that in his full exposition of ethical doctrine Hobbes's position can be seen to be much closer to that of Clarke than this divine suspected, or was suspected by any other of the theological critics of Hobbes. Like Clarke Hobbes held that the grounds of moral obligations are eternal and necessary, and that laws are only good if they tend to the good of mankind. In the argument with Bramhall, however, this doctrine does not break through; because of the obtrusion by Hobbes of mechanist and materialist assumptions. Clarke, therefore, could answer his thesis with the declaration

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(a) E. V. 192                      (b) E. V. 52                      (c) E. V. 170  
(d) Clarke, Being and Attributes of God. p. 124  
(e)        "                      "                      "                      "                      "                      p. 125

that God does not act or decree arbitrarily, but of necessity chooses "only what is just and good" (a). Nevertheless God cannot enforce his will on subordinate creatures having given them free will (b). Necessity is of principle, value, moral laws; not of second causes, actions and the like.

Hobbes defines sin as action against the law (of nature). We have seen that he is most reluctant to differentiate between the law of God and the law of the sovereign, and when the sovereign is a Christian the two kinds of law are for all practical purposes identifiable. But in a heathen state the possibility of divergence exists, and <sup>we</sup> his discourse of necessity Hobbes deals with the possibility. "If God own an action, though otherwise it were a sin, (i.e. a breach of sovereign's law) it is now no sin" (c). By way of illustration he refers to the robbery of Egyptian jewels by the Israelites, which "without God's warrant had been theft. But it was neither theft, cozenage, nor sin; supposing they knew the warrant was from God" (d). The scope of this argument is presumably limited to a proviso of the last clause. Important questions, however, are raised. Which actions can God be said to own, and which to disown, since all are decreed by him? Who is to adjudicate upon the status of actions? In answer to the latter question, Hobbes cannot here give us the customary answer. In this instance the civil sovereign cannot be judge.

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(a) Clarke, Being and Attributes of God. p. 150  
(b) " " " " " " " " p. 151  
(c) E. V. 139 (d) E. V. 139

And if no outside arbitrator is to be found, how is one to know that God warrants an action? All these questions are unanswered in the present context, but we may perhaps gather a partial answer from other writings of Hobbes. We may say in the first place that God owns the actions he has commanded in scripture, that is by revelation; and in the event of any discrepancy between an injunction of scripture and a command of the sovereign, the command of God in scripture ought to be obeyed. But, as we know, the sovereign in a Christian state is, through specially qualified delegates, the interpreter of scripture, and there is little likelihood of discrepancy between his civil laws and the authorised interpretation of scripture. When the sovereign is an infidel the possibility of discrepancy certainly exists, and in general a case might be made out by private citizens for special divine authorisation of unlawful acts. The question has already been considered in Part I, and we may here briefly review what Hobbes has to say, so as to round off the question as it is broached in the present context.

We have seen in Part I that the civil law, even when the sovereign is an infidel, can only in rare circumstances be held to be at variance with the law of nature or God's law. The law of nature enjoins outward obedience to the civil law which is concerned with outward and visible actions; but God looks at the heart. It is almost impossible for an act of obedience to be against the law of nature; and almost impossible for an act of disobedience to be condoned by the law of nature. We

saw also in Part I that in certain very limited and not very precisely specified circumstances disobedience and martyrdom are the right course for the Christian. To these may be added from the discourse on necessity the case in which God owns or enjoins an act of disobedience. The illustration cited by Hobbes, and the views he expresses in Chapter XXXV of Leviathan, suggest what he may have in mind. He refers to the theft of jewels by the Israelites, and it must be recalled that they were in a special position as they were about to exchange one earthly sovereign for another. From the time of Abraham God had been their king, and the earthly rule he had permitted had been patriarchal. In a sense they had come under the civil jurisdiction of Pharaoh; but as they were enslaved and grossly ill-treated Pharaoh could hardly be said to afford them protection. God was about to deliver them from oppression and to inaugurate a new civil polity under Moses. The Jews were a sacred people, set apart by God, and his lieutenant, Moses, spoke to them from God more ostensibly and recognisably than do other civil sovereigns. They had, therefore, the means to know whether God owned any action that was commanded them. We must apply to them the very sharp distinction which is drawn in Chapter XXXV of Leviathan between sacred and profane; and it must not be thought that their case is repeated in the quite different circumstances of modern profane societies. If anyone can be sure of the immediate voice of God, then God must be obeyed before anybody. But that such an assurance can be



experienced by anyone on earth in this age, is something which Hobbes will not grant. In fact a large part of his political doctrine grew out of a profound opposition to claims by private individuals to be in direct communication with the Almighty. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* Spinoza makes a statement on the question of a conflict between the command of God and the command of the sovereign; and what he has to say seems to express the view of Hobbes: In a case of conflict, Spinoza asks, "should we obey the divine law or the human law?". The answer he gives leaves the prerogative of the sovereign and the duty of obedience, to all intents and purposes, unimpaired. "God should be obeyed before all else, when we have a certain and indisputable revelation of his will: but men are very prone to error on religious subjects, and, according to the diversity of their dispositions, are wont with considerable stir to put forward their own inventions, as experience more than sufficiently attests; so that if no-one were bound to obey the state in matters which in his own opinion concern religion, the rights of the state would be dependent on every man's judgment and passions" (a). Hobbes agrees to the hypothetical proposition: if God owns an act of disobedience to the civil sovereign, the act is not sinful; but in the first place he does not think that God will own such an act except in very rare circumstances, and possibly never when the sovereign is

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(a) T. T. P. p. 211, 212 .

a Christian. Secondly Hobbes is sceptical about the possibility of any private person having any special knowledge to entitle him to claim almighty sanction for his act of disobedience. To the paradoxical question raised by the bare possibility of God's owning an act of disobedience - which actions can God be said to own and which to disown, since all are necessitated by him? - we can only say that God has necessitated all acts, and undoubtedly many are sinful and harmful. The question simply points to the inescapable dilemma confronting all determinists who believe in a transcendent God.

Hobbes, of course, was well aware of the dilemma, and uneasiness about it seems to be reflected in the hair-splitting by which he endeavours to dodge the inexorable consequence of his doctrine: God is the author of sin. Hobbes complains frequently of his opponents verbal distinctions which have no reference to fact, and on this very subject, the responsibility of God for evil, slights the bishop contemptuously for distinguishing between God's permission and God's decree. "God", Bramhall had said, "hardened Pharoah's heart permissively, but not operatively or effectively" (a). This Hobbes says is a meaningless school distinction. Elsewhere Bramhall puts the matter slightly differently: "God gave the occasion but Pharoah was the true cause of his own obduration" (b). The hardening of the heart by God which St. Paul speaks of in Romans,

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(a) E. V. 123

(b) E. V. 122

and which had been used by Hobbes, "is not a positive but a negative obduration, or a not imparting of grace" (a). Hobbes also complains that the Bishop and his mentors the schoolmen "distinguish the action from the sin of the action, saying, "God Almighty doth indeed cause the action, whatsoever action it be, but not the sinfulness or irregularity of it, that is, the discordance between the action and the law" (b). Hobbes's answer to all this subtlety is: "Such distinctions as these dazzle my understanding. I find no difference between the will to have a thing done, and the permission to do it, when he that permitteth it can hinder it. Nor find I any difference between an action that is against the law, and the sin of that action" (c).

So much for Bramhall's quibbles, and yet Hobbes himself is equally guilty. "Therefore the opinion, though it derive actions essentially from God, it derives not sins essentially from him, but relatively and by the commandment. And consequently the opinion of necessity taketh not away the nature of sin, but necessitateth that action which the law hath made sin" (d). In this argument Hobbes has the support of St. Paul: "without the law sin is dead" (e). What difference is there, we may well ask, between this and Bramhall's alleged distinction between the action and the sin of the action? Sin is derived from God relatively and by the commandment, which we must infer

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{a} E. V. 129  
{d} E. V. 234

{b} E. V. 116  
{e} Romans VII, 8

{c} E. V. 116

intervenes between God's original decree and the present sinful action. Sin for Hobbes is any act or thought against the laws of nature, which emanate from God. Hobbes by this argument appears to be splitting the decree of God; by one fiat he ordained all the events which would take place in the universe; by another separate fiat he issued his commandments including the laws of nature. By this second fiat some events ordained by the first were rendered sinful. Hobbes writes again: "It is blasphemy to say that God can sin; yet to say that God hath so ordered the world that sin may be necessarily committed, is not blasphemy. And I can also further say, though God be the cause of all motions and of all actions, and therefore unless sin be no motion or action, it must derive a necessity from the first mover; nevertheless it cannot be said that God is the author of sin, because not he that necessitateth an action, but he that doth command and warrant it is the author" (a). Bramhall is able to turn the tables on his opponent. In his *Castigations*, referring to the passage just quoted, he cries: "What trifling and mincing of the matter is this? Let him cough out and show us the bottom of his opinion which he cannot deny, that God hath so ordered the world, that sin must of necessity be committed, and inevitably be committed; that it is beyond the power of man to help or hinder it; and that by virtue of God's omnipotent will, and eternal decree.

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(a) E. V. 138, 139



This is that which we abominate".

In his discussion also of punishment and affliction Hobbes appears to express diverse views. In De Cive sin is spoken of as a disease of the body politic which it is quite legitimate to extirpate by means of punishment, just as a gangrenous limb is amputated. This view is also expressed in the dispute with Bramhall. Then there is the doctrine that punishment is purely arbitrary, being an exercise or demonstration of power on the part of the deity. This doctrine Catlin called macabre, and on the face of it it seems hardly compatible with the first view. To understand the views of Hobbes we must distinguish between punishment by God and punishment by men. Punishment by men must always be to promote good behaviour by other citizens, and by the citizen punished, in the future. Punishment by men should never, for example, be for revenge (a). God, on the other hand, is in a special position. Hobbes answered Bramhall's charge that he, Hobbes, made justice to be the proper result of power, as follows: "I said no more, but that the power that is absolutely irresistible makes him that hath it above all law, so that nothing he doth can be unjust. But this power can be no other than the power divine" (b). It is only God's power that is irresistible, and only God's power which justifies arbitrary visitations whatever their nature and whatever the character of the creature visited.

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(a) E. II 37, Lev. 79, E. V. 152  
(b) E. V. 146

As to punishment by men, which is simply a means to a desirable end, Hobbes says: "I say, what necessary cause soever precedes an action, yet if the action be forbidden, he that doth it willingly may justly be punished" (a). Again: "Is not good good, and evil evil, though they be not in our power? And shall not I call them so?" (b). "He that doth evil willingly, whether he be necessarily willing, or not necessarily, may be justly punished" (c). In a sequel to the first passage Hobbes states his opinion that punishment is properly a deterrent or corrective, and not revenge. Referring by way of illustration to a necessitated act of theft which is justly punished with death, he asks, "Is it (the death) not a cause that others steal not?" (d). It is his view, in fact, that punishment inflicted for any other purpose than to deter a potential wrongdoer is barbarous; but the view appears less enlightened and humanitarian, and falls better into perspective, when we consider that acts of punishment together with all other events, are second causes necessitating the future, and correcting a congenital bias in all men to selfishness and anarchy. Therefore punishment, he says, "respecteth not the evil act past, but the good to come". He adds with more ethical gravity than usual, and less egoism, "without this good intention of future, no past act of a delinquent could justify his killing in the sight of God" (e).

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{a} E. V. 152  
{d} H. V. 152

{b} E. V. 53  
{e} E. V. 152

{c} E. V. 181, 182

On this question of punishment Hobbes's peculiar exegesis enables men to carry the war into the enemy's camp. Bramhall, who talks of the injustice and wanton malice attributed to God by Hobbes, yet himself holds the most barbarous of all doctrines - eternal punishment. Hobbes does not spare the Bishop in his attacks on this doctrine. To put the case against necessity Bramhall had said: "God in justice cannot punish a man with eternal torments for doing that which it was never in his power to leave undone" (a). Hobbes's answer is that God is no such monster as to punish anybody with eternal torments. "What cruelty can be greater", he demands, "than that which may be inferred from this opinion of the Bishop; that God doth torment eternally, and with the extremest degree of torment, all those men which have sinned ... whereof very few, in respect of the multitude of others, have so much as heard of his name?" (b). Again he demands, to punish in this way, "is it not cruelty?" especially when we consider that God, who is said so to afflict, "might without trouble have kept him from sinning". God, we are here reminded in passing, is not only the first cause, but the intelligent architect of the universe. The second death, says Hobbes, is what the term means, death, oblivion, annihilation; and it was this opinion, met with also in Leviathan, that drew from Clarendon some heavy sarcasm: "it may appear very wonderful and no less

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(a) E. V. 16

(b) E. V. 214

scandalous to dispassioned men, that after 1600 years Mr. H. should arise a new evangelist, to make the joys of heaven more indifferent, and the pains of hell less formidable, than ever any Christian hath before attempted to do".(a).

With regard to visitations by God, Hobbes suggests that the word affliction should, in some cases, be substituted for punishment. The innocent cannot be said to be punished (for punishment implies transgression) but only afflicted. "It is true that seeing the name of punishment hath relation to the name of crime there can be no punishment but for crimes that might have been left undone; but instead of punishment if he had said affliction, may not I say that God may afflict and not for sin? Doth he not afflict those creatures that cannot sin? And sometimes those that can sin, and yet not for sin?" (b). An example of the latter is Job, who was afflicted for his ultimate improvement. But this is not always so. "God may afflict by right derived from his omnipotency, though sin were not." (c). Hobbes explains: "I cannot imagine, when living creatures of all sorts are often in torments as well as men, that God can be displeased with it; without his will they neither are nor could be at all tormented. Nor yet is he delighted with it; but health, sickness, ease, torments, life and death, are without all passion in him dispensed by him; and he putteth an end to them then when they end, and a

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{a} Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan, Survey of Ch. 38  
{b} E. V. 17  
{c} E. V. 229



beginning when they begin, according to his eternal purpose which cannot be resisted" (a).

The last observation, which drew from Bramhall in his Castigations the shocked observations, "This is still worsser and worsser", can at least be reconciled with theistic determinism, so long as nothing is said about the morality of God; but a view of afflictions by God which regards them as visitations traversing the pattern of second causes, is wholly incompatible with the doctrine of necessity. Should Hobbes be interpreted as admitting the possibility of such intervention? "The power of God alone", he writes, "without other help, is sufficient justification of any action he doth", and "that which he doth is made just by his doing". Would it be stretching the meaning of words unwarrantably to argue that the act of God, here, and its justification, come within the eternal purpose mentioned at the end of the last paragraph? - a purpose which is worked out through the medium of second causes. If the boils which afflicted Job, and for that matter the murrain which infected the beasts of Egypt, were simply natural events due to natural causes, would there be any point <sup>in</sup> ~~of~~ singling them out as miraculous and in need of special comment and justification? All that can be said at this point is that Hobbes certainly admitted officially (with whatever degree of private scepticism) the fact of miracles in

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(a) E. V. 213, 214

the past. It was part of the teaching of established theology that God had intervened in the past. And whatever the object - whether to cause the moon to stand still or to afflict a creature with suffering - belief in any such intervention was wholly incompatible with the doctrine of necessity. "Power irresistible justifieth all actions really and properly ..." Hobbes declares ... "... and because such power is in God only, he must needs be just in all his actions" (a). As no actions owned by God can be sinful, whatever their ordinary description, so "his doing a thing" - as afflicting one of his creatures - makes it just and consequently no sin" ... "therefore it is blasphemy to say God can sin". God's omnipotency justifies every action, and as we have seen, "God may afflict by right derived from his omnipotency, though sin were not". Bramhall's answer to this is to say that "it overturneth, as much as in it lies, all laws" (b). And why? - "because we used to say that right springs from the law and fact". The argument of Hobbes that God's right and dominion rests in his irresistible power, is answered by Bramhall by supposing that the devil had irresistible power. Clarke, expressing views that are the same as Bramhall's, founds the duty of obedience, not in the relation of weakness to power, but "in the eternal and unchangeable nature of the things themselves" (c). Punish-

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(a) E. V. 116

(b) E. V. 137

(b) Clarke, Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion (5)

ment", he says, "is not an act of absolute dominion, but an act of righteous judgment, whereby God renders to every man according to his own deeds, wrath to them and only to them who treasure up wrath unto themselves, and eternal life to those who continue patiently in well-doing" (a).

We have said that the visitations of God are incompatible with the doctrine of necessity. Although the Bible record of the afflictions of Job suggests that they resulted from an arbitrary intervention into the natural course of events, the doctrine of necessity teaches the impossibility of such interference. According to the doctrine of necessity whatever happened to Job must have come about naturally and inevitably through the medium of second causes. And as far as we are concerned we may take it as absolutely certain that whatever misfortunes may befall us, these are but links in a "long chain of consequences". We may, for example, fall victim of some of the natural punishments mentioned at the end of Chapter XXXI of Leviathan; but these follow breaches of the laws of nature "as their natural not arbitrary effects". Hobbes certainly admitted the possibility of arbitrary visitations by God. After all he professed belief in the Bible where such visitations are plainly recorded, and in the God of Christianity who has always been held to be a God who may and sometimes does intervene supernaturally into the course of nature, and whose

admission by Hobbes might have been thought a greater embarrassment than could have been met by any explanation. But it seems undeniable that these orthodox professions, if not a politic concession to an age of bigots and persecution (in which those who wielded authority were more or less orthodox), were at best the gesture of one persuaded of his duty to uphold the fundamentals of established belief. What was universally held to be indispensable Christian doctrine would not be openly denied by Hobbes, who taught conformity and obedience in those matters. The reader, however, may draw his own conclusions; and where faith and philosophy are at variance, as plainly they are in this matter of divine intervention, the reader can do nothing but choose one and discard the other.

However much we may deplore the consequences of the Hobbesian thesis and "hate his doctrine in our heart", we must allow general soundness and coherence to his arguments. He does, however, lapse into obvious fallacy when he equates his necessity with logical necessity. On Bramhall's statement that two things are necessary to make an effect necessary: first that it be produced by a necessary cause; secondly that it be necessarily produced (a); Hobbes cast ridicule. "To this I say nothing but that I understand not how a cause can be necessary, and the effect not be necessarily produced" (b). Hobbes's argument is that all causes are necessary, in two senses: (1) they cannot be otherwise than they are, being

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(a) E. V. 281

(b) E. V. 269



themselves the produce of other causes, (2) they are by themselves enough to produce their effects. In this second sense they may also be called sufficient causes. Since necessary causes produce necessary effects, all effects are necessary; or to put it in another way and to use his own words: "I hold that to be a sufficient cause to which nothing is wanting that is needful to the producing of the effect. The same is also a necessary cause: for if it be possible that a sufficient cause shall not bring forth the effect, then there wanted somewhat that was needful to the producing of it; and so the cause was not sufficient" (a). A sufficient and necessary cause is an event which must be followed by its effect. Hobbes regards the must to have the force of logical necessity, whereas of course it has no more than the force of de facto necessity. Bramhall holds that all the conditions necessary to produce an effect may be present, but so far as voluntary actions are concerned the effect will not follow if the will is withheld. To this Hobbes could retort that if there is no will the cause is not sufficient or necessary in the sense of being such that the effect must follow.

Not only does Hobbes draw no distinction between sufficient and necessary causes, but he disregards also the very fundamental distinction between logical necessity and de facto necessity. To prove that there is necessity of all events

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(a) E. V. 380

in the universe he quotes a disjunctive proposition: "Tomorrow it shall rain or not rain" (a). He does not see that the necessity of either rain or no rain tomorrow is quite different from the necessity, shall we say, of the sun rising tomorrow. Perhaps it would be better to confine the term necessary to relations which are logical or linguistic; and to speak only of second causes as being sufficient. Hobbes failure to recognise the difference between logical necessity and de facto inevitability led him into logical error, which was quite rightly criticised by Bramhall. But although Bramhall rightly attacked Hobbes's argument to prove logical necessity in the relation between events, he also failed to draw a distinction between logical and casual relations. He missed the true nature and ground of his opponent's necessity. This Bramhall declared was a necessity upon supposition, or a hypothetical necessity. He admitted the element of necessity, but declared that it did not arise until every contingency was extant. It arises: "From the concurrence of all the causes, including the last dictate of the understanding in reasonable creatures". "When all the concurrent causes are determined, the effect is determined also, and is become so necessary that it is actually in being; but there is a great difference between determining and being determined." (b). Necessity then arises when all the causes have concurred to produce the effect, which is actually in being; it is not antecedent.

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(a) E. V. 406

(b) E. V. 41, 42

As to the causes determining events, Bramhall holds that some of these are necessary, others are contingent, others are free. The last are acts of will, the first we shall consider in a moment; the second or contingent causes, as we have seen, leave Bramhall himself in doubt. He confesses that he does not know whether these are contingent in themselves, or only as they are known to us. His account of necessary causes as we have said shows that, like Hobbes, he confused logical necessity with de facto inevitability. Hobbes rejected contemptuously Bramhall's necessity upon supposition, and argued that by the use of this and "such-like terms of schoolmen" false opinion had been "obscured and made to seem profound learning" (a). He would allow simply that there is hypothetical necessity, such as is expressed in the proposition, "If I shall live I shall eat". Bramhall observed that by this Hobbes confessed that a conjunct proposition may have both parts false; and yet the proposition be true; as the proposition referred to earlier, "If the sun shine it is day", is true at midnight (b). "The certain truth of the proposition doth not prove that either of the members is determinately true in present" (c). This of course is true and answers Hobbes's faulty argument: "It is necessary that tomorrow it shall rain or not rain. If therefore it be not necessary it shall rain, it is necessary it shall not rain. Otherwise it is not necessary that the proposition, it shall rain or it shall not rain, should be

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(a) E. V. 249

(b) E. V. 414

(c) E. V. 414

true" (a). Bramhall declared "Hobbes's minor, that it (the disjunctive proposition) could not be necessarily true, except one of the members were necessarily true, is most false".

Bramhall, however, did not notice any more than Hobbes that the kind of necessity or inevitability in the proposition, "If I shall live, I shall eat", is entirely different from the necessity in the disjunctive proposition "Tomorrow it shall rain, or not rain".

Indeed when we realise that Bramhall admitted that some causes are necessary, in the sense that Hobbes argued (the necessity of eating to live) and expressed his doubt as to contingent causes, confessing (in a veiled way) that these may all be deterministic according to his opponent's arguments, we realise that there was considerable agreement between their respective views, except on the question of Bramhall's third kind of causes, those that are free. Neither of them supported the theory of chance which is a third possibility among contending principles.

As a comment on the attitude of the two men to the problem, we may consider for a moment what they have to say on the course of causes. Hobbes stresses the complexity of the pattern woven by second causes, all necessarily interconnected. They do not "make one simple chain or concatenation, but an innumerable number of chains joined together, not in all parts,

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(a) E. V. 406



but in the first link, God Almighty" (a). Bramhall, strongly under the influence of the schoolmen, makes mystery of this doctrine, and especially of the influence of the stars, which Hobbes had said was "but a small part of the whole cause" (b). Bramhall writes: "I do willingly grant that those heavenly bodies do act upon those sublunary things not only by their motion and light, but also by an occult virtue" (c). He distinguishes between causes operated by natural efficiency and moral efficiency; and his explanation of natural efficiency does nothing to explain the mysterious occult virtue by which the stars exert influence over sublunary things. "Then the will is determined naturally", he says, "when Almighty God, besides his general influence, whereupon all second causes do depend, as well for their being as for their acting, doth moreover at some times, when it pleases him in cases extraordinary, concur by a special influence and infuse something into the will, in the nature of an act or a habit whereby the will is moved or excited, and applied to will or choose this or that" (d). This infusion of something into the will, by which manner God Almighty exerts a natural influence over it, must be taken as analogous to the pouring of occult virtue from the stars on to sublunary things, thus influencing them naturally.

The normal way in which the will is determined or influenced is morally "with persuasive reasons and arguments

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(a) E. V. 150      (b) E. V. 105      (c) E. V. 107      (d) E. V. 108

to induce it to will". We have then three kinds of influence or efficiency of causes: natural causes which means physical causes, moral causes, and the general influence of God. The latter is reiterated, and explained in different terms: "God's decrees are permissive, and God operates by a general influence", which is in line with Arminius, Council of Trent, and St. Thomas Aquinas. The view arouses the sharp ridicule of Hobbes. "And that which he says, that God concurs by a general influence is jargon"(a). Hobbes likewise will have nothing to do with Bramhall's infusions into the will, moral efficacy of causes, and the like, as he recognises only natural, that is physical causes. As to Bramhall's occult virtue, this Hobbes says "is not to be taxed as unintelligible. But then I may tax therein the want of ingenuity in him that had rather say, that heavenly bodies do work by an occult virtue, than that they work he knoweth not how" (b).

Hobbes probably allowed freedom to God, although this is not clear; and difficulties attending this part of the subject for Hobbes will be discussed in the next section. When taxed by Bramhall for holding Stoical necessity Hobbes disowned the imputation altogether, and denied rather disdainfully that he had ever drawn a distinction between Stoical and Christian necessity, a distinction which Bramhall summed up as follows: According to Stoical doctrine Jupiter is subject to necessity

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(a) E. V. 340

(b) E. V. 113

or fate, whereas by Christian doctrine necessity is subject to God (a). The observation of Hobbes is: "Nor do I think any man could make stoical and Christian two kinds of necessity, though they may be two kinds of doctrine" (b). Bramhall of course is quite definite on the subject of God's free will, since he holds that human beings, the creatures of God, have free will. God wills freely, not necessarily; furthermore he does not will all he might, whereas a necessary cause acts or works all that it can do (c). To this Hobbes replies: "It is true that God doth not all things that he can do if he will; but that he can will that which he hath not willed from all eternity, I deny"; unless God "can not only will a change, but also change his will, which all divines say is immutable" (d). This denial of Hobbes, with its conditional qualification, appealing somewhat surprisingly to the opinions of all divines, leaves us with a question unsettled. Was the original decree of God free? If God was the first cause he could not be determined by antecedent causes, but does the denial that he can will anything that he has not willed from all eternity mean that he could not originally have willed anything other than his decree because of a necessity in his nature. What can be said positively about the decree or will of God according to Hobbes? In the first place God's will, that is his volition, is a necessary cause in the Hobbeian sense that given

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(a) E. V. 238

(b) E. V. 241

(c) E. V. 246

(d) E. V. 246

that God willed <sup>this,</sup> ~~that~~ it is impossible for these effects not to follow. Secondly God's volition once made cannot be changed, since God is immutable. But could God originally have willed otherwise than he did? God's volition does all that it can do, but does God? The answer that Hobbes might have given to this question, had he thought it interesting and important enough to be discussed, is not known; but for the Arminian churchman, like Bramhall, and perhaps for all the orthodox, Arminian and Calvinist alike, the answer seems reasonably clear. God was in no way bound when he made his original decree. Samuel Clarke in his discourse on the being and attributes of God set out to prove that "The self existent being must be a free agent", and the reason is that intelligence (already proved to be an attribute of God) without liberty is no intelligence at all (a). This Clarke goes on to prove by the "arbitrary disposition of things in the word", so that unlike Bramhall he had no doubts about the reality of contingency.

We have seen that Hobbes's doctrine of necessity presupposes his materialism: the pattern of inter-related second causes is the pattern of the pre-determined and unfolding universe of events; and this is a pattern of bodies communicating motion by impact. We may here repeat that there is a great disparity between this rigid and close doctrine and the kind of argument put forward in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* in

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(a) Clarke, *Being and Attributes of God* IX.



support of social theory. Much of this theory rests upon the acceptance of calculated motive as a spring of human action; and the acceptance of such motive seems hardly compatible with radical materialism. And yet considerations of motive slip into the dispute with Bromhall; although at bottom Hobbes's case here rests upon his materialism. Hobbes defends his doctrine against the charge that it does away with piety: "My opinion is no more than this, that a man cannot so determine today the will which he shall have to the doing of any action tomorrow, as that it may not be changed by some external accident or other, as there shall appear more or less advantage to make him persevere in the will of the same action, or to will it no more ..." (a). The argument is that the prospect of advantage is a second cause operating with others to bring about some action; and other things being equal it is the decisive factor. "A man owing money will postpone payment if that is to his advantage, but is induced to pay because of the prospect of a debtor's prison". In other words self-interest is the deciding factor in human conduct.

Does not this doctrine of self-interest put a great strain on the confident clear-cut materialism upon which the doctrine of necessity is built? Hobbes's words are that as a thing shall appear more or less to a man's advantage, so he acts. It is difficult to see how this language can be divorced from

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(a) E. V. 209

a belief in a human capacity to select or choose courses of action according to their utility or otherwise; and that there is in man such a capacity to select and choose is precisely what the Bishop contends. It is true that Hobbes claims to believe in individual election; but it is not free in Bramhall's sense. "Election", says Hobbes, "is always from the memory of good and evil sequels; memory is always from the sense; and sense always from the action of external bodies". For the argument up to this point reasoned support may be found in the works of Hobbes, although as proof it is incomplete and inadequate. At this point there is a metaphysical leap in the dark: "and all action from God; therefore all actions, even of free and voluntary agents, are from God, and consequently necessary" (a). It is the first part of the argument which for our purpose needs examination. Here is the attempted reconciliation of the materialism and concomitant determinism, with the fact of election and the existence of motive, both of which are presupposed by political and moral doctrine. It is submitted that even if memory - present consciousness of past impressions - may be explained as some sort of physical reflex; even if memory is always from the sense; the preceding assertion, "election is always from the memory of good and evil sequels" must be on a different plain altogether. This cannot without the greatest difficulty be

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(a) E. V. 338

described as automatic or reflex (as strict determinist materialism demands) because here there has been a sifting between good and evil sequels and a choice has been made. According to Hobbes election is predetermined by God through the operation of second causes, which are motion of some kind; and as such it can surely have nothing in common with the vagaries and idiosyncracies of individual assessment of present advantage. Hobbes might try to interpret the latter in materialistic terms, but could not do so in any way that would carry conviction. With his usual emphasis he underlines the universality of self-interest as the motive of human action; and to support the doctrine he appeals to general opinion. Bramhall, we have noticed, made the same appeal to support some of his opinions; and of course appeals like this do not amount to proof. That men are governed by self-interest, says Hobbes, "is so evident to all men living, though they never studied school divinity, that it will be very strange if he (Bramhall) draw from it the great impiety he pretends to do" (a).

THE GOD OF HOBBS

Hobbes's religious views, it has been much emphasised, were subservient to his political doctrine and philosophical assumptions. That his belief in predestination followed logically from his mechanism needs no further discussion or demonstration; but we may repeat for emphasis that he was one of the very few who did not falter at the implications of this principle of science, which in the mid-seventeenth century was already widely accepted, but followed it through to its conclusion.

Granted Hobbes's belief as to the way in which second causes operate, there is no place for freedom, as the term is understood by Bramhall, or for contingency, although both are provided for in Hobbes's scheme by appropriate formulae. And the whole structure of integrally connected second causes finds ultimate reduction to basic principle in a single concept; from which also it derives its logical force and coherence. Everything in the universe is corporeal, said Hobbes; all changes and variety are attributable to motion; and motion itself is not an intelligible concept without reference to bodies. Bodies at rest and bodies in motion divide the universe between them. Even God, who is "a most pure, simple, invisible spirit corporeal" (a), cannot be different in kind from other existents, but unlike them is "eternal, ungenerable, incompre-

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(a) E. IV. 312



hensible, and in whom there is nothing neither to divide nor compound, nor any generation to be conceived" (a). How is motion initiated? How is it communicated? A consideration of these questions, on the assumption that there is nothing in heaven (saving God), on earth, or under the earth except bodies at rest and in motion, points inevitably to the doctrine of second causes and explains it fully.

Hobbes could hold no other views, than the view he did hold, about the human will; and the orthodox view, some features of which were held alike by Calvinists, Lutherans, and Papists, was impossible for him. It is to the discredit of seventeenth century thinkers, since the metaphysical assumptions of Hobbes were not by many of them regarded even with suspicion, that so few of them expressed any sympathy with his opinions. We have seen that according to his definitions free will is in reality a nonsensical expression, but that if the constituents are considered, the only acceptable and intelligible interpretation to be placed on it as used by philosophers and theologians, is that there happens to be no physical hindrance to the pursuit of my desire or appetite, whether momentary or after deliberation (an alternation of desires and appetites) so that my desire (will) is instantly satisfied. But this is not the sense in which the term is used by theologians and philosophers. The theologians and philosophers, therefore, are in error. While he thinks about it Hobbes is

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(a) B. I. 10

concerned to preserve the absolute application of his doctrine of necessity. Suitable arguments are devised to prove that it is the controlling principle in matters of the spirit (using the term simply for convenience) as well as of the body. It must be shown to dominate religion as it dominates philosophy and natural science; and morality also, the doctrine of good and evil, must be brought forcibly into conformity. This last in fact is not achieved without the very greatest strain on rational credibility; as desire and intention, the assessment of probable advantage, to say nothing of even more complex and difficult activities of our mental lives, which are admitted in the Hobbeian morality, are scarcely comprehensible in the pattern of motion communicated causes and effects which comprises exhaustively the temporal universe. For the occasion, and until other urgent topics absorb the attention of the philosopher, we are asked to look upon the universe of events as a gigantic chain reaction set in motion by God, the First Cause.

And here we are up against a real difficulty. God is the First Cause, and, unless the material universe has existed eternally, a necessary assumption of mechanistic science. But God is also an intelligence who is working out his design in the universe, and in human beings, according to Hobbes "through the mediation of second causes". Would it be true to say that God alone is possessed of a faculty or power or capacity like that which the Arminians and Papists call free will, and

mistakenly attribute to men? If God is denied such a capacity would this constitute a contradictory limitation of his omnipotence? Puzzles of this sort are of real significance and difficulty to a philosopher holding the mixed views of Hobbes. It would be hard to think out what answers he might give to the questions, but we may refer for instance to that strange and out-of-character announcement that "it is true God doth not all things that he can do if he will; but that he can will that which he hath not willed from all eternity, I deny". This is in answer to Bromhall's contention that God wills freely not necessarily, and does not will all he might; whereas a necessary cause acts or works all it can do. Hobbes would appear with this assertion to set limits to the omnipotence of God; and he becomes still further compromised with uncongenial theology as he explains that the limitation he suggests is one which has been universally accepted by theologians, that God cannot do anything contrary to his nature. Such an action would be for God to change his will, "which all divines say is immutable".

It is reasonable to say that by admitting into his system the God of the theologians, of infinitely great, but anthropomorphic powers, Hobbes has done a very dangerous thing. He must concede either that his God, nominally all powerful and divinely free, is in practice limited by his original decree; or he must allow that there exists a principle of anarchy capable at any time of intervening and disrupting the

logical scheme of the universe. Old fashioned theologians believe that he has done this from time to time; and even Hobbes, as we have seen earlier, admitted that in apostolic times and before, miracles had been performed. And what is significant in the present discussion, he maintained that every miracle "is the effect of the immediate hand of God". One example of the effect of such an intervention by God was the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent. How could this be reconciled with pre-ordination and the doctrine of second causes? Hobbes also ought to have admitted (though whether or not he did is far from clear) that God acted voluntarily and arbitrarily at least once: when he set off the chain reaction which is the temporal universe. As to miracles Hobbes asserts categorically that they have ceased; but the admission stands that God has intervened supernaturally in the past. In the past God has issued arbitrary fiats changing or initiating motion; has Hobbes disposed satisfactorily of the possibility that God may continue to do so? Once God is admitted, all powerful, incomprehensible and the rest, who can set bounds to his exercise of power? and it is the power of God that we worship according to Hobbes. If God is truly all powerful he may contravene his own order, which would be a contingency not provided for in the original decree. And would not all such intervention constitute a breach in the logical order of events, and take away antecedent necessity from the sequence of second causes?



If Hobbes felt absolutely obliged to admit the theologian's God into his speculations, or if he had a sincere belief in the existence and reality of the deity, then he ought to have humanised his system. The very same argument, of course, can be used with perfect cogency against the Calvinists, with one qualification. The God of Hobbes was not only the God of power, but the God of logic. Calvin's God was wholly and exclusively the God of power. Hobbes must either ignore inconvenient implications in his system, or admit an absolute impasse. On the whole he appears to have adopted the former course. For Calvin the task of system building was easier. His God was all powerful; really all powerful. He could perform all kinds of miracles, even to perpetuating by his very existence a series of blatant illogicalities. All difficulty could be ironed out in a verbal way by the language of mystery. And so it was quite possible for Calvin's God to intervene arbitrarily in human affairs; and at the same time to preside changelessly over the destinies of mankind as the absolute predestinator, and absolute reprobator. Calvin was able to cover every inconsistency in his appalling system, wherein evil was decreed before time began, by an appeal to the inscrutable, the incomprehensible nature of the godhead.

Hobbes, on the other hand, as he argues his case for necessity entailing predestination, and admitting the existence of a personal God, is without his resource of theologians. Although, as we have seen, he admits certain "mysteries of faith", he

consistently declines to give them more than a mention. He certainly does not anywhere enlist their aid to strengthen or even to illustrate his arguments. He cannot therefore appeal to omnipotent God like Calvin and Beza and the rest, as to a fund of metaphysical alchemy, to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain in an argument. He does in fact include inscrutability among the negative characteristics of the godhead; but this is not to escape from deadlock. The attribute is ascribed to the almighty when Hobbes discourses on topics congenial to his secular temper; and his intention is to remove the inscrutable one firmly and without regret from the purview of philosophy, that is natural reason. For the rest he will admit no mystery; has a thoroughly materialist and earthly account to give of angels and devils, which are respectively superior and debased kinds of men; insists that the second death pronounced in judgment on the souls of men is simply physical death, to wit the cessation of bodily functions accompanied by extinction of consciousness and followed by decomposition. Throughout he is very literally down to earth, and not the least when scripture pours most volubly from his lips.

But in the background continually is a presence; there is a personal God; and the God of the Protestant Reformers at that, rather than the accommodating God of the Cardinals who was able, for instance, to condone concupiscence because it is

found to be baptised (a), or the God of St. Thomas who saw all things in the round. Although Hobbes saw things with remarkable clarity, he did not see them in the round, but through the narrow perspective glass. And following a weak human practice he made God in his own image. This God, Hobbes would say, is certainly just, as is every law-giver; and that in some sense he is good is set forward as the essence of Christian philosophy. But how could a God who is good be the cause of sin which he himself abhors? And how could a just God actually provide for the acts of omission and commission which he must inevitably punish, if not with an eternity of torture, with death and extinction? God cannot be the author of sin, and yet God must be the cause of sin, as he is the cause of everything. There is no escape from dilemmas.

What course was open to Hobbes? In De Corpore he had declared that philosophy treats of body and excludes theology which is a doctrine of God. He might have appreciated that his doctrine of necessity belonged wholly to philosophy. We have seen that he divided the universe between God and body, maintaining the latter to be a single genus with the different<sup>ae</sup> the various kinds of motion. Unless he conceived of motion, that is variations in the relative positions of bodies, as being without any beginning, motion had somehow to be started; otherwise the body, a universal plenum (b), would

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(a) Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session V (4)  
(b) E. I. Ch. XXVI

remain forever stationary, and there would be no change, since all ~~change is mutation~~ <sup>mutation is motion</sup> (a). As we know the universe is a universe of change; it was therefore necessary for God to be co-opted as the first mover, but in that impersonal character he should have remained, and Hobbes could have discussed the laws relating to bodies to his heart's content. While blandly announcing his own huge leap in the dark - all things are body, all change is motion, all motion is necessitated - he could have laughed at Bramhall with absolute impunity. We are all allowed to make whatever assumptions we please. That is our own affair.

That God should remain severely impersonal is more pointedly suggested by the way in which, perforce, he is described. He can be spoken of only by negative attributes; or referred to by dutiful but meaningless superlatives - most high, most great and the like (b). Accordingly to dispute of God's nature, after the manner of the schoolmen, is vain and contrary to his honour, for "in this natural kingdom of God, there is no other way to know anything, but by natural reason; that is, from the principles of natural science, which are so far from teaching us anything of God's nature, as they cannot teach us our own nature, nor the nature of the smallest creature living" (c). Natural credulity is neither discounted nor disparaged, but the God whose existence all but fools

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(a) R. I. Ch. IX (9)

(b) Lev. 194

(c) Lev. 195



justifiably assert, it is best not to personalise; our religion like ethics should be treated as a science, with an appeal to reason rather than to emotion and sentiment. This is logical and characteristic doctrine, but Hobbes accepted much from current theology and is far from consistent.

It is perhaps because of what he accepted, or rather had not discarded, of contemporary religious belief that he does not seem to have considered an alternative to the hypothesis of a First Cause. Is it necessary to suppose that the variations in the relative positions of bodies had any beginning? Is the concept that there has been no beginning of motion less credible than the alternative that for an eternity in the past there existed a stationary plenum until at a finite instant motion was initiated? The same question may be asked about the orthodox Christian doctrine of creation. Is this doctrine, that an infinite being called into being a finite universe, any more credible than the doctrine that the material universe has existed for an infinite duration of time. There seems to be no good philosophical ground for supposing that an infinite creator exists, or that an infinite First Cause exists, although there may be good reason on some other ground for making one or other of these suppositions. Hobbes, however, does not openly consider the atheistic thesis that the universe comprising matter and motion has existed eternally. There is no reason to suppose that he entertained it secretly. Although all his enemies and detractors accused him of atheism

he consistently maintained a belief in the deity. About this on a fair understanding of his writings there should be no argument.

Apart from official intolerance toward atheists, and in view of the uncompromising and crude nature of his materialism, Hobbes might have declared himself flatly as an atheist. But he did no such thing. He was not an atheist, and he deeply resented the accusation of atheism. "The words atheism, impiety, and the like", he writes, "are words of the greatest defamation possible" (a). In *De Cive* he gives us the origin of atheism as "an opinion of right reason without fear", as to which it is the antithesis of superstition, which "proceeds from fear without right reason" (b). Both are bad. Atheists, moreover, are enemies of God (c), and in a footnote in *De Cive* he declares: "I am so much an enemy to atheists that I have both diligently sought for and vehemently desired to find some law whereby I might condemn them of injustice" (d). This, however, he has not been able to do, and places their sin in the category of imprudence. The point of the classification was academic, and produced a quite unnecessary clamour of protest, and as Hobbes argued he certainly had the Bible on his side: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God". The important thing to note is that, according to Hobbes,

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(a) E. IV. Bramhall's *Catching Leviathan and Hobbes's Answers*.  
Hobbes's *Epistle to Reader*.  
(b) E. II. 227 (c) Lev. 190 (d) E. II. 198 (footnote)

atheism was a sin, and those who accused him of atheism were beating the air. "It is impossible", he argues, "to make any profound enquiry into natural causes, without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal"; and this happens even though we have no image or idea of him in the mind (a). In discussing the attributes of God, he says, "We ought to attribute to him existence" (b) even though we can say nothing else.

Using the terms in a philosophical sense, Hobbes may be described as both a rationalist and an empiricist, like Francis Bacon. A rationalist in that he felt that the whole truth about reality was in principle deducible by reason; an empiricist in that he believed all human knowledge to be derived in the first instance from some sense impression or sense impressions. The rationalist, ignoring the possibility that the universe of matter in motion has existed eternally, admitted the necessity of a first mover. The empiricist believed that God could be described only negatively as nothing positive could possibly be known about him apart from revelation, which, according to Hobbes, may be a means by which God discovers his will to individuals, but nobody else is obliged "to believe he hath so done to him that pretends it" (c). While a theologian like Clarke, therefore, could deduce positive information concerning the being and attributes of God, Hobbes

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(a) Lev. 53

(b) Lev. 193

(c) Lev. 200

could say little except that he existed. "The attributes therefore given unto the deity, are such as signify either our incapacity or our reverence" (a). On what ground did he include these negative attributes which are ascribed by reverence? The question is still unanswered. Why did Hobbes not content himself at most with the impersonal First Cause? Why did he go even so far as he did toward the anthropomorphic embodiment who was God in the imagination of seventeenth century Puritans?

Perhaps after all the question is unrealistic and should not be put. It would be too much to expect Hobbes to be emancipated completely from the age-old preconceptions which were accepted without question by almost all his contemporaries. On the other hand the conception of deity he gives us - of a being half impersonal but such as to command absolutely the worship of his creatures; remote and incomprehensible and yet the repository of almighty power which is manifest in the convolutions of the temporal universe - this concept does provide a sanction for the theocratic sovereign of the Hobbesian ideal. The sovereign is God's vicar on earth. The God for whom he speaks must at least be thought about as seeing and knowing everything although he himself must remain forever invisible and uncomprehended; of approving and disapproving, although in this life the approval and disapproval can be translated only through the lips and actions of a human

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(a) *El. Pt. I, XI (3)*



lieutenant. The religion which is expressed in civil laws, and the church of which the sovereign is the earthly head would be no religion and no church without a live and comprehending and veritable godhead.

And then there is the possibility that on account of a temperamental incompatibility with the theme, Hobbes did not consider very deeply the logical implication of his tacit acceptance of a personal God; the God of the Reformers. It is possible, indeed it is more than possible, it is probable, that when God was on his lips his heart was far from him. For Hobbes religion had its place, that is to say he gave genuine adherence and genuine support to a regular and regulated form of public worship, which on practical grounds he held to be highly desirable. But the Christian's God had no real place. It is quite feasible to argue, and many critics have taken the view, that by his professed orthodoxy, and public adherence to the Christian faith, he paid lip service only as the scrupulous subject of rulers who themselves held and enjoined one form or other of Christian orthodoxy. Charles I believed in God, and so did Oliver Cromwell. Both, in fact, in much the same God. Both professed Christianity. What other course was open to Thomas Hobbes than to express a similar belief? His thoughts on religion and the Godhead, it is argued, when they were not special pleading with an ulterior and non-religious motive, were lip-service to the established state myth. Such an opinion, we may repeat, is entirely feasible. But on a

broad view of all his works, and the grandiose aim he kept before him with a most intense, a most passionate seriousness, and especially in view of the incautious and provocative tone of his writing, and his obstinate loyalty to his own opinions whatever they might be, the opinion does not quite do him justice. The temper of his age demanded some caution, but he was not an intellectual sycophant.

It is fairer to say that because of temperament, or mental constitution, or for any other reason which might be suggested, he did not exhibit, nor did he have any understanding for or sympathy with, the qualities or characteristics which are described as godly or god-fearing.

PART III

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN AND CRIME

THE DOCTRINE OF GOOD AND BAD

HOBBS'S DOCTRINE OF SIN AND CRIME

"A sin", says Hobbes in the beginning of Chapter XXVII of Leviathan, "is not only a transgression of the law, but also any contempt of the legislator" (a). It may consist therefore not only in unlawful acts or omissions, but also "in the intention or purpose to transgress". A crime on the other hand is an unlawful act, but in passing judgment on the person who commits the act, the intention which went with it is an important consideration, as we shall see. Sin is a transgression, in intention as well as deed, of the law of nature. "Sin in its largest signification, comprehends every deed, word, and thought against right reason" (b). It is reason which finds out the <sup>re</sup>cepts or rules of life which are called laws of nature. "Where law ceaseth", Hobbes says in the chapter of Leviathan already referred to, "sin ceaseth. But because the law of nature is eternal ... all facts contrary to any moral virtue can never cease to be sin" (c). In a further consideration of the nature of sin he lays it down that "ignorance of the law of nature excuseth no man" (d). According to Hobbes one may sin in ignorance, though as we shall note one may not in general be guilty of crime in ignorance.

In De Cive is a definition of sin which at first sight appears to be out of harmony with the dicta already quoted.

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(a) Lev. 154  
(d) Lev. 155

(b) E. II 195

(c) Lev. 155



"Whatsoever a man does against his conscience is a sin" (a). The kind of behaviour thought about in this definition might seem by no means necessarily to be coincident with transgressions, even ignorant transgressions, of the law of nature. But, when the meaning which Hobbes gives to the terms is understood, these various definitions and descriptions will be seen to be in close agreement. The laws of nature oblige in foro interno, in the court of conscience, "there being no court of natural justice, but in the conscience only; where not man, but God reigneth" (b). This view is expressed more than once, in different contexts, and in the three principle works on politics and religion. In De Cive we have the statement: "... the law of nature doth always and everywhere oblige in the internal court, or that of conscience" (c); and in the Elements: "The force therefore of the law of nature is not in foro externo, till there be security for men to obey it; but is always in foro interno ..." (d). What does Hobbes mean by conscience? In the Elements he defines conscience as "a man's settled judgment and opinion" (e); it is not an innate and instinctive prompting, but judgment reached by care and thought; it is in fact right reason which may be defined as "a sense of what is required for self-preservation"; that peculiar (individual) and true (not ill-considered and faulty) ratiocination which, according to a footnote early in De Cive,

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(a) E. II. 152

(b) Lev. 189

(c) E. II. 46

(d) EL. Pt. I XVII (10)

(e) EL. Pt. II. VI (12)

is the means by which a man in a state of nature discovers what kind of behaviour "may either redound to the damage or benefit of his neighbours" (a), and will promote his own conservation. Reason discovers the laws of nature which are canons of conduct tending to peace and self-preservation; conscience is our knowledge and application of these canons in our daily lives.

It can now be seen that the definition of sin as acts and thoughts against right reason, and as breaches of the laws of nature, is in complete harmony with the definition of sin as acts done against conscience. It must be noted also that the reason and conscience of each man is individual and private. Hobbes makes this quite clear. Although he draws the sharpest distinction between public and private conscience, and holds that in society it is by the public conscience that actions are to be judged; there are still thoughts and intentions, which almost always precede actions, and are of the greatest moment. To thoughts and intentions the sovereign's writ does not run; the subject who thinks and intends, alone is in a position to pass judgment; and in doing so he must appeal to his own settled judgment and opinion, his own conscience. In this respect thoughts and opinions in a civilised state have the status of actions in a state of nature, "in which state no man can know right reason from false, but by comparing it with his own"; so that "everyman's own reason is to be accounted, not

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(a) E. II. 16 (footnote)

only the rule of his own actions, which are done at his own peril, but also for the measure of another man's reason, in such things as do concern him". Hobbes's repeated strictures, therefore, on private conscience, must not blind us to the fact that according to his own account private conscience has a legitimate and vital part to play: in the private assessment by the individual of his own motives. How important motive is, for Hobbes, in the consideration of sin, we shall see.

Hobbes is not quite consistent in his use of the words justice and injustice. The most characteristic statement is perhaps that found near the end of Chapter XIII of Leviathan "They (justice and injustice) are qualities that relate to men in society, not in solitude" (a). In the state of nature "nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place". In the state of nature everyone has a right to everything so that no action can be unjust (b); and it is the prerogative of the civil power to define what injustice is. "What any man does in the bare state of nature, is injurious to no man; not that in such a state he cannot offend God, or break the laws of nature" (c). The terms justice and injustice are most generally used as applying to conditions when the civil law has defined rights and created obligations; in other words as referring solely

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(a) Lev. 66

(b) Lev. 66

(c) E. II. 9 (footnote)

to outward acts and omissions. But this is not always the case; and some of the things Hobbes has to say about justice and injustice give further insight into his doctrine of sin as opposed to his doctrine of crime. Toward the conclusion of his exposition of the laws of nature in *De Cive* he makes the observation: "it is not therefore to be imagined that by nature, that is by reason, men are obliged to the exercise of all these laws in that state of men wherein they are not practised by others". A footnote expands the thought a little: "in the state of nature what is just and unjust is not to be esteemed by the actions but by the counsel and conscience of the actor" (a). Here just and unjust mean righteous and sinful respectively; and sin is judged by intention rather than action. Eachard, therefore, was wildly missing the mark when he wrote about Hobbes's state of nature that it "is to be understood a certain supposed time in which it was just and lawful for every man to hang, draw, and quarter whom he pleased ..." (b). If he is using the words just and lawful in the usual sense employed by Hobbes, the truth is that the words have no application in the state of nature where nothing is either just or unjust, lawful or unlawful. On the other hand if he is using the words in Hobbes's secondary sense as being equivalent to righteous, that is in conformity with the laws of nature, he is in error again. According to Hobbes it is

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(a) E. II. 46 (footnote)

(b) Eachard - Hobbes's State of Nature Considered.



only lawful in the sense of right to kill to preserve one's life. Murder, of course, for Hobbes is as wrong or sinful, and in one sense as unjust or unlawful, in the state of nature as in society. "Nothing but fear can justify the taking away of another man's life." (a).

A passage in the Elements, which is found substantially repeated in Leviathan, distinguishes between the justice and injustice of actions, and the justice and injustice of men. "When justice and injustice are attributed to men, they signify proneness and affection and inclination of nature, that is to say passions of the mind apt to produce just and unjust actions" (b). Later on in the same treatise he refers to "observation of the law of nature, which is that for which a man is called just or righteous (in that sense in which justice is taken, not for the absence of all guilt, but for the endeavour and constant will to do that which is just)" (c). In Leviathan also the word injustice is sometimes used to refer to a state of mind rather than outward action; to describe, that is to say, a sin of which a man might be guilty before the founding of society. "The injustice of manners is the disposition or aptitude to do injury; and is injustice before it proceed to act." (d).

Did Hobbes believe in original sin? It seems clear that he did not hold this belief in anything like the theologian's

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{a} El. Pt. I, XIX (2)  
{c} El. Pt. II, VI (10)

{b} El. Pt. I, XVI (4)  
{d} Lev. 77

sense. He argues, for example in Leviathan, that "to be delighted in the imagination only, of being possessed of another man's goods, servants, or wife, without any intention to take them from him by force or fraud" is no sin. Again to call it sin to have pleasure in imagining hurt to one's enemy "were to make sin of being a man" (a). A consideration of this, he continues, has caused him to think the opinion too severe that the first motions of the mind are sin. Again the tacit assumption that although the reason of many is defective, some are endowed with right reason which in the long run cannot err; and the doctrine that to know one has sinned is to repent, and to will an error is impossible; these opinions are hardly compatible with the doctrine of universal natural depravity as it was held, for instance, by Calvin. The antidote of solid reason (b) may not be a powerful safeguard to the youthful, and to many others of maturer years, but at least some have the capacity to, and do, erect this bastion for themselves.

Perhaps the doctrine of Hobbes is that a proportion of mankind are so constituted by nature that they cannot unaided and uncontrolled make their way to peaceful living and security, which is the end all desire. His doctrine of the passions is scarcely complimentary to the natural man, but is not so calamitously wholesale, so macabre one might say, as the theological doctrine of original sin. About some of the

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(a) Lev. 154

(b) Lev. 174.

passions Hobbes declares: "As for the passions, of hate, lust, ambition, and covetousness, what crimes they are apt to produce is so obvious to every man's experience and understanding, as there needeth nothing to be said of them, saving that they are infirmities so annexed to the nature both of man, and all other living creatures, as that their effects cannot be hindered but by extraordinary use of reason, or a constant severity in punishing them" (a). After arguing in *De Cive* that factions lead to civil war he makes the pregnant comment: "But some will say, these things do not necessarily nor often happen. He may as well say that the chief parties are not necessarily desirous of vain glory, and that the greatest of them seldom disagree in great matters" (b).

Does the existence of vain glory take the place of original sin? In the Epistle Dedicatory of *De Cive* Hobbes rejects the doctrine of original sin as taught by Christian theologians: that all men are "wicked by nature ... cannot be granted without impunity". He suggests here also that the wicked, that is those with a propensity to make and attempt to enforce excessive claims for themselves, are in a minority, though the fact does not lead to a triumph of moderation. It is a case of a little wicked leaven leavening the whole lump. He further explains that it is the actions of the aggressive minority which may be wicked, and not their natures. The affections of the mind, the natural dispositions of men, are

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(a) Lev. 158

(b) E. II. 139

neither good nor bad. A statement in chapter XIII of Leviathan which is a modification of corresponding passages in De Cive and the Elements, on vainglory, after arguing the reasonableness of securing ourselves in anticipation of possible danger in the future, by procuring the submission of as many of the people about us as we can, goes on to say that there are some who take pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, and pursue conquest further than security requires (a).

Vainglory or vanity, as it is found in a proportion of mankind, may be said to be an original principle of evil which makes life without society and a sovereign power an impossible condition. But the evil is by no means universal. Some we must remember are naturally temperate. It is not a case of everybody being born in sin and shapen in iniquity. It is true of course according to Hobbes that no man is born fit for society, but this is not because of universal inborn depravity, but because society is an adult creation. All men naturally desire to come together, because "solitude is an enemy"; but civil societies "are not mere meetings but bonds" (b). The profit of society is not known to children and to those "who have not yet tasted the miseries which accompany its defects" ... "manifest therefore it is that all men, because they are born in infancy, are born inapt for society. Many also, perhaps most men, either through defect of mind or want of

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(a) Lev. 64

(b) E. II. 2 (footnote)



education, remain unfit through the whole course of their lives" (a). Even in this context it is not asserted that all men are without the natural capacity to work out their own salvation uncompelled.

The precise views of Hobbes on the natural condition of men, the proportion of the vainglorious to the temperate, the potentially just to the unjust, are not easy to decipher. In a classic statement in Chapter XVII of Leviathan, comparing men with ants and bees, he declares that "men are continually in competition for honour and dignity, which these creatures are not" (b), so that men are not naturally fitted for society. The statement here is general and certainly suggests that the anti-social and therefore bad craving for honour, if not absolutely universal, is very prevalent and widespread. Against this a passage from the Elements may be cited. This work was earlier and in some respects more moderate than Leviathan, although the central parts of its argument are much the same. In Chapter IX (1) of the Elements Hobbes argues that vainglory must be distinguished from a just confidence in our power and worth. Vain or false glory either inspires the kind of aspiration which procures ill success, or begets no appetite to endeavour. The well founded glorying of the justifiably confident man on the other hand, begets aspiration, an appetite to succeed further, which is wholly desirable. We may rest our appeals to the statements of Hobbes by repeating the

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(a) E. II. 2 (footnote)

(b) Lev. 88

opinion expressed in De Cive, reproducing substantially a corresponding passage in the Elements. Some men are vain-glorious and will not allow equality in the enjoyment of right, but challenge respect and honour as due to themselves before others. The rest are moderate, but are driven to arbitrary action to protect themselves. Finally the admission of vain-glory as a natural human attribute is something like assent to the Christian doctrine of original sin in a proportion of mankind.

In Chapter XVII of Leviathan Hobbes argues that unless there is a sovereign power to compel obedience people will only obey the laws of nature when it is safe for them to do so (a). It is necessary, therefore, for a sovereign to make civil laws incorporating the laws of nature to the extent that they refer to actions and omissions; and to convert sins of commission and omission into punishable crimes. It is the province of the city "to determine what with reason is culpable" (b), Hobbes declares in De Cive; and culpability here carries the prospect of official punishment. Following the commonest usage of the words just and unjust it is laid down that "Legitimate kings ... make the things they command just by commanding them, and those which they forbid unjust by forbidding them" (c). Just actions, in this sense of just, are those in obedience to the civil law, and injustice is an act done without right as defined by civil law.

(a) Lev. 88

(b) E. II. 197

(c) E. II. 151

As for the civil law (lex) this is distinguished from right (jus). "Nature gave a right to every man to secure himself by his own strength, and to invade a suspected neighbour by way of prevention; but the civil law takes away that liberty, in all cases where the protection of the law may be safely stayed for" (a). "Law and right", says The Elements, "are no less different than restraint and liberty, which are contrary." Restraint, or invasion of right, must of course be backed by the power to punish. "Not every command is a law, but only ... when the command is the reason we have of doing the action commanded"; that is where there is a "right in him that commandeth to punish". "When the command is a sufficient reason to move us to the action, then is that command called a law." (b).

Unlike the law of nature, the ignorance of which excuses no-one, civil laws must be promulgated and brought to the notice of subjects, to be effective. Ignorance of a civil law is a good excuse, "if the civil law of a man's own country be not so sufficiently declared as he may know it if he will" (c). Whether or not the law has been adequately published is a question of fact. Want of means to know the law is a total excuse, "But the want of diligence to enquire shall not be considered as a want of means" (d). As civil law applies only to those who have the means to take notice of it, natural

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(a) Lev. 154  
(d) Lev. 160

(b) EL. Pt. II, X (5)

(c) Lev. 156

fools, children, and madmen are not bound by it (a). Finally, in all cases not covered by the writing (or other mode of recording and publication), the law of natural equity, that is the law of nature, is to be followed.

In the interpretation of the civil law the important consideration is not the letter of the law but the intention of the legislator (b). And to reach the intention behind the law certain principles must be borne in mind. In cases of ambiguity, or in the absence of explicit statement, there is an assumption that the legislator's intention was equity (c). When this was obviously not the case, other canons of interpretation are applicable. It is a postulate of Hobbes, almost without reservation, that civil laws are reasonable; that they are in accordance with the law of nature. Injustice is always against right reason (d); and justice, which is public right defined by law, is a rule of reason (e). From this follows the dictum asserted in De Cive and discussed heretofore, to which a significant rider is attached: "No civil law which tends not to a reproach of the deity ... can possibly be against the law of nature" (f). The civil law, as we have seen, does not extend to thoughts and consciences (g), and it is against the law of nature to attempt to extort from a man his private opinions when his actions conform to the law (h).

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(a) Lev. 160  
(d) Lev. 75  
(g)

(b) Lev. 143  
(e) Lev. 76  
(h)

(c) Lev. 149  
(f) E. II. 190



We have already discussed the provision made by Hobbes for possible wrongful commands of the sovereign, and we have seen that in Hobbes's view the possibility is very remote, and the overwhelming probability is that the commands or laws of the sovereign will embody the spirit of the unwritten laws of nature. Nevertheless it is arguable that the passage from De Cive quoted in the last paragraph robs the distinction drawn by Hobbes between sin and crime of any significance. It is possible to find other statements with a highly casuistical flavour which appear to have the same effect. In De Cive again is the unqualified assertion that "if I be commanded to do that which is a sin in him who commands me, if I do it, and he that commands me be my right lord over me, I sin not" (a). In Leviathan it is declared that "whatsoever is commanded by the sovereign power, is as to the subject (though not so always in the sight of God) justified by the command" (b). But there are other less questionable arguments tending to elevate civil law to the status of the law of nature, and even divine law, and in all of them the crucial consideration is that the civil sovereign is the sole interpreter of the law of nature and the law of God, and that his command which is the civil law must necessarily be in conformity with both. "All subjects are bound to obey that for divine law which is declared to be so by the laws of the commonwealth;" and as crime, or punishable sin, is breach of the law, so "all virtue is

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(a) E. II. 152

(b) Lev. 120

comprehended in obedience to the laws of the commonwealth" (a). In spite of this it must be insisted that the distinction between sin and crime is fundamental. In the first place we must repeat that there is little likelihood according to Hobbes of repugnance between civil law and the law of nature (especially when the sovereign is a Christian); and secondly there are the thoughts of the heart which are the mainspring of action, and over which the sovereign has no jurisdiction. The civil law is silent about motive and intention as these constitute sin, and in this whole field the appeal is to the natural reason, conscience, and the laws of nature. How vitally motive and intention enter into the consideration of sin and crime we shall now see.

We have observed that the intention of the legislator is all important in the interpretation of civil law which defines culpable sin or crime; but more fundamental is the truth many times repeated that sin is motive; that God looks at the heart and judges intention. Of hidden thoughts and motives, for which a man cannot be accused, "there is no judge at all, but God that knoweth the heart" (b). Actions vary according to the circumstances, so that what is right today may be wrong tomorrow, "yet reason is still the same" (c). The end of the laws of nature is peace, so that when a man's honest intention is peace he cannot be guilty of sin (d). In fact it may be

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(a) Lev. 153  
(c) E. II. 47

(b) Lev. 299, 374  
(d) E. II. 47

laid down as an absolute principle that in judging conformity with the laws of nature, honest endeavour is crucial. It follows from this that malice makes all the difference to the character of a man's acts. "They who sin only through infirmity, are good men even when they sin; but these (the malicious), even when they do not sin are wicked" (a). An extension of this thought brings us to Hobbes's doctrine of idolatry. No act is idolatrous unless there is intention to worship a graven image as God. Naaman did no sin by entering the House of Rimmon, because he did not intend to honour any false God.

Motive also plays a part in the consideration of crime. It is certainly involved in the account Hobbes gives of extenuating circumstances, and the various degrees of culpability. Acts committed against the civil law, are of course always crimes, but in certain circumstances the agent may be excused the penalty. Crimes committed in terror of death are totally excused (b), and crimes committed "by the authority of another are by that authority excused against the author" (c). Again a wrongful act prompted by vainglory is a greater crime than "if it proceed from hope of not being discovered" (d); and "the same fact, if it have been constantly punished in other men, is a greater crime than if there have been many precedent examples of impunity" (e). The point of this statement may be that in one case the legislator's intention is clearer than in

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{a} E. II. 197  
{d} Lev. 161

{b} Lev. 160  
{c} Lev. 161

{c} Lev. 160

the other. No man can be punished for his thoughts, but it is a continuous endeavour to be just which makes the just man, and this should certainly be taken into consideration in passing judgment upon his actions. "That which gives to human actions the relish of justice", says Hobbes, "is a certain nobleness or gallantness of courage (rarely found)" (a); is in fact the state of mind which goes with the actions.

There is one sense, which ought to be mentioned, in which motive has an opposite bearing on crime, to the bearing it has on sin. If a man's outward act is lawful, a bad motive gives no ground for punishment. Just as the Apostles and their successors, according to Hobbes, were authorised to take note only of the outward marks of repentance, and could not enquire as to the sincerity of the penitent; so a civil judge must exonerate a man whose conduct is blameless, even though his heart be wicked. By contrast - as we have seen already - a culpable act is not sin when the intention is good; and conversely there may be sin when an act which is conformable is thought to be a breach of the law of nature, or even when there is merely a doubt about the nature of the act (b). To conclude it may be useful to summarise other features distinguishing sin and crime. Sin may be intention as well as an act; a crime is solely an act. The prohibitions of the laws of nature which define sins, extend to thoughts and conscience;

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(a) Lev. 77

(b) Bl. Pt. I. XVI (4)



the civil laws which define crimes are concerned only with outward actions. Ignorance of the laws of nature excuses no-one, so that if it is possible for a man to be ignorant of the laws of nature, he may sin in ignorance (a); ignorance of civil law without negligence exonerates a man who has committed an unlawful act, from culpability (b). Sin is possible in a state of nature; crimes are possible only in society. The sovereign may be guilty of sin, that is may commit a breach of the laws of nature; but the sovereign cannot in any circumstances be accused of crime, crime being a breach of the civil law which is his own commandment.

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(a) Lev. 155

(b) Lev. 156

THE MORAL TEACHING OF HOBBS

Prominent theologians of the seventeenth century and after have criticised Hobbes on many counts, but most fiercely and most unanimously on account of his doctrine of morality. He denied, it was alleged, that there are eternal and immutable moral laws, and made morality dependent on human will, or human appetite. There is, it must be admitted, some ambiguity and even apparent contradiction in the account of Hobbes, or rather his several accounts; but when the whole is viewed impartially these will be seen in large measure to disappear. It was because of a superficial difficulty in reconciling one statement with another, and because of a tendency in critics to confuse the terms good and bad with virtuous and sinful, that injustice has been done to Hobbes in the many attacks which have been made upon him by leaders of the church. We have seen that according to Hobbes sin is a breach of the laws of nature. There is an objective standard by which sin may be judged. The terms good and bad, on the other hand, are used to denote the objects of present desire and aversion. The standard by which goodness and badness are to be judged, according to the usage of these terms, is private and personal: it is subjective. The object desired may be such as will satisfy an immediate appetite, or for the enlightened it may be what seems likely to serve a long term interest. But still the object, be it immediate satisfaction or deferred benefit,

is called good because it meets, or seems to meet, a private wish. That morality (meaning by the word the doctrine of good and bad) is private and mutable certainly seems to be taught by Hobbes, until all the strands of his doctrine are brought together and understood.

The principle contention of Ralph Cudworth in his long treatises attacking Hobbes anonymously, is well summed up in his own words: "Everything is what it is immutably by the necessity of its own nature" (a). A very similar view was expressed by Bramhall in "Catching Leviathan": Religion is born in us, and the moral laws which religion enforces are eternal (b). Eachard states the case with reference to morality with characteristic pungency: "There be several things most firmly and undoubtedly good in themselves, and will continue so, let all the supremes in the world meet together to vote them down; and there be others which are so famously bad and unreasonable, that all the princes upon earth (if they should conspire) can never set them up and give them credit" (c). As for this last criticism, we may observe that if by the phrase, "good in themselves", is meant good independently of their relation to the well-being of men, Hobbes would certainly disagree: if it means good independently of what particular individuals think to be for their own welfare, Hobbes would

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(a) Cudworth, A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality. Bk. I. Ch. II.

(b) Bramhall, Catching Leviathan E. IV. 289

(c) Eachard, Hobbes's State of Nature Considered.

probably agree. All the critics of Hobbes's moral doctrine, of his day, overlooked, or disregarded two things: first that part of the moral teaching of Hobbes developed around the notion of rational good, or remoter good, which may be the object of desire just as much as some immediate satisfaction; secondly the fact that for the most part Hobbes kept separate in his works the doctrine of good and bad and the doctrine of sin. The first deals with those things which are desired, and those which are desirable; the second deals with those things which are reprehensible and punishable. We shall see that by a process of reasoning which his critics would have rejected Hobbes did arrive at a position not so very far removed from that of Cudworth.

Hobbes, then, presents us with two kinds of goodness. There is good as the object of present desire; and there is rational good; and the way the one leads on to and is naturally merged in the other may be referred to prudence which is reason gained by experience. "Of appetites and aversion", he writes in Chapter VI of Leviathan, "some are born with men; as appetite for food" and the like. "The rest, which are appetites of particular things, proceed from experience, and trial of their effects upon themselves or other men" (a). In the light of this we may interpret his classic statement on the meaning or usage of the terms good and evil. "But

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(a) Lev. 24.



whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire", he writes, "that is it which he for his part calleth good: and the object of his hate and aversion, evil. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves; but from the person of the man (where there is no commonwealth) or, (in a commonwealth) from the person that representeth it ..." (a). The import of the last clause of the statement will be discussed a little later. For the present it is clear that good is the object of desire; and that for the measurement of good and bad there is no absolute objective standard. At the end of the same chapter (Chapter VI) of Leviathan from which the above passage is taken, occurs this paragraph: "And because in deliberation, the appetites, and aversions are raised by foresight of the good and evil consequences and sequels of the action whereof we deliberate; the good or evil effect thereof dependeth on the foresight of a long chain of consequences, of which very seldom any man is able to see the end. But for so far as a man seeth, if the good of those consequences be greater than the evil, the whole chain is that which writers call apparent, or seeming good. And contrarily, when the evil exceedeth the good, the whole is

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(a) Lev. 24

apparent or seeming evil: so that he who hath by experience or reason the greatest and surest prospect of consequences, deliberates best himself; and is able when he will, to give the best council to others" (a). It should be noted that it is experience or reason that gives foresight of remoter good; but still the good is what seems so to a man. The criterion is private. In the Elements Hobbes argues that we either do things on a sudden, "or else to our first appetite there succeedeth some conception of evil to happen unto us by such actions, which is fear, and withholdeth us from proceeding" (b). Here the avoidance of evil consequences is a remoter good which outweighs the attraction of immediate appetite.

The statements we have quoted are clear and there may seem to be justification for the criticism of theologians. So far Hobbes does assert that good and bad are relative terms dependent on private will or appetite; and he does deny categorically that there is anything absolutely good of itself, or absolutely evil. Indeed these terms are treated as so relative and idiosyncratic as to vary with the constitution, that is the taste or temperament, of the individual; "through the diversity of our affections it happens, that one counts that good, which another counts evil" (c). It is of course a fact that what is good in one sense for A may not be good for B. For example castor oil may be good in one sense for a

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(a) Lev. 39

(b) EL. Pt. I. XII (1)

(c) E. II. 196

person who needs the treatment, and good in no sense for anybody else. The goodness of castor oil for a person who needs it is relative. If we are thinking of his palate it is probably not good; but if we are thinking of his internal economy it may be. Or to refer to an object of desire, for example happiness, which may be considered good for all men, this also is relative in the sense that individuals may have widely different opinions about what conditions are likely to promote happiness and how to secure them. Hobbes introduces a further complication by contrasting apparent good (that which is thought by a person to be in his interest and so desired) and real good (that which actually is in a person's interest but is not necessarily desired). In the definitions we have quoted he is thinking about good and bad from the point of view of the individual, and from that standpoint the terms are relative. In other words the good he is talking about is apparent good, and may only incidentally also be real good.

Hobbes's detailed account of the passions in this Chapter VI is in complete agreement with the primary doctrine of good and bad and the will. "Grief for the calamity of another is called pity; and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself" (a). "Grief for the success of a competitor in wealth, honour, or other good, if it be joined with endeavour to enforce our own abilities to equal or succeed

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(a) Lev. 28

him, is called emulation"(a); and so on. Moral terms are defined and the alternations of desire and aversion toward objects as they appear good or bad are brought in review to show the practical application of doctrine. In Chapter XI of Leviathan Hobbes utters his celebrated dictum which has often been taken as his statement of man's summum bonum. The utterance certainly has a ring of finality about it. "I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death" (b). The words which follow, however, greatly qualify the scope of this dramatic assertion. Here in fact we have an outstanding example of a characteristic mentioned in our introduction and found especially in Leviathan, of Hobbes's method of exposition. He makes the arresting and paradoxical statement first, and then qualifies it afterward. We desire more and more power not because we hope in that way to increase our delight, but because it seems to us (in a state of nature) to be the only way to secure well-being. The account of the passions of course is an account of the passions of the natural man. In society passions are brought under control and by the force of law public spirit becomes the guiding principle of conduct. In the state of nature, however, even the temperate man is justified in taking the most vigorous steps to secure his own liberty and safety. Those who do not desire power for

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(a) Lev. 28

(b) Lev. 49



vainglory, desire it because it is the only means of security against the vainglorious. Hobbes has flashed before us again the picture he has drawn at the end of the first chapter of *De Cive*, and in the *Elements* - a picture to which imagination can add touches of its own suggested by his choice of words - of stockade and arsenal and hasty defences; of a feverish seeking out of allies and auxiliaries of war (a). The desire for power is a necessary effect of the pursuit <sup>by</sup> of the vainglorious of private appetite.

Let us now examine more closely the distinction between good as the object of present desire, and remoter good. It is present evil resulting from universal attempts to satisfy private desire that prompts men to look ahead. Private good as an end is self-defeating, and good can be attained only incidentally to the attainment of a larger end which is peace; so that to seek peace is the first law of nature. The discovery of this primary canon of conduct, Hobbes says, is a work of reason; and reason is the same in all men, so that all if they deliberate will arrive at the same conclusion. Although men differ widely as to immediate good, they "do agree concerning a future good, which is indeed a work of reason; for things present are obvious to the sense, things to come to our reason only" (b). We can see now how the account is feeling its way toward an objective standard of good and bad.

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(a) E. II. 13

(b) E. II. 48

When men reason well they reason alike, and reason discovers that the greatest good is peace. The desire for peace among the enlightened is general, but it is still a personal desire for personal ends. Hobbes makes it clear that the abnegation of immediate good for the attainment of remoter good is not natural to a man. Self-denial is painful even though it is in one's true interest, and the process of thought by which one discovers the best because the most expedient course depends on foresight of "a long chain of consequences of which very seldom any man is able to see the end" (a). Consequently not every man will venture on the process of deliberation. But when reason has begun her work and discovered that peace is the greatest good, the process of self-enlightenment continues. "Reason declaring peace to be good, it follows by the same reason, that all the necessary means to peace be good also; and therefore that modesty, equity, trust humanity, mercy, (which we have demonstrated to be necessary to peace), are good manners or habits, that is virtues" (b). This passage is taken from De Cive, and exactly the same kind of argument occurs in Chapter XV of Leviathan; and in Behemoth there is an unegoistical and unexceptionable dictum, expressing an idealistic utilitarianism: "In sum, all actions and habits are to be esteemed good or evil by their causes and usefulness in references to the commonwealth" (c). Virtuous conduct,

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(a) Lev. 29

(b) E. II. 48

(c) E. VI. 220

the necessity of which is dictated by the stark fact of human nature and its effect on human relations, is contrary to man's natural passions (a). And yet it is a fact that great multitudes of people in human societies do conduct themselves at least outwardly, in accordance with an artificial code. How is this possible? Hobbes's answer is that it is not possible without compulsion, and at this point his theory of sovereignty and the state impinges on his doctrine of good and bad.

The point we have reached is that reason in her deliberations finds out a code of behaviour which is necessary to secure the peace and happiness of people living together. The code is in fact the laws of nature. But although many thinking men may make an identical discovery simultaneously, the findings are still private, and each is concerned with his own interest and his own good. And still there are a great many who will not venture on the painful process of reasoning, discovery, and self-denial. No man, and no group of men, can profitably live a virtuous life if they are surrounded by neighbours who will not submit to the artificial restraints demanded by such a life. Morality is like disarmament; it must be universal to work. And there is no guarantee that of their own volition all men will obey moral precepts. The answer provided by Hobbes to this dilemma of human nature is the civil sovereign, invested with absolute authority to keep

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(a) Lev. 87

men in awe. The sovereign makes laws embracing the laws of nature, which are the moral laws. Private morality at one stroke is elevated to public morality, and is enforceable. The moral code which formerly was personal to each individual, though assented to by the reason of all at all times, at the sovereign's command is embodied in an objective code of civil laws.

That the antithesis between good as the object of immediate desire, and rational good, makes it necessary for an absolute sovereign to take control, is much emphasised by Hobbes. At the end of Chapter XVIII of Leviathan for instance, after discussing the rights of sovereigns by institution, he declares that although all men are by nature "provided of notable multiplying glasses (that is their passions and self-love) through which every little payment (for national defence) appeareth a great grievance", they are without "those prospective glasses (moral and civil science) to see afar off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without those payments be avoided" (a). By nature men are incapable of ordering their lives to promote rational good, and so there is the necessity for a law maker to provide for the attainment of this objective. Once society has been entered into the private measure of good and bad ceases to have significance outside the mind of the individual. A man may have desires,

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(a) Lev. 96



but he may not satisfy them beyond what the law allows. "Not the appetite of private men, but the law, which is the will and appetite of the state, is the measure of good and bad" ... "and the private measure of good is a doctrine, not only vain, but also pernicious to the public state" (a). We must remember of course that the morality commanded by law, like the prohibitions which define crimes against the state, are concerned with outward behaviour. The laws of nature as they are embodied in the civil laws relate to manners and conversation (b), which are actions to be seen and heard. The laws enjoining public morality are civil laws defined in one place in the Elements <sup>as</sup> ~~are~~ "measures of the actions of the subjects" (c). In framing its laws the commonwealth must see that they are "good", which in this context means "needful, for the good of the people, and withal perspicuous" (d). Here we have introduced a criterion which bears a direct relation to remoter or rational good, but independent of private wish or appetite.

The state, whose prerogative it is, according to Hobbes, to lay down the measure of good and bad, commands men to do those things which conduce to remoter or <sup>appetite and rational good.</sup> rational good. <sup>and we may now return to the crucial distinction which Hobbes draws between immediate</sup> The hub of the distinction is in the place and function assigned to reason in the conduct of men's lives. We must remember that

(a) Lev. 372

(b) EL. Pt. I XVIII (1)

(c) EL. Pt. II X (8)

(d) Lev. 185

in the state of nature each man seems to pursue his "right" with impeccable logic and justification; but then begins the work of reason, or "right reason" as Hobbes calls it. ~~In~~ <sup>A</sup> footnote (already quoted in an earlier section but well worth quoting again) explains his terminology. "By right reason in the natural state of men, I understand not, as many do, an infallible faculty, but the act of reasoning, that is the peculiar and true ratiocination of every man concerning those actions of his which may either redound to the damage or benefit of his neighbours ... I call it true, that is concluding from true principles rightly framed, because that the whole breach of the laws of nature consists in the false reasoning, or rather folly of these men who see not those duties they are necessarily to perform towards others in order to their own conservation" (a). What is concluded from true principles is antecedent and morally binding, although its end or motive and what makes it binding is the preservation of a man's life.

We may say, then, that good as the object of immediate appetite is the good recognised by the natural man. Rational good is recognised only secondly and after deliberation. The attainment of rational, or remoter good, involves an understanding and observance of the laws of nature, or precepts of natural reason, which outside civil societies are properly speaking not laws but dispositions or inclinations disposing

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(a) E. II. 16 (footnote)

all men towards peace, purely in the interest of their own preservation, and to end the brutish anarchy in which they have existed. It is in the universal and changeless laws of nature, according to Hobbes, that is to be found an explanation of the universality and immutability of the moral code which we all recognise. The laws of nature prompt us to peace; they also enjoin the means to peace which is the pursuit of virtue. The understanding of rational good is to recognise that virtuous living by everybody is the only means to peace, self preservation, and happiness. Morality, according to Hobbes, serves a strictly utilitarian end; it is not so much a good in itself, as a means to good, that is peace.

The doctrine is admirably summed up by Hobbes in a passage in De Cive, which has already been referred to, and which may now be quoted in full: "All writers do agree that the natural law is the same with the moral. Let us see wherefore this is true. We must know, therefore, that good and evil are names given to things to signify the inclination or aversion of them, by whom they were given. But the inclinations of men are diverse, according to their diverse constitutions, customs, opinions; as we may see in those things we apprehend by sense, as by tasting, touching, smelling; but much more in those which pertain to the common actions of life, where what this man commends, that is to say calls good, the other undervalues, as being evil. Nay, very often the same man at diverse times praises the same thing. Whilst thus they do, necessary it is

there should be discord and strife. They are therefore so long in the state of war as by reason of the diversity of the present appetite, they mete good and evil by diverse measures. All men easily acknowledge this state, as long as they are in it, to be evil, and by consequence that peace is good. They therefore who could not agree concerning a present, do agree concerning a future good; which indeed is a work of reason; for things present are obvious to the sense, things to come to our reason only. Reason declaring peace to be good, it follows by the same reason, that all the necessary means to peace be good also; and therefore that modesty, equity, trust, humanity, mercy, (which we have demonstrated to be necessary to peace) are good manners or habits, that is, virtues. The law therefore in the means to peace commands also good manners, or the practice of virtue; and therefore it is called moral" (a). Later in De Cive, morality is defined as "justice (meaning of course here the constant intention and endeavour to act righteously) and civil obedience, and observation of all the natural laws". There appears in Behemoth (a book which in a cantankerous setting contains many jewels of maturity) this considered statement: "It is not the much or little praise that makes an action virtuous, but the cause; not much or little blame that makes an action vicious, but its being unconformable to the laws, in such men as are subject to the law, or its being unconformable to equity or charity in all

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(a) E. II. 47, 48



men whatsoever" (a). We have seen in the former section that sin is disobedience of laws, natural and civil, so that in the end the terms sinful and bad, though not quite synonymous, share a large part of their meaning, and the doctrines of good and bad and of sin can be seen to harmonise.

We must now discuss some difficulties which arise out of Hobbes's account of morality. First there is the problem which has presented itself in other contexts and to which we have given some attention. Put very badly the question is, what happens to the laws of nature when the commonwealth has been formed and the sovereign invested with absolute authority. We had to ask the same question in our discussion of sin, but then we were able to provide an answer from Hobbes which, if it perhaps dodged the issue a little, was adequate for the purpose of that particular discussion. Sin, we saw, is wrong intention as well as wrong action, and as wrong intention is by far the most important element in the eyes of God whose commands are embodied in the laws of nature, the emergence of the absolute sovereign makes no difference to one cardinal aspect of these laws, that is as prohibitions of sinful thoughts and sinful intention. In a consideration of the laws of nature, however, as canons of morality, this way out of difficulty is not open to us. As moral laws the laws of nature are concerned with external actions as well as with intentions; they are precepts of social behaviour. Of course

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(a) E. VI. 218

thoughts and intentions have just as important a bearing on this kind of behaviour as they have on right and wrong actions generally. Nevertheless for the social moralist, surely, the important consideration is what people actually do, rather than what they would like to do. Mere intention without action is of little significance to one's neighbours. In other words whereas the question of sin is personal between a man and his God who looks at the heart, morality, for Hobbes, is first and almost wholly a community question. As the civil law provides for outward actions, it is most important to try to find what status is left for the laws of nature in so far as they are rules of conduct, in the commonwealth.

We may say with certainty that as between himself and God the sovereign is bound by the laws of nature. Although David was not guilty of any injustice to the husband of Bathsheba, he sinned against God (a). It may be accepted also that in the absence of any explicit provision the laws of nature are part of the civil law. This is in fact less than the obvious meaning of the statement in Leviathan that "the law of nature and the civil law contain each other and are of equal extent" (b). But what about the proposition which has already given us pause, that it is impossible for the civil law to be against the law of nature (c). If the sovereign were to command me to commit adultery, it would be unlawful, which means sinful,

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(a) Lev. 112

(b) Lev. 141

(c) E. II. 190

for me to disobey. If I obey and commit the act I may with some show of plausibility be acquitted of sin. My intention may not have gone with the act, and there would have been no violation of the law of nature prohibiting lust. But the law of nature most certainly also prohibits the act of adultery. In fact, although in the sight of God lust is as sinful as the act, from the human and social point of view the act may well be considered the more serious. It is certainly so if seriousness is to be judged by effect on other people, which is no inappropriate criterion of morality in the sense of social behaviour.

The moral difficulty raised by this dictum of Hobbes must reluctantly be allowed to stand. What he says certainly challenges the whole basis of Christian morality: each individual is responsible for his acts; and to behave morally is a duty which we owe to God and transcends all other human obligations. We may take it, however, as certain that Hobbes did not think that a case such as he suggests would ever be likely to arise. The purpose<sup>of</sup> of most of his sentences is that the sovereign will implement in his dominions by civil laws the laws of nature as they are known to his reason. "When a commonwealth is once settled then are they (the laws of nature) actually laws, and not before; as being then the commands of the commonwealth, and therefore also civil laws ... the law of nature therefore is a part of the civil law in all

commonwealths of the world" (a). Hobbes appears to have had implicit faith in the common sense which absolute responsibility must engender. No sovereign would be so foolish as to command disobedience to the laws of God, because reason would inform him that such a procedure must lead to ruin.

Another difficulty involved in Hobbes's doctrine of morality considered beside his doctrine of sovereignty, is an extension of the problem raised in the last paragraph. Reason discovers the laws of nature which amount to a code of social behaviour. They inform us how we ought to live together to secure peace and safety. If followed they would involve, according to Hobbes's account, a continuous abnegation of a portion of our natural right. But natural right does not extend beyond what is needful; and if all members of the community were observing the laws of nature the right to everything would devolve upon nobody, as this right arises only as a measure of self-protection. As all adult members of the community have the capacity to reason which would inform them all in identical terms of the kind of social conduct demanded by their best interests, it might be thought that observance of these social rules could be brought about by persuasion and agreement. Conditions would then be created in which all would have the boon of freedom with peace and security.

Hobbes does not think these conditions could be secured by

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(a) Lev. 141



agreement. For one thing he suggests that in their natural state men cannot agree about the laws of nature, although all commend the virtues they enjoin. Inability to agree is because of irrational appetite, "whereby they greedily prefer the present good". Something more than agreement, even if it were possible, is needed to secure observance of the laws: there must be a person or body in charge with power to compel obedience. It is interesting to note that although observance of natural laws (with freedom and enjoyment of natural right) could not be secured by agreement, because of the intractability of human nature which is widely prone to vainglory, Hobbes introduces into his account a hypothesis or fiction of a social contract, or an agreement each with each for a total surrender of right to an autocratic sovereign. On his view of human nature would it ever be possible for such an agreement to be entered into? The truth is, of course, that Hobbes was interested only in the terrestrial scene as he found it. It is a fact, he holds, that the earth is parcelled out among states in all of which absolute sovereignty resides somewhere (a). Hobbes simply would strengthen the hand of the sovereign, would warn of the dangers of sedition, and by his analysis of the things which belong to our peace would provide an antidote against sudden change or revolution.

Is it not a fact, however, that by postulating in every society the existence of a sovereign law-maker having absolute

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(a) Lev. 101

authority, and by postulating at the same time a body of precepts or laws which are changeless and everlasting, and which tell us infallibly what kind of conduct is necessary for the maintenance of civil peace, Hobbes is in danger of admitting the divided authority which it has been his dearest wish to avoid? The absolute sovereign power which he postulates as existing in every community surely makes nugatory and superfluous the laws of nature and any other body of independent principles, except as a guide to the sovereign. Hobbes suggests principles by which the sovereign should be guided in his legislative duties, but the laws of nature certainly have universal application as arbiters of the inner life and, before the foundation of the commonwealth, as a guide for all men on the way to peace. When Hobbes is discussing sovereignty and describing its boundless prerogatives the very notion of independence existing within the state but outside the sovereign, and whether of principles or of men, is unthinkable. When he is discussing morality, the laws of nature grow in importance, and approach a paramount authority. When he is discussing the two together he is inclined to be ambiguous, at one time laying emphasis on the one, and at another on the other.

Hitherto it has been our concern mainly to show that Hobbes, no less than the most orthodox theologian, taught a morality which was expressed in universal and changeless canons; although he differed from the theologians in stressing the

utilitarian nature of morality, since self-interest is the motive for observance of its laws, and observance does in fact promote the best interest of the individual. Hobbes and the theologians alike based their arguments as to the nature and status of moral laws on a priori assumptions, as far as Hobbes was concerned upon the assumption that the laws of nature are universal and immutable. Now it is time to consider two questions. Is there any empirical justification for the doctrine that moral laws are universal and changeless? And what is to be said about the so-called selfish doctrine of Hobbes? Is morality, and human conduct generally, dictated by self-interest?

First as to the empirical evidence for or against the doctrine of universal and changeless moral laws. It is possible that a general principle at the basis of traditional morality, such as Hobbes puts forward - "Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thyself - or as Christian moralists maintain - Do to others as you would have them do to you - might conceivably be established as having universal validity at the present time. It might also be possible to find evidence in support of the view that some such principle has been widely accepted throughout historic times. This appears to be part of the argument of C. S. Lewis in his Riddell Memorial Lecture, "The Abolition of Man" (a). The

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(a) C. S. Lewis, "The Abolition of Man". Riddell Memorial Lectures, Durham 1943.

evidence adduced in this lecture would tend only to establish the principle empirically, though a larger claim is made for it. But even if we allow that there is a universal general principle at the basis of morality, would it be possible to make out any case for the universality of a whole moral code? That there is such a code is taken for granted by Hobbes and his contemporaries. Details have an absolute validity as well as principle. There are of course two sides to a moral code. There are duties and there are prohibitions. And we may test the case for the doctrine of Hobbes by reference to both sides.

First as to prohibitions. It might be possible to establish that certain kinds of action are universally considered bad at the present time. For example it might be shown that murder meets with world wide disapprobation. And it might also be possible, though I should imagine extremely difficult, to establish that there are actions which are universally condemned to-day and which have always been condemned. But to establish these two data, the universality of certain prohibitions, and that some prohibitions have always existed, would by no means prove that an entire moral code, such for example as that which, for the sake of argument, we may assume to be accepted in the west, is universal and immutable; and this is the proposition which was asserted by seventeenth century moralists and by Hobbes and which we are examining. On the other hand it is suggested that the arguments which might be brought against this proposition might well be held conclu-



sive. In the first place when speaking of a system of morality it is necessary to confine oneself to a geographical area. We spoke just now by way of illustration of a hypothetical moral code of the west (without of course opining that any such thing exists), and it was impossible to suggest any wider generalisation, because of course morality varies from place to place. The western countries, for example, all condemn polygamy, as immoral; but this point of view is certainly not shared by Arabs. Examples might be multiplied of such radical differences of opinion, and would surely prove that there is no universal system of morality.

Now let us consider a single case of what was formerly held to be a moral duty, and in the light of it the proposition that moral laws are immutable. It is suggested that the proposition would be sufficiently disproved if it could be shown that what was generally considered at one time to be a moral duty, has ceased to be so considered. It is also suggested that history does provide examples of such a change in outlook. In the heroic age there is no doubt that private revenge of certain kinds of wrong was fairly generally looked upon as a solemn duty; and it does not strengthen the case for the immutability of moral laws to argue that this was because of the circumstances of the time, the general insecurity, and the absence of any effective control by authority. Such arguments, on the contrary, only tend to support the view that the validity of moral laws is empirical. Hobbes would

certainly have agreed that in the seventeenth century private revenge was a crime and not a duty; and this view would have been generally shared; so that the "natural sense of right and wrong" of the great majority would inform them that private revenge was not the kind of behaviour which is properly called good. In other words in the centuries since the heroic age the general standard of morality had undergone at least one important modification. The must implied by "vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord", had superseded the must which was the ground of Hamlet's Tragedy.

I would like at this point to examine a little further part of the arguments of C.S. Lewis in the lecture referred to. There are, he maintains, objective values which have a priori validity and are universally accepted, and were this not so there could be no possible ground for duty or obligation; and in the last resort even the modern innovator cannot escape an appeal to duty to justify the moral reformation he hopes to bring about. The truth of a value judgment may be known to "practical reason", which may be defined, I suppose, as the mental capacity to understand value. Or on the other hand the feeling toward good things in themselves may be called sentiment. But that there are good things in themselves, the goodness of which neither demands nor admits of proof, must be accepted if the whole notion of duty is not to collapse. "If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obliga-

tory stall".

But is it absolutely necessary for value to have the kind of truth and universality which is insisted upon. There may still be an understanding by "practical reason" of values which are valid and objective, and known to be such empirically; and there may be sentiment toward certain modes of behaviour which have been proved empirically to be "good", and have been inculcated because they are "good. We may go further. The ability to understand called "practical reason" will surely have the capacity to adapt itself to changing circumstances; and the felt obligation to conform to certain patterns of conduct, called sentiment, is not conceived as any the less powerful or imperative because it is attributed to the weight of public opinion in its favour. A moral precept which is held to be proved by the experience of the race or the community has for those who abide by it a validity as unquestionable as that of a precept which is accepted as axiomatic. And because moral codes are held to be conventional and variable, this does not weaken the obligation to obey them. An injunction is not less mandatory because it is the voice of the community, than if it really had been uttered on Mount Sinai. Hobbes maintained the necessity for conformity in the public worship of God. So the moral man is the man who conforms to the settled custom of his society, and conformity here is in the public interest.

The laws of nature, said Hobbes, the means to peace and

harmonious living, are discovered by reason. Reason here is prudence, and is doubtless the same as the "practical reason" referred to. May we not say that it is experience which informs us of the moral precepts which Hobbes calls laws of nature, and that men have the capacity to learn by experience. Experience teaches us what works in present conditions, and conditions change. What is a must in the circumstances of today, might not have been a must in the circumstances of yesterday. The criterion of values is workability, rather than self-evidence, whatever precisely that may mean when applied to moral laws. There is certainly no contradiction in denying the truth of a moral law. That there are precepts or canons of social behaviour which all reasonable people learn as they go through life cannot be doubted. That there is present agreement in principle and detail over large areas of the globe as to what these canons are, may be true. But that the canons have always been the same, and are the same for everybody in all circumstances, seems questionable. Hobbes was right in postulating his laws of nature; but when he asserted dogmatically that they are immutable and eternal, he was taking a leap in the dark.

What, we may now ask ourselves, was the moral code envisaged by Hobbes and his contemporaries? Hobbes talks of good manners or habits which are a means to peace and which include modesty, equity, trust, humanity, mercy. These are social virtues, and the list does not include those states of



mind, such as faith in the religious sense, and the state of being "God fearing", which a religious moralist would include in the list and might even place at the head. The theologians of the seventeenth century appear to have assumed that the reader was aware of what constituted the body of Christian morality; and as far as I know they did not attempt definitions. Certainly they did not concern themselves with finer points and border-line cases. There were no casuists among the Cambridge Platonists. Hobbes also, although he gives detailed accounts of the laws of nature, sums them up in the precept we have mentioned more than once, which echoes the spirit of the gospels, and would have found no critic among leading churchmen of the day - "Do to others as you would have them do to you". When from time to time he writes of "moral virtues", it is with a lack of precision which bespeaks unquestioning acceptance of the point of view that precision is not necessary. Everybody knows perfectly well what he is talking about. Perhaps the most we can say is that seventeenth century moralists and Hobbes accepted what is vaguely called Christian morality, or western morality, and leave it at that. It is worth noting that Hobbes admits that systems of morality other than that which he propounds have been devised by philosophers; but the systems have been false and the philosophers in error, because they have not understood that the goodness of actions consists in their tendency to promote

peace (a). There have been other systems, that is theories to explain why certain actions are good and others bad; but it is implied that the moral code which says what actions are good and what bad, is universally known and accepted, and is unimpeachable.

We shall now examine the Hobbesian doctrine that the motive for the observance of moral laws is self-interest. Everybody would agree that self-interest is very often the motive for human actions, and that these actions may be good or bad according to the circumstances. Few would question that some kind of self-interest, often misguided and even perverted but not necessarily so, is responsible for the momentary satisfactions which are grasped and enjoyed by all of us from time to time. All would probably agree that moral behaviour in the long run does serve our best interest, though certain theologians, and probably the majority of theologians in the seventeenth century, might argue that our interest to be served may not belong to this world but to the next. Possibly a majority of theologians to-day might agree that our best interest in this world is promoted by moral behaviour; in other words they might be in agreement with the principle involved in "Honesty is the best Policy", and even perhaps with what must be accepted as an ordinary interpretation of "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (b). But how many would approve the

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(a) E. II. 48, 49

(b) Matthew VI. 33

dictum that the motive for moral behaviour is long-term self-interest?

To understand Hobbes's account and do justice to it we must examine in what sense precisely he holds this dictum to be true. The account he gives may be put briefly as follows: although it was possible for men to agree about a future good, it was not the case that all were capable all the time of ordering their conduct so as to promote a future or rational good, or to defer for that end the satisfaction of momentary appetite. And so it was necessary for a sovereign authority to enforce moral behaviour by law. His argument would be that in cases of conflict short-term self-interest would be too strong for long-term self-interest to assert itself. This is the meaning of the closing passage of Chapter XVIII of Leviathan. Although all men are provided with magnifying glasses, their passions and self-love, they are destitute of prospective glasses to enable them to see afar off. The motive therefore to concern us, according to Hobbes, is not the motive of the individual but of the sovereign authority; because to follow private motive, like the acceptance of the private measure of good, may be harmful to the state (b). What is the motive which actuates the sovereign as he frames his laws? Bound up with this is the other question which confronts us repeatedly as we discuss Hobbes's moral teaching. Is the sovereign likely to enforce the kind of behaviour that the

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(a) Lev. 372

theologian would call moral? Answers to these questions may provide a solution to some of the complexities of Hobbes's account. We shall consider the second question first.

Moral behaviour, according to Hobbes, is the only behaviour consistent with peace (a). We must therefore assume that an intelligent sovereign would command the observance of moral behaviour in his dominion. As the law of nature, which is the moral law, is deemed to be contained in the civil law (b), we may assume that no intelligent sovereign would make any law inconsistent with the laws of nature, (forgetting for the moment the thorny dictum that it is impossible for civil law to offend the law of nature) or excluding their operation in his dominions. Nevertheless, a sovereign may be unintelligent as well as intelligent, and Hobbes does go at considerable length into the question of what is the sovereign's duty in framing laws. (See De Cive, Part II, Chap. XIII.) The gist of these provisions is that laws must be in accordance with the dictates of morality. We may accept it as Hobbes's conviction that no sovereign would wilfully make laws incompatible with morality.

Secondly, what is the sovereign's motive in framing moral laws? The short answer to this is obviously to preserve the peace of the realm, as moral behaviour is the necessary means to peace. But it may also be claimed that the motive is to

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(a) E. II. 48, 49, Lev. 141

(b) Lev. 141



serve both his own interest as a natural person, and the best interest of the community. The community's best interest is only served by peace, which is the means rather than the end. In the works of Hobbes the interests of the commonwealth and the interests of the sovereign are absolutely identified. In fact the terms "civil sovereign" and "commonwealth" are used interchangeably. It is true to say, therefore, that the motive prompting the law-maker as he frames moral laws is in a real sense self-interest. The commonwealth acts vicariously through its sovereign. According to Hobbes's hypothetical account of the genesis of the state, it was in the first instance self-interest which prompted the surrender of rights to the sovereign. It is an extension of the same self-interest which leads to the framing of moral laws, and their acceptance and observation as the only means to peace.

In accepting self-interest as the foundation of morality Hobbes seemed to be making a departure, but a dispassionate examination of contemporary moralists, especially the men of religion, will show that this was not really so. The alternative to observing moral laws from a motive of self-interest, is to keep them for their own sake and because that is the right thing to do, and without regard to consequences in this world and the next. Moral behaviour from the second motive would really be actuated by some such faculty as Shaftesbury's "natural sense of right and wrong", or by conscience. It is hard to think of any other motive beside these two, unless to

avoid censure or gain approbation or set a good example to others, all of which might be subsumed under self-interest. In any case we may ask the questions, why do people condemn breaches of moral law and why do they approve of moral behaviour and why is it a "good" example that one sets by behaving morally? Once again we are driven to say either that by observing moral laws some benefits will result; or to observe them is a good thing in itself. The critics of Hobbes objected to his frank acceptance of the first, utilitarian, motive for moral behaviour; but how many of them set forward the second motive as the proper one: the motive of Kant? The inducements held out by Christian moralists have always at bottom been utilitarian. One is assured of the favour of God here and now, which means happiness; of reward in the world to come. These are not the kind of inducements to influence a materialist, but to the sincere believer they must be reckoned to have effective significance. They persuade him that the pursuit of morality will be to his advantage.

The difference between Hobbes and Christian moralists is that Hobbes makes no attempt to disguise his utilitarian doctrine, so as to make it acceptable to those who teach, even if they do not consistently practise, unselfishness. He merely states the doctrine and seems to imply that it must be clear to everyone on reflection. Self-interest accounts for all human actions; it is ultimately at the back of moral behaviour. The benefits and advantages to be gained also from

this kind of behaviour are strictly mundane; peace on earth, security, a quiet life. Christian moralists on the other hand make a distinction between the securing of one's eternal welfare, and seeking purely temporal advantage. The former is somehow good and laudable, the latter unworthy and reprehensible. And although they mention the good to spring from moral conduct in this life, such good is incidental and its attainment is never represented as worthy motive. On the other hand the saving of one's soul, avoidance of punishment in the after life, attainment of reward in heaven, are quite clearly set forward as worthy motives for moral behaviour. Somewhere between Hobbes and the Christian moralists is Spinoza who understood self-interest in a wider sense than Hobbes, although like Hobbes and unlike the theologians, he frankly admitted that self-interest was the motive for moral behaviour. According to Spinoza the benefits accruing to moral behaviour are not confined to "peaceable and commodious living", but also include the blessedness of the individual. Indeed "blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself" (a).

Hobbes's analysis of motive would find more supporters to-day than in his own time; and more also it may be than in the recent past. Writing in 1908 A.E. Taylor observed that Hobbes exaggerated in insisting on the necessity for civil enforcement of morality. He argues that even savages, who are without any settled political organisation, "possess a

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(a) Spinoza, *Ethics Part V*, Prop. XLII



rudimentary morality, based on traditional tribal custom". The question is whether in the most primitive tribes there is not the sanction of some recognised authority to enforce obedience to custom? To what extent is acquiescence spontaneous and unconstrained? It has been insisted more than once that Hobbes did not hold that morality was purely arbitrary; it is founded on the laws of nature which are universal and rooted deeper even than custom. Taylor criticises also the Hobbesian view that independent nations "recognise no moral restrictions whatever in their dealings with their neighbours" (a). It may be worth while to quote Hobbes on international relations to illustrate how much more closely we may understand and accept his views to-day than could a writer in 1908. In *De Cive* he says: "How absurd it is for a city or sovereign to commit the ruling of his subject's consciences to an enemy; for they are as has been shown ... in an hostile state, whosoever have not joined themselves into the unity of one person. Nor contradicts it this truth, that they do not always fight; for truces are made between enemies. It is sufficient for an hostile mind, that there is suspicion; for the frontiers of cities, kingdoms, empires strengthened with garrisons, do with a fighting posture and countenance, though they strike not, yet as enemies mutually behold each other" (b).

We shall now consider the "natural sense of right and

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(a) A. E. Taylor, *Thomas Hobbes*, p. 68  
(b) *Ibid.* II. 152



wrong" which was introduced by Shaftesbury, a pupil of Hobbes, into the discussion of morality. Men conduct themselves in a moral way, he says, because they possess this inner sense. It is what Hutcheson calls the moral sense, and Butler conscience. What does Hobbes say about this? ~~What does Hobbes say about this?~~ We have already discussed the statement that "whatsoever a man does against his conscience is a sin" (a), and we have seen that this is in complete harmony with the definition of sin as thoughts and actions against right reason, and breaches of the laws of nature. To behave morally is to conform to the precepts of the laws of nature, and again, as already quoted, "all facts contrary to any moral virtue can never cease to be sin", although the laws of nature in a state of nature are silent "provided they be referred not to the mind but to the actions of men" (b). Viewed from ~~mind~~ this aspect, sin and immorality are identified, as are virtue and righteousness. More important in a discussion of the moral doctrine of Hobbes in the light of accepted Christian teaching, is to examine again what Hobbes means by conscience in this context. Conscience, we saw, for Hobbes, is a man's "settled judgment and opinion"; and in an elaboration of this definition we concluded that it is the voice of right reason, which informs people of "those duties they are necessarily to perform toward others in order to their own conservation". Right

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(a) E. II. 152

(b) E. II. 64

reason, the laws of nature, conscience are in many respects, for Hobbes, identical terms. Certainly all three share this connotation: they are the means by which a man has knowledge of the kind of behaviour which will promote his best interest. Hobbes, as we know, believes that self-interest is the motive for all behaviour, including good behaviour; and if motive as what we should call a mental state is to be allowed at all, self-interest certainly agrees most readily with his mechanistic materialism. In this way also, reason and conscience, which are the guardians of self-interest, are harmonised, at least on paper, with the doctrine of necessity and the materialism. There is no choice in human affairs, and mankind is swayed by a succession of appetites and aversions: the alternation of appetites and aversions is what is called deliberation: again deliberation, reason, conscience are closely allied terms. Hobbes had an allotted place for private conscience in his system, and held that it functioned to initiate and change behaviour, violently as he denounced the setting up of private conscience against what was prescribed by law, and in spite of difficulties raised by the admission of such an autonomous principle into a system of materialistic determinism.

In his age Hobbes could not deny the function and potency of conscience. He lived through a century torn asunder by political and religious faction, and when full allowance was made for self-interest it had to be admitted that conscience did play a part in this tragic drama. Not all the Puritans

were purely avaricious political revolutionaries masquerading under the cloak of religion, and Hobbes had to admit it. The very violence and bitterness of his attack in Behemoth underlines his acceptance of the truth. The democratical men really did oppose their private conscience to the king, and not only their greed for gain and lust for power.

The postulation by Hobbes of laws of nature, which instruct men to do to others as they would have them do to them, a precept which, according to the founder of Christianity, is the whole of the law and the prophet, is to admit something which functions in much the same way as the inner sense of Shaftesbury, and the conscience of <sup>Joseph</sup> ~~Samuel~~ Butler, however different from the system of Hobbes may be the doctrine of these moralists, in the degree of emphasis which is laid on the utilitarian nature of morality. A prompting to moral behaviour by antecedent eternal principles is backed by a sense of discrimination (right reason which discovers the precepts) which says that moral behaviour is best because most expedient, and which even before the formation of any commonwealth said that present anarchy and bloodshed was bad and peace a good thing. Surely the interplay and operation of this impartial prompting and the ability to discriminate is very near to what Butler called conscience and what Shaftesbury called the natural sense of right and wrong.

PART IV

HOBBES AND THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



HOBBS AND THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES

Although, as Sir Leslie Stephen points out, the opinions of Hobbes were so unacceptable to his contemporaries that in the *Vitae Hobbianae Auctarium* of Blackbourne mention of only one champion can be found among a host of critics, his religious opinions cannot be detached from those of his century. We have already seen to what degree he shared his doctrine of predestination with the ante-lapsarian Calvinists, so that inside a certain narrow theological range there might have been common ground between them, had their motive and accentuation been less radically opposed. In the same way there was some apparent common ground between Hobbes and the Episcopalians. We shall trace briefly in the next sections the growth of the two main religious parties, whose outlook, at least at the extremities, was so profoundly different, but which both undoubtedly contributed to the theology of Hobbes. Such an examination should serve as a commentary on the stark theological isolation of Hobbes, while making his very dogmatic and individual opinions more intelligible. But as a preliminary it may be useful to attempt a summary of the points of apparent agreement between Hobbes and these parties, and to show how appearances were in fact deceptive.

In the political argument which split the country in the reign of Charles I, both Episcopalians and Puritans were to be found on either side; but in the main the leaders of the

Church of England, that is the Anglican Episcopalians, sided with the king; while the religious outlook of the parliamentarians, especially the important men, was Puritan. The Anglicans were represented by the successors of Richard Hooker, and with some difference by the school of Laud. The Puritans were both Presbyterians and Independents, as well as a host of minor sects. As for his Anglican contemporaries, the effect of Hobbes's theory of sovereignty might be to give the king the same sort of position as he would hold on the divine right theory, although Hobbes must not be saddled with a belief in this doctrine. However, he backs his theory of sovereignty by a formidable weight of scripture in an effort to prove that it is part of the law of God as revealed in the Bible. The theory is that the sovereign is God's vice-regent upon earth, interpreter of the mind of God, sole law giver, so that no valid distinction can be drawn between canonical and civil law (a). Although in practice the sovereign does not officiate in church, he might do so if he wished, because he has, as Constantine claimed to have, the status of bishop, or as Hobbes says, of chief pastor, which is the name of a doctor of the church (b). This of course goes a great deal further than Laud's doctrine of divine right, and it is very questionable, as we shall see, whether in any sense Laud could have been called Erastian. The king held his office by divine right, but so also did the Archbishop of Canterbury; and not

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(a) Lev. 313

(b) Lev. 253, 294

only the Archbishop, but all bishops, archdeacons, deacons, etc. (for the list see the etcetra oath). On the question, therefore, of the status of the sovereign Hobbes had less in common with the dominant Anglican school of his day, the Laudians, than might appear. With more moderate churchmen, however, he was in much closer sympathy, as they were simply and dutifully Erastian, although they would have deplored Hobbes's ruthless pursuit of this doctrine to its remotest logical conclusions.

Again Hobbes might have been quoted by the Anglicans to support a general opposition to private interpretations of scripture, and to appeals to private consciences to settle the outward form of worship. On the question of uniformity, the doctrine of the Anglicans like that of Hobbes was authoritarian, although Laud and his followers were inclined to show considerable toleration in doctrinal matters. In general their appeal was to the church, especially the primitive church, to the early fathers, and to the scriptures. The interpretation of well established doctrine and practice they would hold did not admit of much wrangling, and as to practice especially, this had been handed down in the Catholic tradition and was evident for all to see. Hobbes's assertion of public authority in matters both of doctrine and practice was far more dogmatic and uncompromising, and was on grounds other than those of many leaders of the church. He denied that the church is a spiritual entity, separated from the world and supra-national,

accountable to God directly and alone. He did not accept the civitas dei of Augustine. The church he held is national, not universal; and in a Christian state its membership is coincident with that of the state. And therefore public worship "is the worship that a commonwealth performeth as one person" (a); and "seeing that the commonwealth is but one person, it ought also to exhibit to God but one worship" (b). And when Hobbes submitted to the Church of England, placed in it his "belief faith and trust" (c), and accepted for instance its authority as to what constitutes the canon of scripture (d), he was in reality submitting to the sovereign who is supreme governor of the Church and chief pastor. Such submission was the duty of every member of the commonwealth, so that there could be no room for anything but the strictest uniformity in matters both of doctrine and practice. Heresy, in fact, is the word used to signify private opinion (e) whenever that opinion is publicly expressed. Private thoughts to which no expression is given are of course the interest and concern of nobody but the individual.

Although Hobbes pronounced himself in a most unequivocal way for uniformity, his opinions on particular matters were by no means in harmony with Church of England doctrine and practice. He proceeded, in fact, as though he himself was not bound by his own most emphatic injunctions. Many of the opinions

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(a) Lev. 193  
(d) Lev. 203

(b) Lev. 196  
(e) Lev. 316

(c) Lev. 32



published in Leviathan were heresy according to his own definition of the term, being beyond question and dispute, private opinions. There were, for example, his doctrine of the status of the Son, and his views of the Trinity generally. The first bordered closely on Arianism, and the second certainly amounted to a denial of the three persons in one, and were not much removed from the views of some of the Unitarians: the one God has revealed himself in a succession of modes. Again he was opposed to many of the practices of churchmen, which are labelled high church to-day, but which had been a feature of episcopal services ever since the Elizabethan Settlement, and of course before, with a short break in the reign of Edward VI. He was, for instance, opposed to the decoration of churches with images (a); but on the other hand he held it a sign of contempt "to adorn the place of his worship less than our own houses" (b), and he favoured a liturgical service. "Prayers must not be rash or light or vulgar, but beautiful and well composed" (c).

It was in his attitude to the dignity and prerogatives of the episcopal hierarchy that his views diverge most widely from those held by the majority of contemporary churchmen; and their feeling may be taken as expressed by Clarendon in an effusive defence of "the best constituted church in the world" having "the most learned clergy of any church". "I cannot

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(a) Lev. 360

(b) El. Pt. I. XI (12)

(c) E. II. 218,  
Lev. 195

but observe", he says, "and I should be inexcusable if I should not, that after all his bitter and uncharitable invectives against the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, and of which he would still be thought a member, he hath not in this his last chapter of cui bono, been able to fasten the least reproach upon them, of being swayed by any other motives than the most abstracted considerations of conscience, duty, gratitude, and generosity, constantly and steadfastly to adhere to the king" (a).

As to how the standing of the clergy is reduced, some points may be mentioned. The authority of the keys is whittled down to the obligatory function of administering baptism (a sign merely) to the outwardly penitent. It is the business of the church as a whole, and not individual priests, to pronounce on the genuineness of repentance. Excommunication, unless and until strengthened by the civil power, is robbed of most of its significance. It can be pronounced only for conduct and not for doctrine, and is simply an injunction to Christians to avoid the company of the excommunicated (b). Apostolic succession may be a fact, but it has none of the special importance which the Roman church, and many Anglicans, attached to it. For one thing, in apostolic times, it was not any particular individual, but the whole congregation who laid their hands on a newly elected church officer; and in any case, with or without the

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(a) Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan. Survey of  
Ch. XLVII

(b) Lev. 275

laying on of hands, "Christian kings are still the supreme pastors of their people; and have the power to ordain what pastors they please" (a). On the whole the dignity and authority of the episcopal hierarchy, both in England and in the Roman church, are belittled indifferently, and the character of its members disparaged. The changes in religion are attributed to "unpleasing priests" both among the papists and in the Church of England (b). Hobbes feels that in the universities especially they have been troublesome, in that "claiming divine ordination through laying on of hands", they have "aspired to the authority of the pope in England where that authority had been thrown off". For his part he limits the authority which they claim from the apostles, to admonition and outward ceremony. They have of course their function and utility. He does not side with the Puritans who would get rid of them root and branch. In a Christian city the scriptures must be interpreted by clergymen, and "in deciding questions of faith, that is to say, concerning God, which transcend human capacity", the sovereign is obliged to use the services of lawfully ordained clergymen (c).

In spite of his disparagement, and this very grudging concession of some place in the commonwealth, Hobbes expressed surprise at the attacks of episcopal clergymen on himself. He attributed it to "a relic still remaining of popish ambition, working in that seditious division and distinction between the

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(a) Lev. 294

(b) Lev. 62

(c) E. II. 297

power spiritual and civil". At his hands, we may conclude, the dignity of the episcopate suffered quite as much as the reputation of the presbytery. He could not, therefore, number among his supporters any of the Anglicans, and in fact it was their opposition which drove him back to England in 1651 to throw himself on the mercy of Oliver Cromwell; and among their numbers were to be found his most determined and acrimonious critics.

As to the Puritan party also there is much in Hobbes that they might have found congenial, but more that was derogatory and calculated to rouse hostility if not hatred. They were for the most part staunchly Calvinistic. Their appeal was to the scripture first (many of them in fact stopped there) and afterwards to the early church and the early fathers; so that the order of preference for authorities accepted by Anglican divines was reversed in the case of the Puritans. They were united, Presbyterians and Independents alike, in a rabid opposition to the episcopal hierarchy, and in general to the notion of a multiplicity of intermediaries between the sinner and his God. They were, a great many of them, vociferous in their demand for democratic discipline in the church after the Genevan model. They exalted the status and importance of the private conscience; they accepted private interpretations of scripture. With reference to the last two, private conscience and private interpretation, Hobbes denounces them in writing, and agrees with them in his practice as we have seen; there



is appearance of agreement over the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and the weight attached to the authority of scripture, but appearances are deceptive. In their rejection of intermediaries Hobbes goes some way with them. His doctrine in this respect might be stated by a slight alteration of a passage of scripture: There is one mediator between God and men, the civil sovereign. We have seen that the bishops regarded Hobbes with justification as a derogator of their position and dignity; and to that extent he sided with the Puritans. In his contemptuous rejection of school theology he would also have gained their full support; whereas in the Anglican camp there was already a revived interest in the schoolmen, and their works were treated as a lesser or corroborative authority. (As to this see Bramhall's championship of the schoolmen in his Defence of Liberty).

But in spite of these points of contact and agreement between the opinions of Hobbes and the Puritans, we have only to read the opening passages of Behemoth to understand the bitterness and violence of his opposition to allsectaries, under which denomination he includes Presbyterians and Independents, as well as Anabaptists and the rest: the numerous and quasi-respectable, as well as the scattered offscouring. His opposition was political rather than doctrinal. He held all sectarians to be subversive, as they set up their private opinions in opposition to what had been established by law. On the vital questions of religious practice and belief they

challenged the state, and for Hobbes this condemned them utterly. It ought to be pointed out that while most Puritans would have placed personal conviction in matters of doctrine and the mode of worship above the law, this was not true of all of them. For example the Parliamentarian Selden was as much opposed as Hobbes to the attempts of religious leaders to set their authority in any respects above that of the civil sovereign. He was thoroughly Erastian. Among the Independents was a strong group mainly composed of city merchants, who although republican were opposed to what might be called the Lilburne faction, and held Erastian views. Oliver Cromwell was for a time attracted by the notion of a rule of saints, which would mean of course that the civil authority would fittingly control not only temporal concerns, but ecclesiastical also. The Erastians, however, and men like Selden in particular were a minority in the puritan movement as a whole, and Hobbes was in no mood to discriminate in his sweeping denunciations. Altogether he held the Puritans as objectionable and dangerous as the supporters of "Aristotelity". It was the Puritans in fact who had deliberately precipitated the troubles which had ended with the execution of the king, and according to Hobbes their motives had been both selfish and sordid. Little wonder that the Puritans abominated him, so many of them as were acquainted with his works; and his influence such as it was exerted in later theological and ecclesiastical developments, contributed indirectly to the

pattern of thought in the Church of England.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

We are concerned at present with Hobbes and religious movements of the century, and it will be useful to sketch something of the development of each of the parties as it has a bearing on his doctrine and influence. We are to consider the history and outlook of the parties in relation to three important questions:- the political standing of the church, the authority of scripture, toleration. In his attitude to the first question Hobbes is in closer agreement with the Anglican point of view than with that of any other religious body. With regard to the second question his position is equivocal. To the extent that he himself anticipated the modern historical method of biblical interpretation, he has close affinities with some of the churchmen, for example with Richard Hooker. On the other hand much of his exegesis is strange just because of its literalness, and the most illiberal of Puritans could go no further in this direction. As for religious toleration, there was little enough of this in seventeenth century England, and in his writings Hobbes does not show any, although it can be suggested with confidence that as a man he was opposed to persecution.

In acknowledging the headship of the sovereign in ecclesiastical matters, the Church of England was nearer to Hobbes than any other body of Christians. Throughout the seventeenth century, except during the Protectorate, it consciously adopted a privileged position in the body politic,



and its claims in respect of the necessity and public duty of uniformity in worship were supported by the civil power. All this should have earned the enthusiastic support of Hobbes, and he was in fact a member of the Church of England, but not an enthusiastic member. As we have seen he levelled many criticisms as its institutions and ordinances, and at the episcopal hierarchy. Nevertheless in spirit and complexion, as revealed in the works and sermons of its divines, it affords so instructive a commentary by way of agreement and contrast, that a brief review of its developments may be deemed a necessary supplement to the study of Hobbes.

Two things must be remembered about the Reformation Settlement of Queen Elizabeth. In the first place the arrangement was much more a political compromise than a strictly religious settlement. In the second place while the Queen had little religious enthusiasm, she was distinctly Catholic in outlook and sentiment, though not Roman Catholic, but English Catholic; and accordingly she did what she could to preserve the Catholic elements in Anglican worship. . . . These two features of the Elizabethan settlement deserve some attention, as they determined the direction of Anglican thought and development, and had also more far reaching consequences. It was the political nature of the settlement expressed in the political status of the church which it established, and the relation of the church to the secular authority, and also the Catholicism of the Queen reflected in her insistence on the maintenance of a certain church

order, which between them produced the Puritan revolution. And this in turn, because of its anarchic potentialities only held in check by the strong arm of military authority, and its severely anti-national character, made certain the ultimate acceptance of all that is meant by the term Erastianism. It ensured also the growth of a latitudinarian spirit in the church, and ultimate general toleration. The fact therefore that the church in its origin was given a unique political status, ensured that this should be its permanent place universally accepted; and because the Queen was Catholic and the church in its origin both Catholic and Calvinist as can be seen by a comparison of the thirty nine articles with the pronouncements of its leading divines, it was inevitable that after an interlude of bitter dogmatism, a broad and liberal outlook should predominate. The church, which was tethered to the state, and circumscribed doctrinally, though with plenty of latitude, became a stabilising influence. It catered for a residue of worshippers as well as for all those who were sincerely and even ardently convinced of its divine ordering; to none ultimately was its special secular status a stumbling-block.

The Reformation Settlement of Queen Elizabeth as we have seen was a political compromise. Some religious settlement had to be made and the Queen was prompted by two motives. She was herself a protestant to the extent that she did not acknowledge the pope as head of the church, and in fact reserved that dignity for herself although for politic reasons she contended

herself with the title of "Supreme Governor". Secondly, being an honest statesman, she desired the peace of the realm, and this end she felt could be achieved only if the religious feelings of the great majority of her subjects were not dealt any flagrant outrage. Her own view was that the best course would be a middle course, and it may be submitted with fair confidence that the choice was a wise one. A very large proportion of her subjects, especially in the north, were Roman Catholics; and as the Queen could not and would not adopt their faith, she knew that to throw in her lot with the other side, the extreme Calvinists and Puritans who in London were extremely vocal and pressing, would be most calculated to harden opinion against her among the numerous followers of the old faith. As it was, the many popish plots did not receive anything like the widespread support among the Queen's Catholic subjects as was hoped and calculated by the foreign and English desperadoes who were prepared to risk their lives. In spite of the express terms of the Act of Uniformity which in effect outlawed the religion of the Roman Catholics, in spite of the powers of coercion which Parliament gave to the Queen and in spite of the oath of supremacy and the fines for recusancy, the Roman Catholics remained loyal, and the Queen retained her popularity with them as throughout her realm. And this was because of her own moderation and the moderation of her chosen primate, Parker. The coercive powers were exercised but sparingly, the exaction of the oath of supremacy was frequently

waived, and the fines for recusancy were seldom extorted.

Although the terms of the Settlement were dictated largely by considerations of political expediency, the Queen's own religious bias does enter into the picture in an important way. As we have observed already she was Catholic and strongly inclined to an outward form of worship which departed as little as possible from the Catholic tradition. She would have liked to revive the first prayer book of Edward VI as being congenial to her taste, as much as for reasons of state; and this seems to be borne out by the provision made on her insistence for retaining ornaments and vestments in the Church of England, both of which were allowed by the first prayer book of Edward, and proscribed by the second. The Queen's personal preference as well as her political sagacity is also shown by her lenience toward recusants, and even toward Catholic plotters and Jesuits dedicated to the overthrow of the throne and protestant monarchy in England. Persons convicted of treason were hanged as was proper, but this treatment should be compared with the great brutality meted out to Puritan separatists toward the end of the reign, and to anabaptists, unitarians, and free-thinkers throughout.

In the matter of the prayer book to be adopted the Queen's hand was forced by the bishops who had been exiled by her sister, Mary. They had returned in force and had gained a controlling voice in the House of Lords. The second prayer book of Edward, with slight revisions, was reintroduced, so



that the position of the Church of England became once more substantially what it had been when Mary ascended the throne, except in the matter of ornaments and vestments. By a rubric of the second prayer book of Edward VI in the beginning of the communion service the use of ornaments and vestments in churches was forbidden. This rubric was taken out of Elizabeth's revised prayer book, and a clause was inserted in the Act of Uniformity "that such ornaments of the church and of the ministers thereof shall be retained and be in use as were in this Church of England, by authority of Parliament, in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI", that is to say such as were provided for in the first prayer book of Edward. These were the ornaments and vestments used in the Roman service and which for centuries communicants had been accustomed to see, and which appealed to their natural love of colour and ceremonial. The Act of Uniformity further provided for the publication of "such further ceremonies or rites as may be most for the advancement of God's glory, the edifying of the church, and the due reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments" in case "there shall happen to be any contempt or irreverence ... in the ceremonies or rites of the church". There was in fact such contempt and irreverence in the estimation of the Queen, and such lawlessness, that Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was instructed by the Queen to draw up further orders as provided by the Act of Uniformity. In his Advertisements Parker took the course of laying down an absolute

minimum of seemliness - the surplice was to be worn by the priest in all services; and the fact that it was necessary for such an order to be made indicates how far the intentions of the Queen had been frustrated by the actions of a determined Puritan minority in the church.

Before we proceed to discuss first the point of view of certain of the Anglican divines, and then in another section the outlook of the Puritans, it will be convenient at this point, and in the light of what has just been said about the Elizabethan settlement, to state precisely what was at issue between the two parties. For our purpose an understanding of this is of the utmost importance, because it turns on the central doctrine of Hobbes. The question was this: Who is the ultimate authority in the affairs of the church? And to illustrate the way in which this crucial question divided the religious parties from each other, we may consider the situation in France at this time. In that country acute religious differences boiled over into a series of destructive civil wars, while England happily remained at peace, largely through the wisdom of the Queen. The fact was that in France the centre of gravity was never at a position making for stability; not at any rate until the "conversion" of Henry of Navarre. Opposed to each other were the Calvinists and the Guises; and the latter, especially after the formation of the Catholic league and the alliance with Spain, became the embodiment of the spirit of militant ultramontane catholicism, now campaign-

ing desperately all over Europe for the recovery of lost territory. These two opposing parties, moved by such bitter and implacable hatred of each other, had at least one thing in common: they agreed in acknowledging an authority over the church independent of the state, although of course, they were completely at variance as to the person or persons constituting that authority. In any case, whichever side had won, the spiritual in France would have been exalted above the temporal, the ecclesiastical above the secular. In the middle stood the royal party, which represented in a feeble way the ancient Gallican spirit of France. It was not until this spirit was at last triumphant with the conversion of Henry of Navarre, that civil peace was again restored.

The bearing of this history on affairs in England is obvious and instructive. In England also there were the three parties: the two extremes represented by the Ultramontane Catholics and the Calvinistic Puritans, who agreed in the opinion that church government was outside the province of the secular authority; and between them holding the balance effectively, was the Anglican party which acknowledged the royal supremacy in affairs ecclesiastical as well as lay, and owned tacitly that church laws and constitutions are in the last resort matters for the discretion of the civil power.

For the years following the Elizabethan settlement the leading Anglican dignitaries and divines (as opposed to Calvinists like Whitaker), men like Jewel, Parker, Grindal,

Whitgift, accepted the Erastian position of the Church of England; and in answer to the Puritan demand for a new order in the church did not make the claim which is implied in the very nature of episcopal ordination. If there is anything at all in the doctrine of Apostolic succession (and this doctrine has certainly been held from very early times) there is no doubt as to the propriety of the episcopal order in the church. The Anglican divines, however, did not follow this line of argument for the very good reason that it would have seemed to have set them in church government above the sovereign, who could claim no apostolic succession. Can any further proof be wanting of their complete acceptance of the sovereign's position in church government? The stand they took, at any rate in their public defence of episcopacy as seen for example in Whitgift's controversy with Cartwright, did not add anything at the strictly doctrinal level to Hobbes's own prescription in this matter. While accepting the Anglican order, Hobbes suggested that on the question between bishop and presbyter, there was no ruling in scripture, as in the New Testament the terms were used interchangeably (a); and in any case the bishop had a status not more exalted than that of pastor, had received his succession and authority from the whole congregation (b). Whitgift defended episcopacy on the ground that it was a method of church government decided on originally

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(a) Lev. 288, 289

(b) Lev. 288, 289



by the whole church, so that in any country where it existed "consistently with soundness of doctrine, and the rights of the chief magistrate being Christian", it could not be right for it to be superseded by another.

The most famous champion and exponent of the Elizabethan settlement was Richard Hooker. The Queen was influenced by considerations of political expediency, and only to a lesser extent by her own religious preferences; Hooker accepted the settlement and as a devout Church of England man undertook to defend the Establishment against the Puritan onslaught. His attitude was empirical and reasonable; he made no extravagant claims for the church, but based his defence on what was the order of Catholic worship in England and elsewhere, and clearly had been the order from early times. There was a presumption in favour of such order, and changes if made at all should not be made lightly (a). The order in the church, like the order in the state, as both had evolved through many centuries, could not be without divine sanction, because in such processes reason must play a part. Hooker's theory, like that of Joseph Butler, was that men tend toward their own perfection (b), and in pursuit of this end the guide is reason. What is reason? Is it a faculty like the sense of harmony of Shaftesbury and others or is it a body of principles or precepts like the laws of nature of Hobbes?

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity Bk. IV (14)  
(b) " " " Bk. I (4)

What Hooker's answers to these questions would have been is not quite clear, but he certainly held that the dictates of reason and the general sense or general opinion of mankind were in agreement. One of his pronouncements in this connection goes a stage further and almost amounts to Vox populi, vox dei. "The general and perpetual voice of men is as the voice of God himself" (a). Hobbes does not agree with this. "Others make that against the law of nature, which is contrary to the consent of all mankind; which definition cannot be allowed, because then no men could offend against the law of nature" (b). Hobbes's ~~agreement~~<sup>argument</sup> is that men are swayed by passion, so that public opinion is a most untrustworthy guide. On the other hand "reason is no less of the nature of man than passion", and under the guidance of reason it is possible for men to discover the laws of nature which are the laws of God. In Leviathan XXXII on the principles of Christian politics<sup>CS</sup>, Hobbes expresses an opinion which is close to the view of Hooker. In our appeals to the Bible, he says, we are "not to renounce our senses and experience; nor that which is the undoubted word of God, our natural reason" (c). According to Hooker, the order of society ensuring peace is the product of reason, and as such within the will of God; and in the very same way the order in the church which has evolved through the centuries is the creation of the human will which is the

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. I. VIII (5)  
(b) *Id.* Pt. I. XV (1)  
(c) Lev. 199

instrument of reason (a), and must therefore have the divine sanction. The import of his declaration just quoted, that the general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God, is that reason and revelation are not at variance but complementary, and this has a direct bearing on the Puritan complaint that many elements in Church of England worship have no scriptural authority and must therefore be outside God's will. Hooker points out that over a great many things the scripture is silent, and in all such cases the guide is reason (b):

Hobbes has a somewhat parallel argument to the effect that although God was the first author of speech, Adam invented words out of his own head and without prompting from the deity (c).

In Book VII of Ecclesiastical Polity Hooker discusses the relation between church and state in England, and here his views are identical with those of Hobbes, or almost identical.

Hobbes's view is that unless there is some authority (the civil sovereign) to enforce uniformity of worship, and attendance in the congregation, there is no church, but "a multitude, and persons in the plural, howsoever agreeing in opinion". Wherever there is a Christian sovereign at the head of a Christian city, that "is the same with a Christian church, for the matter of a city and a church is one, to wit, the same Christian men" (d). Hooker argues in the same way: "Wherefore to end this

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- (a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. I. VII (3)
  - (b) " " " Bk. III. IX
  - (c) Lev. 12
  - (d) E. II. 278



point I conclude: First, that under dominion of infidels, the Church of Christ, and their commonwealth, were two societies independent. Secondly, that in these commonwealths where the Bishop of Rome beareth sway, one society is both the church and the commonwealth; but the Bishop of Rome doth divide the body into two diverse bodies, and doth not suffer the church to depend upon the power of any civil prince or potentate. Thirdly, that within this realm of England the case is neither as in the one, nor as in the other of the former two; but from the state of pagans we differ, in that with us one society is both the church and the commonwealth which with them it was not; as also from the state of those nations which subject themselves to the Bishop of Rome, in that our church hath dependency upon the chief in our commonwealth, which it hath not under him. In ~~the~~<sup>a</sup> word, our estate is according to the pattern of God's own ancient elect people, which people are not part of the commonwealth, and part of the church of God, but the self same people whole and entire under one chief governor, on whose supreme authority they did depend" (a).

It is clear from Hooker's defence that in the matter of ceremonials, ornaments, vestments, observation of festivals, and church practices generally, as well as over doctrinal matters, the Church of England which Hooker defended was broad and comprehensive, and certainly admitted a great many elements

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. VIII, I (7)



which the Puritans condemned as Popish, and which modern low churchmen would call Anglo-Catholic with disapproval. For instance Hooker does not deny the Real Presence but seeks to divert controversy from the gross question of corporeal presence (transubstantiation or consubstantiation) to the spiritual significance of the Eucharist. Spiritually there is no question as to the presence of God in the elements. The Eucharist after all is a sacrament, and it is the inward and spiritual grace which is important. "Curious and intricate speculations do hinder, they abate, they quench such inflamed notions of delight and joy as divine graces use to raise when extraordinarily they are present. The mind therefore feeling present joy is always marvellous unwilling to admit any other cogitation, and in that case casteth off those disputes whereunto the intellectual part at other times easily draweth" (a). Hobbes's view of the sacraments, as we shall see, was closer to the Puritan's than the Anglican's: <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ the distinction between inner and outer religion is as important for Hobbes as it is for Hooker. Outer religion, of course, is all that the law regards. Inner religion is beyond the jurisdiction of earthly rulers: it is a matter between a man and his God.

It may not be inappropriate at the risk of slight repetition to summarise some of the arguments of Hooker which especially illustrate his reasonableness and tolerance, and in certain respects foreshadow Hobbes, who was, none the less,

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. V, LXVII (3)

a very different kind of man with a very different message. He agreed with Hobbes that "the greatest part of men are such as prefer their own private good before all things" (a), and this makes necessary the institution of society. Like Hobbes he based his doctrine of the propriety, indeed the sacredness, of the state on contract. It was only by "agreement among themselves, by ordering some kind of government public, and by yielding themselves thereunto" that men could escape the evils of the time "wherein there was as yet no manner of public regiment established" (b). In this way he clears the ground for his argument against the Puritan doctrine, reproducing St. Augustine with a difference, of an irreconcilable cleavage between the Civitas Dei and this world. As we have seen, where the religion of the state is Christian, and the sovereign Christian, there is no cleavage at all, as church and state are identical (c). Hooker's interpretation of scripture is historical rather than literal, and this again anticipates Hobbes as to the less unsatisfactory feature of his exegesis; and it is in opposition to the main Puritan position, as they were for the most part shameless and insistent literalists. The books of the Bible Hooker declared "had each some several occasion and particular purpose which caused them to be written", so that the contents "are according to the exigence

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. I, X, (6)  
(b) " " " " Bk. I, V (4)  
(c) E. II. 278

of that special end whereunto they are intended (a). As we have seen scripture is not the sole rule; it has to be interpreted in the light of reason. And beyond that God teaches us out of "the glorious works of nature" as well as from scripture (b).

Hooker holds the necessity of uniformity, as might be expected, in the interest of order and seemliness and for no imagined infallibility of any particular method or creed; and he sets his face as Hobbes was to do against "private fancies" (c). He included Roman Catholics in the universal church, and generally adopted a tolerant attitude toward them (d). His principal opponents were the Puritans, and on this question of a reasonable attitude toward Roman Catholics he declares "as they (the Puritans) affirm, so we deny, that whatsoever is popish we ought to abrogate" (e). As for the reform of the Roman system, the speed and thoroughness with which it should be carried through, and the extent to which it ought to go, he declares: "We should be slow and unwilling to change without very urgent necessity" (f). And in deciding upon the necessity for change "The rule of men's private spirits is not safe in these cases to be followed" (g). As in secular affairs the decision of difficult questions pertains to civil

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity Bk. I, XIV (3)  
(b) " " " Bk. II, I (4)  
(c) " " " Bk. I, XVI (7)  
(d) " " " Bk. III, I (10) (11) etc.)  
(e) " " " Bk. IV, III (1)  
(f) " " " Bk. V, VII (3)  
(g) " " " Bk. V, X Chapter Synopsis



wisdom, so the decision of questions relating to the church "is a point of wisdom ecclesiastical" (a). So also Hobbes was to declare with the proviso that the Doctors of the Church act for the civil sovereign. The liturgy is defended by Hooker on much the same grounds as those of Hobbes (b); but he holds the authority of the keys, and the meaning of baptism, at a higher value than Hobbes. His view is that of the great majority of churchmen (c). Hooker appears also to have believed in the divine right of kings, however the king may originally have come by his position. In this Hobbes disagrees as he bases sovereignty firmly on a secular foundation.

Hooker was the father of a succession of Church of England divines who followed him in the interpretation of the via media of the church. As for the Erastianism of the church this appears to have been taken for granted. The Act of Supremacy was on the state<sup>ute</sup> book; the queen, always prepared to go some way to meet possible objections, and a genius for compromise, contented herself with the title of Supreme Governor; nobody as far as I have been able to discover levelled any positive objection at her peculiar status. The divines in fact accepted the settlement, and by degrees it came to be looked on as something sacrosanct and divinely inspired. But toward the end of the reign there is a change of emphasis in the claims and pronouncements of the protagonists. There was about this

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity Bk. V, VIII (1)  
(b) " " " Bk. V, XXIII  
(c) " " " Bk. V, LVIII



time a great revival of Puritanism, which continued right on till the civil war. The tactics of Martin Marprelate were discredited and had brought the movement into some disrepute, but now a body of devoted champions took up the cause of the new discipline. There has never since been anything like the Bible erudition of this period, and the best of the Puritans did not confine their researches to the Bible. This development produced, naturally, a counter reaction among the Anglicans; and with the accession of Bancroft to the Archbishopric of Canterbury, there begins a new movement which almost rivals ultramontaniam in its elevation of the status of the episcopal hierarchy.

Bancroft followed Whitgift as Archbishop in 1604, and already he had established himself as the severest opponent of the Puritans among official leaders of the Anglican party. Whitgift had insisted on the union of church and state, and had perpetrated brutal severities to enforce outward uniformity and orthodoxy; but with Bancroft there is a new departure. He was the first exponent of the doctrine of Divine Right of Bishops, which was in the field before the essentially complementary doctrine of Divine Right of Kings. While Archbishop he showed his anti-Erastian tendency by attempting to make the ecclesiastical courts independent of the law. And beside him there were others working toward the same end. Keble gives a list in the Introduction to his edition of the works of Hooker; and the activities of the theologians he names can be verified

by reference to history and biographies. There was, for example, Hadrian Savarina, a Dutch scholar who had settled in England. He wrote a treatise entitled: "Concerning the various degrees of ministers of the gospel, as they were instituted by the Lord, and delivered on by the apostles, and confirmed by constant use of all churches". Keble quotes from the Address to the Reader the following: "There are some" (the Erastians) "who think that all control of manners is to be left entirely to the civil magistrate, and confine the ministry of the gospel to bare preaching of the word of God, and administering the sacraments; which being impossible to be made out by the word of God, or by any example of the Fathers, I wonder that such a thought could ever enter into the mind of a theologian". There was the anonymous author of "Querimonia Ecclesiae", concerning "the divine origin and indispensable necessity of the episcopal order". There was Bilson, Bishop of Winchester, who wrote on "The Perpetual Government of Christ's Church", and extolled the Divine Right of Bishops. This movement ultimately grew into the school of Laud, as to whom we shall have something to say in a moment.

It should be pointed out at once, however, that this anti-Erastian movement still did not represent the most influential and important body of Anglican opinion. Indeed it never has been representative of true Anglicanism which has remained fundamentally and essentially Erastian, and in line with the doctrine of Richard Hooker. Hooker supported the Apostolic



succession, he argued that the sovereign also is subject to the law; but these admissions make no difference. And so the greatest of his followers. We may mention only Lancelot Andrewes before we say something about Laud. Like Hooker, Andrewes showed great breadth and comprehension, like Hooker also he defended high church practices; in fact in this direction he went a good deal further than Hooker. But he was no narrow partisan and included among his circle of intimates, Calvinists and others of a theological persuasion different from his own. His friendship with Casaubon is famous. He does not exalt the status of the Anglican episcopacy; that was to campaign for religion on too narrow a front; he does not beat the drum of Bancroft. There is no breath of a suggestion belittling or calling in question the special position of the sovereign in the Church of England. As Hooker had defended the Church of England against the Puritans, Andrewes took up its defence against Rome. For his own church he appropriated the title Catholic, and denied that the Roman church had an exclusive right to it. His position is made clear in his first answer to Cardinal Perron, and from this also we can gather the breadth and comprehension of his outlook. He is against adoration of the host, reservation of the sacrament - "it needeth not; the intent is had without it" - communion under one kind. But as for the Holy Eucharist he says, "The Eucharist ever was, and by us is considered, both as a sacrament, and as a sacrifice"; while relics should be



treated with respect but not adored. He is in favour of the observance of holy days, vestments, vessels etc., but against the tonsure and celibacy of the clergy; and as to apostolic succession he says: "We plead there is no interruption in the succession of our church". He defends, in short, the truly Catholic element in the doctrine and practice of the church. Also it is clear that Arminianism did not come into the church with laud. Andrewes declares his belief in Freewill and that works are necessary to salvation (a).

If a generalisation is permissible, it may be said that during the first two reigns of the Elizabethan settlement and the royal governorship, the Protestant position of the Church of England had been taken for granted by the great majority of its leaders and ministers; and in doctrinal matters the Anglicans on the whole were broad and tolerant. Bigotry was an exception among Anglicans, although an important and influential exception as the activities of Bancroft illustrate. Persecution broke loose only to counter a serious separatist movement towards Puritan extremity and fragmentation; and this because the movement was felt to challenge the union of church and state, which for the glory of God and the peace of the realm was the principal achievement of the Elizabethan settlement. This was widely felt to be so fundamental and so much of the essence of Anglicanism, that any movement calculated to under-

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(a) Andrewes, Answers to Cardinal Perron



mine it must be dealt with by all possible means. Religious toleration toward the Catholics, while providing some evidence of the leanings of the queen, illustrates also the undoubted fact that the threat to the state religion, and the prerogative of the state then felt to be natural to exact uniformity, came from Puritans rather than Catholics. The outlook of the Church of England in doctrinal matters was broad, and this it remained in spite of a vigorous growth of high Anglicanism, which came as a reaction against the neglect of ordinance and ceremony, of the rubric enjoining vestments, and disrespect of churches. All shades of opinion however were represented in the church. The thirty nine articles for example constituted a prominently Calvinist confession, and there were and had been many Calvinist divines in high office, Whitaker and Lidall to mention only two.

This then was the position by the middle of the reign of King James. The king himself, whose general outlook is neatly epitomised in his own dictum, "No bishops, no king," was a Calvinistic churchman, but he had no objection to the growth of a strong high Anglican party, and greatly advanced its interests by promoting Laud. After all, members of the party had already professed belief in the divine right of kings, a doctrine which could be in no way obnoxious to a monarch like James.

With the ascendancy of the school of Laud a change in outlook, which up to now had been adopted by a minority, for a

time became general. "Divine Right" on the face of it might be taken to add the perfect finishing touch to the sovereign's position in the church, but, as already suggested, caution is necessary. The doctrine must be interpreted in the light of the activities as a whole of those professing belief in it. We have already observed that Laud believed that church dignitaries held their office by divine right as well as the king; and then his policy of insistence on absolute uniformity of worship, while retaining a comparatively tolerant attitude in doctrinal matters, of concentration on the visible elements in worship and of attempting to re-introduce wholesale into churches an order and discipline which was expressed in outward symbols - this policy tended greatly to the aggrandisement of the church and the hierarchy in the eyes of the whole people, the ignorant as well as the learned. Hobbes sums up the position as follows: "After that certain churches had renounced this universal power of the pope, one would expect in reason, that the civil sovereign in all those churches, should have recovered so much of it, as (before they had unadvisedly let it go) was their own right, and in their own hands. And in England it was so in effect; saving that they, by whom the kings administered the government of religion, by maintaining their employment to be in God's right, seemed to usurp, if not a supremacy, yet an independency of the civil power ..." (a).

Laud attempted diligently to foster the growth of the

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(a) Lev. 377

idea of the spirituality as complementary to, and if necessary in hostility to, the temporality, which is shown very clearly by the fact that he toyed with the notion of the government of a refractory people through Convocation. Charles I seems in some ways to have been almost incredibly pliant to Laud, and that directly to his own undoing. Unlike his father, who could be severely autocratic to all his subjects, ecclesiastical as well as lay, Charles I felt himself to be a devout son of the church. This is illustrated by his compliance with Laud's firm request for the king to be present at prayers as well as sermon every Sunday in the Chapel Royal. The custom under his father had been for prayers to be cut short the moment the king appeared in his closet overlooking the chapel, and for the preacher to go straight to the pulpit, and this custom greatly offended Laud's sense of Order and seemliness in religion. While to James the episcopal hierarchy was a powerful reinforcement to monarchy, Charles regarded bishops as his spiritual fathers.

At this point we may pause to consider how history appears to bear out some of the arguments which Hobbes adduces in support of his Erastianism. As we have seen his main argument is that divided authority in the state, or a rivalry between the spirituality and the temporality for supreme authority, must lead to civil strife (a). Was not this argument borne out by the history of the religious wars in France? The king was

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(a) *Lex.* 313.



reduced almost to a puppet, to be made use of cynically and ruthlessly, or to be brushed aside, by religious factions; and it was not until the civil authority was in a position at last to assert itself over all religious bodies that peace was restored. And so in England. To what extent must Laud be held responsible for the ultimate bloodshed through his determined efforts to exalt the church above the state? Or may we put the question another way. Would there have been a civil war if Charles had been less devoutly religious, and with a firmer grasp of expediency? If he had controlled at least the Church of England, which he might have done, and secured for himself a solid body of moderate opinion? Extremely bad blood there would have been between the king and parliament throughout the reign, but it is certainly questionable whether there would have been actual war were it not for the ill-starred activities of Laud.

After the execution of the king the Church of England suffered eclipse, and a great moderating influence was for the time being removed from the body politic. When the church came into its own again there was for a time a narrowing of outlook, and in the breasts of some of the most influential churchmen, and politicians who supported the church, had been bred a spirit of bitterness and retaliation. How general this was we shall consider later in another context, but it was certainly effectual for a time. A decade of persecution and banishment had served to confirm in the breasts of many church-



men the antagonism to sectaries and the insistence on uniformity, which had always been present more or less in the minds of staunch Anglicans. And as in the past there had been regrettable consequences, like the severities of Whitgift against Puritan separatists, so now,

The best side of the reinstated church is shown in the spirit of the latitudinarians, the worst in the narrow persecuting spirit of the Clarendon code. All that was best in the church had been seen there before, the breadth and comprehension; the spirit of toleration in doctrinal matters; the interpretation of hard and subtle truth on a basis of accommodation. Between eclipse and revival one great divine who may be mentioned had laboured and suffered in retirement. Jeremy Taylor produced a work just before the civil war which bore the title, "Of the sacred order of episcopacy". The outlook is mainly that of Laud, but in the treatise Taylor lays emphasis on the fact that the Church of England which is a divine institution, is also loyal to the state. Laud, while asserting officially in line with Hooker that in England church and state are one, had in practice tended to separate them and to exalt the church above the state. Taylor seems to bring church and state into loyal harmony: "It is the honour of the Church of England that all her children and obedient people are full of indignation against rebels, be they of any interest or party whatsoever".

As the fortunes of the king declined and the sectaries

triumphed, Taylor learned a new kind of toleration; and this was to remain the guiding principle of his life, to be bequeathed by him to succeeding generations of Englishmen, and to be taken to the heart of the church he served. I shall quote on this subject from the biography of Edmund Gosse: "It would be impossible to estimate the alleviation which Taylor's tolerant theory, in its successive extensions, has brought to the multitudes of men. Such horrors in the cruel chastisement of impiety as followed the battle of Naseby were to be impossible again among civilised Englishment as long as the world should last. It was gradually to be understood that sin is not to be punished by torture, and that the liberal opinion that 'all papists, and anabaptists, and sacramentaries, are fools and wicked persons' was no longer to be an excuse for ferocious reprisals. Those, and all errors which are of the head and not the heart, were to be treated for the future with argument and a meek humility - the blessed anaesthetics which this great innovator introduced into the practice of religious surgery. What the world has gained in loss of pain is incalculable. There is, perhaps, no man to-day in England, who worships, or who worships not, as his conscience bids him, who does not owe a fraction of his peace to Jeremy Taylor" (a).

In his retirement Taylor suffered from misunderstanding and misrepresentation; he was accused of being tainted with heresy, in that he stressed the importance of the individual

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(a) Edmund Gosse, Jeremy Taylor, P. 46, 47

responsibility for holiness of life, the need for true repentance, and seemed to cast doubt on the doctrine of original sin, at least in its extreme form. (See Unum Necessarium). With the accent on holy living, Taylor prepared the church for its proper role, one in which it could loyally serve the state and not attempt to exert authority over it. There had been an over-emphasis on the one side on external uniformity, and on the other on narrow doctrinal issues. As a result the thing which must be regarded as the only real justification for religion in the state, or a state religion, had been forgotten. Religion in the state must surely be to uplift and guard the morals of the community.

After the Restoration, with men like Taylor pointing the way, the Erastian Church of England might have, and perhaps in some measure did, take up its proper role. This was the golden age of Anglican theology, but the theologians were the cream of the church. At the foot of the ecclesiastical scale, and in the scattered parishes, the privation and ignorance of the clergy was such that the national church was brought into serious disrepute, as Eachard showed with some embellishments in his "Grounds for Contempt of the Clergy". And to undermine further the reputation of the church there occurred toward the end of the century a split, which developed into serious schism; and the effects of it are still felt. It was over this very question of the position of the civil sovereign in the church, and by the curious irony of events, it was those divines whose

actions proved them most unswerving in their loyalty to their civil sovereign, undertaken in the oath of Supremacy, who became the founders and inspiration of a faction in the church which has always set its face against Erastianism. The Non-Jurors were looked back upon by the Tractarians as their spiritual fathers; and a later successor of the Tractarians, Canon MacColl, is able to sneer at Archbishop Tillotson as Erastian (a) although he had no conscience about abrogating one oath of submission to a civil sovereign in order to subscribe to another.

Two features link the church at the dawn of the eighteenth century with the church of Richard Hooker. Both were Erastian and both were broad. And these features have continued to characterise the church down to the present day, in spite of determined efforts to compromise them. Bigotry has raised its head, and there has been agitation for separation from the state; but neither has been able to produce a change. It is easy to-day to recognise the essential features of the national church, without which it would cease to be the same community and to exert the same influence; but in the seventeenth century the church had still to establish its own unique position. Offspring largely of historical accident and political compromise, it was assailed from within and without by zealots who denounced its institutions and were set on change. For one blank space in history the church as it had been established

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(a) Canon MacColl, Reformation Settlement



by law almost ceased to exist. Even at the end of the century no-one, not even the most optimistic well-wisher, could have felt justified in prophesying positively its continued existence in the principles of its establishment; that is to say as a state church and a comprehensive church. It had recently been weakened by rupture on top of a formidable draining away to nonconformity. It might be entering upon a decline; indeed for a number of years there was a serious decline in standards and influence.

When Hobbes wrote Leviathan the church was passing through its darkest hour; and in many ways he contributed to weaken further the regard of his countrymen for the establishment, and to undermine their confidence. By laying such stress, however, on the indivisibility of sovereignty, and the prerogative of the civil sovereign as extending to the control of ecclesiastical affairs as well as lay, and by denying the separation of church and state in a Christian community, it may be that he ~~did~~ contributed to a wider recognition of the proper function of a state church. This is to serve the state which is the same as serving the community; and not to claim rights and prerogatives and privileges of its own. The separation of church and state necessarily entails divided loyalties in all believers; it belongs to the politically disruptive and socially disintegrating theology of God and mammon, where that doctrine is interpreted too narrowly. There is eternal opposition of course between God and evil; but it does not

follow that there is necessary opposition between God and the state. To argue in this way would be to argue that the state is necessarily evil, for which proposition there is no warrant in the New Testament or in common sense. When in the New Testament the world is spoken of as a principle of evil, the world is not to be understood as the state; although by many Christians throughout the ages this interpretation has been taken for granted, and they have felt it to be their duty to withdraw as much as possible from all community with their fellows.

Between church and state, what are the possibilities for co-existence? There may be a sharp division of authority with each paramount in its sphere, after the ruling of Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory, of Luther and other Reformers. According to this theory it would be as unlawful for the state to encroach on the church as for the church to encroach on the state. It is doubtful, however, whether such division of authority has ever been known to work. If this possibility is rejected it seems that there are three others. (1) Church and state may be recognised as forming one community or body. (2) There may be a close partnership between church and state of the kind Locke seems to have had in view in his Letter concerning Toleration. (3). One or the other, state or church, may be promoted to a position of supremacy and control over the other. Hobbes's doctrine of absolute sovereignty made the partnership theory impossible for him. With regard

to (3) he might have taken the view that the state is supreme over the church, and his teaching on the subject <sup>of</sup> state/church relations ~~has~~ sometimes been interpreted in this light. In fact he taught, as had Richard Hooker, that church and state are not separate bodies, but are one and the same community. Throughout history the supremacy of the ecclesiastical has been associated with loss of spiritual prestige. Where the church is supreme, government must fall to a Hildebrand or a Borgia, neither of whom would in any sense be considered a true spiritual father as lacking the essential humility. Theocracies have not tended to promote general happiness, and have leaned rather to cruel intolerance; and as the secular arm is more suited to rule it is better that it should wield the power that corrupts. And better too for the church to accept in all Christian humility its role of ministering servant to the state and not its master.

Hobbes saw with his usual clarity the futility and dangers of divided authority, and because he gauged accurately the strength of religious feeling of his day, he felt it imperative for the church to be incorporated with the state. By so doing, though he lowered the status of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, he did not really belittle the church, but acknowledged its essential function. His theory of sovereignty is built on a secular foundation, and in the same way, according to him, the ecclesiastical establishment with its bishops and clergy, fulfils its role and performs its duty by

secular authority, and not by divine right. And however we look at it this is without doubt a practical interpretation of the machinery and routine of appointment and promotion in the church. If this seems to lower the standing of the church, it may certainly be considered to enhance the value of the state. "The process of assimilation" between church and state writes A. F. Pollard in Chapter XIX of Volume VI of The Political History of England, (on the Elizabethan Settlement) "has been regarded too much from one point of view, as the secularisation of the church; this had its counterpart in the promotion of the state to a place in the divine order, and in its devotion to duties once regarded as purely ecclesiastical".



THE PURITANS - HOBBS AND THE BIBLE

Before the breakdown of the Savoy conference the Puritans were a party inside the Church of England, and endeavouring with more or less zeal to alter the church according to their standards. And among themselves the Puritans were an extremely heterogeneous party, and increasingly so. Throughout the period, however, there was a considerable group of moderate men who had little to mark them off from moderate Anglicans. The fact is illustrated, for instance, by the friendship of Andrewes for the one time Huguenot, Casaubon, who roused the suspicion of the advanced Calvinists for the moderation of his work, "De Rebus Sacris" in answer to Baronius. And it may be noted further that in one generation a Calvinist scholar like Whitaker, and in another a Puritan divine like Baxter, had a very great deal in common with more advanced episcopalian contemporaries. On the other side, to refer to those who may be considered extremists, even the admirers and followers of Laud were by no means narrow or exclusive in their relations with other religious leaders and protagonists, wherever relations were possible. The gatherings at Lord Portland's house at Great Tew numbered scholars of every shade of opinion, the Laudians, the moderates, the Calvinists, and were characteristic of this great age of wide and sympathetic scholarship. The word Catholic best describes not only the outlook of the most human of the theologians, but also the spirit of learning which refused to be circumscribed and led to



the foundation of the Royal Society.

Before we discuss the important features of the Puritan case and the Puritan faith as it was advanced by stauncher protagonists, it may be worth while to consider a little further the very narrow territory which divided the parties at their closest points of approach. At the centre there was a very great desire for peace on both sides; at the extremes both were to blame for discord. Hobbes blames the Puritans for the trouble in the mid-century; and it is reasonable to suggest that the reinstated Church of England was the more to blame for the ultimate separation of the non-conformists. Hobbes would have no division, and would bring all into one politico-religious community; and by insisting on their point of view after the Restoration, influential leaders of the Church of England were much out of sympathy with the outlook of Hobbes. In any case at that time royalty were near to Rome, and in view of Hobbes's opinion of the Kingdom of Darkness this fact might be considered to have presented his whole system with a problem. If the moderates of both parties had had their way it is reasonable to submit that there would not have been the split which by the end of the century had become permanent and irreconcilable, and if the civil war had been fought at all it would have been fought without religious battle cries. In these circumstances a great deal of what is essential in the Hobbeian thesis on its religious side would not have been forthcoming. It is worthwhile therefore to consider just how close



the moderates of both sides were, and how easily reconciliation might have been effected.

It is a matter of surprise that on the whole the disputes which tore the century were over questions, not of doctrine but of ritual. Since the earliest days of the Reformation this had been so. Throughout the reign of Elizabeth, for instance, the Calvinists had demanded sweeping reforms from the Episcopalians, although both were agreed absolutely on the "deep point" of predestination; and it was not until the controversy of Arminius and Gomarus, and the clash of Remonstrants and Counter Remonstrants, that a deeper tone was added to religious controversy. As to this doctrinal question, although it is true to say that the advanced Anglicans were almost all Arminian, and among the Puritans the strict Calvinists had by far the strongest representation, both points of view were represented on both sides. The Thirty Nine Articles had a pronounced Calvinist bias, and the Lambeth Articles even more so; while in Ireland Bishop Usher stands out as a champion of Calvinism while sharing Laud's reverence for Catholic antiquity. On the other hand among Independents, Milton was Arminian, and the Calvinism of Emanuel College, Cambridge, assimilated easily and survived the Arminianism of Whichcote and his followers. It is enough to say that the differences which divided England were not primarily doctrinal. Hammond, an advanced Anglican and a vigorous defender of Episcopacy, laid as his complaint against the other party in his treatise "Of Schism", that they

had set up "a new, or a no-form of worship" (a). That was the point at issue - the form of worship. Both sides tended to be more tolerant about doctrinal differences of opinion, than about differences of opinion as to external order in the church; while it is regretted that both sides were capable of meting out to the unquestionably heterodox, the free-thinker, and the atheist, an equal savagery.

It should be noted also that of the extremists, those in the Anglican camp were on the whole more tolerant, or at least moderate, toward their Christian opponents, the Roman Catholics and the Puritans. Of course the persecution of Puritans by Laud was bad, but in the years following the Parliamentary victory, it was matched by a phase of suppression, which was far more ruthless and far more uncompromising in its total denial of all accommodation. And later, when Milton was pleading eloquently for toleration and Oliver Cromwell adopted it as official policy, even the great Protector was not able to control the more militant among his fanatical supporters. Among Episcopalians, Hammond, who has been mentioned already and who represented a considerable body of opinion among advanced Anglicans, ended his treatise "Of Schism" with a prayer for the "Incomparable blessing of Christian peace", and had earlier declared himself in favour of the freedom of external communion, that is of admitting to communion in churches of the establishment all Christians of whatever party

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(a) Hammond, Of Schism Ch. XI



or persuasion. Like many other Anglicans who shared his Catholic leanings, Hammond was surprisingly more severe in his attitude to Roman Catholics than to Puritans. The same is true of John Cosin who was a staunch Laudian, a champion of old liturgies and a more Catholic form of service, one of a team of scholars who revised the prayer book after the Restoration and whose handiwork finally drove Baxter and his followers into the wilderness. And yet while he was in France Cosin was a friend of the Huguenots, and at the Savoy Conference he strove earnestly to bring about a reconciliation with the Presbyterians.

The dogma of the divine right of bishops was the kind of unequivocal claim leading to rigidity and bigotry, but only a small number really held this view even among advanced Anglicans. In "Irenicum" Stillingfleet contended that the doctrine was unscriptural and also that it was not widely held. Laud, who acknowledged the doctrine, was not so bigoted as some of his followers, otherwise he would not have promoted Helios. Most Anglicans shared the view of Richard Hooker which was later advanced in Irenicum, that no form of worship is necessary, and the question whether any one form should be allowed is more than half practical. So long as there is no positive prohibition in scripture and contradiction in the practice of the early church, it is a question of what is established and accepted and what is seemly.

There were of course persecuting bigots among the Anglicans; men like Morley, Bishop of Worcester, who is remembered chiefly

for his quarrel with Baxter, whom he described as a hireling (a) and forbid to preach in his diocese. And there was of course the Glarendon code and some persecution of nonconformists after the Restoration. Two observations may be made. It is true that at the Savoy Conference some of the Anglican representatives took up an unreasonable and reactionary attitude. Such changes as were to be made in the liturgy would not be in the direction demanded by the Presbyterians and others, but in the opposite direction; and it was this more than anything that brought about the final breach. As Baxter says in the Preface to his answer to Dr. Stillington's charge of separation after the Savoy Conference; the nonconformists at the conference "offered nothing for church government but Bishop Usher's primitive form, and nothing for worship but the reforming of the liturgy, and the free use of additional forms". But the changed liturgy (as revised by the Anglicans) and the new Act of Uniformity "have made conformity now quite another thing than it was before, and to us far more intolerable".

Secondly as to the Glarendon Code, it must be pointed out that Glarendon himself was not the author of the code, although once it was passed he supported it. And again the code was directed more against Roman Catholics who were felt to be politically dangerous, than against protestant dissenters; and as far as the latter were concerned the provisions of the acts

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(a) George Morley, Letter to a Friend in Vindication of the Calumnies of Baxter

were not strictly enforced for a number of years. In a pamphlet defending the Church of England against a charge of persecuting dissenters, Burnet goes at some length into the whole question. He excuses the Clarendon code on the ground that it was a counter to the king's papistical leanings. "The spirit of severity was heightened by the practices of the papists, who engaged the late king in December 1662 to give a declaration of liberty of conscience. Those who knew the secret of his religion as they saw that it aimed at the introduction of popery, so they thought there was no way so effectual, for the keeping out of popery, as the maintaining the uniformity, and the suppressing of all designs for a toleration". After the disgrace of Clarendon the House of Commons would not pass a measure for "comprehension of some dissenters, and the tolerating of others"; and the dissenters themselves were concerned in this, because of their fear of popery and the leanings of the crown party. Nothing was done against the dissenters until 1681, and then there was the popish plot scare and the scandal of Titus Oates, and the clergy showed a desire to tighten uniformity. Many churchmen were against exclusion (of the Duke of York as next in line to the throne), and nonconformists so influenced public opinion against the Church of England because of this, and coldly entertained "secret propositions for accommodating our differences" that the opinion of the leaders of the church hardened against them. "We were then", Burnet wrote, "totally given up to a spirit of dissention". On the part of the Church of England, a fear that

dissenters were set on their ruin, and the influence of the court party, produced the unhappy persecutions that followed (a).

It may now be repeated that between the two extremes there was a very large party of broad churchmen and moderate Puritans who had a great deal in common, and who, if extremists had never taken control, would have maintained the unity of the English protestant church. There were ordained churchmen like Hales who in his famous tract concerning schism and schismatics declared heresy and schism to be two theological scarecrows, and put forward proposals for ending all differences. To the episcopalian extremists, and to Archbishop Laud who promoted him later, is the warning: "They do but abuse themselves and others that would persuade us that bishops by Christ's institution have any superiority over men further than of reverence". There was Chillingworth, that vacillating Christian, who nevertheless based the propriety of adherence to episcopal form on the circumstance only that it was the form and order of the country. On the Puritan side there was Baxter who had a rooted horror of fanaticism, and at the crucial Savoy Conference as we have seen would have gone a long way to meet the episcopalians in the interest of peace and unity.

There were some also who cannot decisively be placed in either party, who began often as Presbyterians and ended as moderate churchmen. There was the Scot, Robert Leighton, whose father had suffered in the Laudian persecution for a tract against

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(a) Burnet, Apology for the Church of England against the aspersions of Persecution.



prolacy. Robert was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1641, but after the Restoration he was known to favour the modified form of episcopacy suggested by Archbishop Usher, and to which Baxter and other moderate nonconformists were prepared to consent. Charles II, who was preparing to re-introduce episcopacy into Scotland, made Leighton first a bishop and then Archbishop of Glasgow. In spite, however, of favour he held to a very moderate course, and even took the part of the persecuted Covenanters. There was Stillingfleet who in 1662, when he wrote *Ironicon*, definitely favoured a compromise in form between episcopacy and presbyterianism, which involved fundamental changes in the state church. Twenty years later, however, he had moved over solidly to episcopacy as it existed in the Church of England. In "The Unreasonableness of Separation" his standpoint is quite orthodox. Here Baxter should certainly be mentioned again, as he evinced in many of his writings remarkable accommodation. The title of Book II of *Catholic Theology* speaks for itself: "The Synodists and Arminians, Calvinists and Lutherans, Dominicans and Jesuits, reconciled". Like Leighton Tillotson, who accepted the Archbishopric of Canterbury reluctantly after the deposition of Sandcroft, began his ministry as a Presbyterian, and was not in the Church of England until the Act of Uniformity, 1662. He remained broad and tolerant until the end, and suffered misunderstanding because of his views. For one thing he advised William to appoint an ecclesiastical commission for the reconciliation of dissenters, which proposal

was not popular with some Anglicans. Here may be recorded the dictum of the learned Isaac Barrow, the substance and meaning of which coloured the opinion and influenced the activities of many a Christian leader in England. It is found in *Enchirideon Theologicum*, directed against Roman Catholics, but which has equal application to churchmen and dissenters: "The church was not intended by God to be under one singular government or jurisdiction of any kind". There is something of an analogy in the arguments of Hobbes, who rules in effect that the constitution and government and order of a church must vary from country to country according to the exigencies of place and time as assessed by the sovereign power. We may, in fact, go back again to Richard Hooker. After quoting Gonses, Necessitas quicquid cogit defendit,<sup>he</sup> comments, "so we must not, under a colourable commendation of holy ordinances in the church, and of reasonable causes whereupon they have been grounded for the common good, imagine that all men's cases ought to have one measure". Even "profitable ordinances", he argues, ought sometimes to be relaxed, rather than that all men always should be "strictly bound to the general rigour thereof" (a).

The earnest desire for peace, conciliation, and unity, on the part of the centre party of both sides, is well illustrated by the numerous *panaces*, *nostrums* and the like to heal the breach. John Holes, for instance, in "Of Schism and

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(a) Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Bk. V, IX (4)

Schismatics" proposes that from "all the liturgies that are or ever have been", there should be removed "whetsoever is scandalous to any party, and leave nothing but what all agree on" (a). Baxter, at the very parting of the ways, brings out his reformed liturgy to show how easily reconciliation might be effected. Almost in the same month was published Irenicum with its detailed compromise proposals. Burnet undertakes a vigorous championship of occasional conformity as a way out of the deadlock, and of this design an anonymous layman wrote to him in a letter (1704) "If your lordship thinks the Church of England inclusive of all protestants, 'tis a notion perfectly latitudinarian" (b). Even Hammond gave publicity to a mild palliative slogan; "Freedom of outward Communion" (c). From all this it can be gathered that there was no want of sincere desire by men of goodwill on both sides for reconciliation and the end of separation.

On the whole it might be said that the best of the Anglicans were marked by moral earnestness, and a sense of the continuity of the Christian church; while the main accent of the Puritans was on the infallibility and authority of the scriptures, with an acknowledgment tacit or expressed of the right of each individual, not only to study the scripture, (this was in fact a duty) but to interpret it for himself. The

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(a) John Hales, A Tract concerning Schism and Schismatics 1642

(b) A Layman's Answer to the Bishop of Salisbury in answer to his speech for Occasional Conformity

(c) Hammond, Of Schism, Ch. IX

Puritans were what they were because they claimed the right to private interpretation of scripture, and to be guided by private conscience; and also because in many cases they applied to their interpretation of scripture an outlook too narrow, and in many cases an understanding and knowledge that were defective. They were driven to extreme action as much by the inherent shortcomings of their theology, which produced inflexibility and dogmatism, and their own narrowness of motive, as by the exercise against them of a royal prerogative claiming to exact uniformity of worship, exploited in the last stages in an unfortunate manner by the king's first minister, Archbishop Laud.

Hobbes enters into the Puritan revolt against Anglican claims demonstratively and in a startlingly individual manner. He supported the royal prerogative as extending over every department of life, not least the religious; although he had no sympathy for episcopal pretensions not tending to support the royal prerogative. He was bitterly opposed to the Puritan claim to exercise private judgment in religious matters, as he held this led directly to anarchy. And yet to a considerable extent he was himself infected by the puritan contagion. In his dogmatism, and to some extent in his interpretation of scripture, in much of his doctrine, in his intolerance of contrary opinions, in his root and branch attitude to almost all disputed questions, he is very much the child of his times; and these times to the length of two decades, until the Restoration opened doors long closed and uncovered fresh vistas, were crowded out and choked by the Puritan growth.



It is hardly necessary to say that in all but the moderate Puritans of the centre, the exercise of the claim to private interpretations of scripture did not breed any general spirit of toleration. It resulted on the one hand in private bigotry and on the other in Presbyterianism. For the latter it was John Calvin's private interpretation of the Bible which was the important one; and many of his devoted followers as they searched the scriptures, just could not see that any other interpretation was possible. In fact the writings of John Calvin had established for themselves such a place in the minds of his countless followers, that they almost rivalled in a protestant age the Summa Theologiae of mediæval scholasticism.

The Presbyterians had as their aim a universal church, or at least a national church, having official status and empowered to exact uniformity of worship. The Admonition to Parliament of 1579 proves that the Presbyterians were as strict advocates of uniformity and discipline as the most advanced Anglicans. In matters of doctrine and theology, moreover, as distinct from external order, they were committed to an inflexible system. And not only were they obsessed with the sacredness and their organisation, and unbending in their insistence on national uniformity (more so, even, than Archbishop Laud, whose discipline did not extend beyond externals, and who like Queen Elizabeth wanted no windows into men's souls) but they were eager to foist it upon others, as witness a political bargain like the Solemn League and Covenant. The Presbyterians embody

that very powerful tendency inside the Puritan movement to rigidity, and in opposition to any breath of toleration; and because of their intransigence there is some justification for the practice of Hobbes of bracketting them with the Church of Rome. His reason for doing so was, of course, because of their claim to independence inside the state and ultimately to dominance. He writes in Leviathan: "... in those places where the Presbytery took office, though many other doctrines of the Church of Rome were forbidden to be taught; yet this doctrine, that the kingdom of Christ is already come, and that it began at the resurrection of our Saviour, was still retained. But *cul bono?* What profit did they expect from it? The same which the popes expected; to have a sovereign power over the people. For what is it for men to excommunicate their lawful king, but to keep him from all places of public service in his own kingdom and with force to resist him, when he with force endeavoureth to correct them? Or what is it, without authority from the civil sovereign, to excommunicate any person, but to take from him his lawful liberty, that is, to usurp an unlawful power over his brethren? The authors therefore of this darkness in religion, are the Roman, ~~and the Roman,~~ and the Presbyterian clergy (a). The ideal of the Presbyterians, and of the Calvinist churchmen in England, was the ecclesiastical state at Geneva; as Baxter says in 'A Holy Commonwealth', "It is the theocratical polity or divine commonwealth, which is the

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(a) Lev. 577

unquestionable reign of Christ on earth, which all Christians are agreed may be justly sought; and that temporal dignity of saints, which undoubtedly would much bless the world" (a). To our eyes the first model, the theocracy at Geneva, seems to be a little replica of the Hildebrandine Christian empire; and the Independent, Nye, in the Westminster Assembly could declare with justification: "Nothing troubles me more than to think whether the presbytery shall be set up jure divino" (b).

We must be careful then not to imagine that the veneration of the Puritans for the scriptures, and their championship of the right of each individual to go to the fount of knowledge and interpret for himself, guaranteed a spirit of toleration or even accommodation. On the other hand it was the principle cause of sectarianism, as Hobbes insisted. And in seventeenth century England sectarianism had become so widespread that it was recognised, even by many Puritans, as a danger not only to the Christian religion, but to national stability. There was at this time a very notable increase of free thinking, and even atheism, and on the other hand there were painfully evident cracks and fissures in the body politic which answered to religious differences. The multiplicity of Puritan sects began to be paralleled by a crop of political factions and persuasions; and it was because of this that the sanest voices were raised in demand for a general amnesty, for tolerance and

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(a) Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth, or Political Achorisms

(b) Nye, Speech in Westminster Assembly

peace.

In the nature of things the Independents were the most disposed to tolerance, and it was they who ultimately gained political control. Enforcement of uniformity was to the Independents, almost by definition, a sin. Among themselves the Puritans must be allowed to worship how they liked, where they liked, when they liked, and believe almost what they liked. But of course toleration was never to be general. It need scarcely be observed that it was never to extend to the crucially heterodox; to Unitarians, free-thinkers, atheists, and the like. Jews were sometimes proscribed and sometimes not, and among orthodox Christians, prelatists were consistently excluded. In spite of his belief in toleration Milton remained an anti-prelatist to the end of his days. Toleration among the Puritans was, in the main, limited to other Puritans, and was demanded by the brute logic of events. No one sect, not even the Independents, would have been powerful enough to suppress all the others; and there was the paramount demand for the preservation of a united political front in the face of a larger menace, thrust into the background, but still very real; the Anglican tradition, and the Anglican hold on the people's minds, in association with the monarchy.

Oddities of creed, therefore, and even deviation from strict orthodoxy were condoned. We have, for example, the interesting idiosyncracies of Milton's theology: an anti-prelatic Arminianism; the Arianism and semi-Pelagianism of



Paradise Lost; a belief in toleration up to a point, balanced by an ardent wish, in spite of prodigious learning, so to alter the University curriculum on religious grounds, as to close many important doors of knowledge. It might not be unfair to say that the Independents in general, and Oliver Cromwell in particular, believed in religious toleration for everybody except their political enemies.

It has been observed already that at the heart of the Puritan movement was veneration <sup>for</sup> of the Bible, and it is time now to consider this side of the movement more closely. Hobbes himself drew constantly on the Bible and it is at least highly probable that he would not have done so to such a remarkable extent, had it not been for the Puritan attitude to the holy book. It should be said at once of the Puritans that where wide scholarship was wanting, the besetting danger of narrow literalness in interpretation was not avoided; and even such learned theologians as Whitaker by insistence on the Bible as unmodified and uncorroborated authority, produced a faith that was firm and staunch but brittle. We may consider the Puritan treatment of the Bible from two points of view. First as illustrating the universal attitude of theologians, especially in the seventeenth century - the acceptance of authority. This was in direct opposition to the new scientific spirit emanating from Francis Bacon, which was empirical and inductive. Secondly we may consider the polemical use made of prodigious Bible study. All this will lead to a discussion of Hobbes's treatment of the

scriptures.

It is true of course that all through the Christian era, authority, and the just interpretation of authority, had been the essence of a disputant's case. This is what is meant by saying that Christianity is a historical religion. It is a religion of a record. Individuals have from time to time claimed direct revelation, but they have not secured more than a fragmentary following, or created any schism of lasting importance. Even the first and one of the greatest of the schisms, that of Montanus who claimed direct inspiration and to be the mouthpiece of the paraclete, could not survive in spite of winning the support and adherence of one of the greatest champions of ecclesiastical tradition and order - Tertullian. The canon of scripture was not then finally settled, but the frenzied Montanists could not command the support necessary for the survival of their schism, as Christians were already sufficiently schooled in their heritage of tradition. Like Sir Thomas Browne, they loved to keep the road. From the earliest times it has been a fact that to prove his case any disputant has felt it necessary to prove that his contention is scriptural, or has been the tradition of the church, or is supported by the writings of the fathers; and this has tended to give a legalistic character to Christian theology which is absent, for instance, from Eastern mysticism.

The Reformation, which began in Germany, has not been very accurately named. It was, in fact, a revolt leading to a

revolution. The church with its accumulated and tortuous scholastic authority, and its machinery of grace, was discarded, and the idea of direct access to God, and direct responsibility to him, was accepted. But, as no one had ever seen God or received personal communication from him, or no such communication as the people would accept, there was a spontaneous and inevitable turning to Holy Scripture as the utterance of God, the sole and complete revelation of his will, and through which he was still communicating with his creatures. With the Reformation begins the acceptance of the Bible as the inspired revelation of all that need be known about God. The first reformers did not discard the early Fathers altogether, nor what could be established as the practice and belief of the primitive church; although these tended to be used solely to support their own interpretation of scripture. And in any case all other authorities were strictly subordinated to the Bible. Many of the followers of the Reformers were unlearned, and could boast no patristic scholarship; they could however read the Bible once the book was put in their mother tongue. What they had access to, and what they felt they could understand, was accepted by them. To them the Bible became the sole authority.

We may now consider the use made of the Bible in disputation. The early Puritans rested their case on the Bible, and throughout the centuries their successors have done the same. Trouble and difficulty has always arisen, however, in disputes with an adversary who rejects the authority. In that event no

ground has been left for an argument; and because of this many of the more scholarly and broadminded of the Puritans went out to meet their opponents and to tackle them on their own ground. The challenge of Jesuit erudition, the most formidable that the Reformed Church had to meet, could not be met by a doggedly narrow appeal to Holy Scripture, and rejection or ignorance of everything else. So that the scope of study was enlarged by enlightened elements, and Puritan researches in the writings of the Fathers and the conditions of the primitive church were as painstaking and thorough as anything in the history of scholarship. But always at the centre was the Bible, their knowledge of which was encyclopaedic.

These two points are well illustrated in the great work of Whitaker: 'A Disputation on Holy Scripture against the Papists, especially Bellarmine and Stapleton'. In the Epistle Dedicatory he says: "There have been many heretofore, illustrious Cecil, (Lord Burghley), who have defended the papal interest and sovereignty with the utmost exertion, the keenest zeal, and by no mean or vulgar erudition. But they who have played their part with most address, and far outstripped all others of their own side, are those men who now, for some years back, have been engaged most earnestly in this cause; a fresh supply of monks, subtle theologians, vehement and formidable controvertists; whom that strange - and in former times unheard of - Society of Jesus hath brought forth, for the calamity of the church and the



Christian religion" (a). In his search after support for his great argument for the sufficiency of scripture, Whitaker went to the Fathers and used them constantly to prove his contentions; and the conclusion he reached was that the "whole scripture is useful for all ... purposes; therefore it is perfect and sufficient and contains all necessary things" (b). For the rest of mankind there was no need to appeal to human tradition; he had done it exhaustively to prove his point. The line of reasoning seems to call to mind certain arguments of Milton with reference to this same question. As to the interpretation of Scripture, Whitaker quotes Jerome: "Let us not think that the gospel is in the words of scripture, but in the sense; not in the surface but in the marrow; not in the leaves of speech, but in the root of reason" (c). The assumption is that the sense is clear and unambiguous; and it is a curiosity of history that observance of this canon contributed materially to the literalness which characterised Puritan exegesis, and which Whitaker condemned.

In the Calvinist school Whitaker was as much a scholar as Andrewes in the orthodox Anglican. And there were other scholars who, if they were not enthusiastically with the advanced guard of Puritans, were not in the other camp. There

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- (a) W. Whitaker, A Disputation in Holy Scripture against the Papists, 1588, Epistle Dedicatory  
(b) " A Disputation in Holy Scripture against the Papists, 1588, Question the Sixth. P. 635  
(c) " A Disputation in Holy Scripture against the Papists, 1588. Question the Fifth. P. 386

was Casaubon who has been mentioned before, and whose wealth of scholarship, classical and patristic, acted as a powerful stimulus to the more scholarly of the British Puritans. There was Storr, whose Puritan devotion to the Bible obliged him, whenever intractable difficulties in the way of a literal understanding presented themselves to his open mind, to apply an allegorical interpretation. And there was Baxter who had read and absorbed everything that belonged to Christian theology. It must be insisted, however, that although Bollermino, to take one example, treated the church as an authority superior to the Bible, and Laud held an equality of respect for authentic tradition and the word of God, this was never the case with the Puritans. Bible worship was the practice throughout their ranks. They rejoiced together at the goodness of God, that in a turmoil of uncertainty and carnality, priestcraft and idolatry, in a scene that all held to be fleeting and condemned, he had provided an infallible guide. Some of them in fact were such scripturalists that they sought to regulate every detail of their lives by the Bible, and carried the practice so far into the realms of fetish that they even made it a custom to refer to random texts for the solution of every day problems and difficulties.

What was the attitude of Hobbes to the Bible? The answer to this question must be reserved and tentative, as he does not appear to take a consistent view of scripture; and in fact it is possible to attribute to him a number of attitudes, and it

is very difficult to reconcile them. The treatment of scripture as a whole in the works of Hobbes almost forces the reader to the conclusion that his practice of underlining arguments with texts was followed simply because in his day it was a sine qua non in religious controversy. Catlin writes: "Hobbes showed that the devil can quote scripture" (a). This is perhaps a little uncharitable in its wording, but one has the feeling as one reads that as the great thinker draws continually on canonical authority, he parades an unwonted, if not in sober reality an unwanted, auxiliary. He would not have written like this, we say to ourselves, if he had not, as to a large range of his arguments, opposed himself to the Puritans. We have affirmed already that the religious opinions of Hobbes, as they were expressed in his writings, were sincere. But these opinions were such that if they were amenable to proof at all, it was from history and experience; there was nothing to be gained by a persistent and detailed appeal to the wording of the Bible.

Having made these observations, and they are put forward only tentatively, we may attempt a discussion of Hobbes and the Bible. There are scattered through his works various passages which suggest an attitude of reverence and subjection to the authority of Holy Scripture; but the attitude is seldom wholly unqualified. On the whole there would appear to be little more than a pious gesture to an accepted ideal; and even when he adopts the language of reverence and Christian duty, there is

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(a) G. E. G. Catlin, Thomas Hobbes, An Introduction P. 53

some inconsistency. To what extent are we to accept the Bible as a literal guide and to what extent does reason enter into its interpretation? Are theology and philosophy to be kept apart as Bacon held, or are they integral and inseparable, as may be taken to have been the view of the religious enthusiast? Any branch of learning, he would say, which claims to be independent of the truths revealed in the Bible, is vain philosophy. If Hobbes's ostensible thesis is to be accepted, that religion is law, there is little meaning in reverence as that term is ordinarily understood, and little point in inculcating an attitude of piety to the "mysteries of faith".

After allowing in the Epistle Dedicatory to the English translation of De Corpore that even school divinity could manage to walk firmly on one foot "which is the Holy Scripture", he committed himself to the undertaking "to yield what is due to religion to the Holy Scripture, and what is due to philosophy to natural reason" (a); and in Leviathan there is a recommendation of the same doctrine of divorce; "The scripture was written to show unto men the kingdom of God, and to prepare their minds to become his obedient subjects; leaving the world and the philosophy thereof to the disputation of men, for the exercising of their natural reason" (b). And on a perceptibly less traditional and less pietistical note, and perceptibly more characteristic of Hobbes, but still arguing a separation of religious authority and its treatment from reason and common

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(a) W. I. Epistle Dedicatory

(b) Lev. 39



sense, is another statement in Leviathan: "When we believe that the scriptures are the word of God, having no immediate revelation from God himself, our belief, faith, and trust, is in the church; whose word we take and acquiesce therein" (a). At the end of Chapter 32, however, there is a return to the tone of Christian reverence, and also a remarriage of reason and faith in a passage which seems to breathe the "decent piety" of George Herbert, and might have come from the pen of Richard Hooker. Here Hobbes argues the sufficiency of scripture for all things whenever it is submitted to "wise and learned interpretation, and careful ratiocination" (b). A great deal in the Christian Commonwealth depends on "supernatural revelations of the will of God," nevertheless "we are not to renounce our sense and experience, nor (that which is the undoubted word of God) our natural reason" (c). Very reminiscent of Hooker's answer to the negative argument of the Puritans, that because some doctrine or practice is not prescribed by the scripture it is therefore unscriptural, is Hobbes's assertion that he finds no warrant from scripture for the opinion that Adam "was taught the names of all figures, numbers, measures, colours, sounds, forms, relations etc." (d). In this and in the other passages quoted, the Bible is treated with respect and discretion.

Hobbes's treatment of the Bible for the rest turns upon this question of interpretation. How should interpretations be

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(a) Lev. 32  
(d) Lev. 12

(b) Lev. 202

(c) Lev. 199

made and who has the right to interpret? There is a peculiar mixture of broadmindedness and brittle dogmatism, of common sense, exaggeration and inconsistency. We may refer at this point to two specific and clear-cut canons of interpretation, which seem unexceptionable, and are a repudiation of that narrow Puritan literalness which so degraded the text of Holy Scripture, and undermined its prestige and authority. It is laid down as follows: (1) Consider the whole of scripture as much as possible, and do not appeal to isolated texts, torn out of their context. To insist upon single texts, without considering the main design, is like casting "atoms of scripture, as dust before men's eyes" (a), which is calculated to make things more obscure rather than to explain them or to expound the Word of God. This he declares is "an ordinary artifice of them that seek not the truth but their own advantage" (b). (2) Scripture should not be studied too minutely; "For though there be many things in God's word above reason; that is to say, which cannot by natural reason be either demonstrated, or confuted; yet there is nothing contrary to it". And so when anything in scripture is too hard for us, we should not labour it, "For it is with the mysteries of our religion, as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed whole have the virtue to cure; but chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect" (c).

In spite of this advice, however, we may discern in the interpretation of Hobbes at many points a close affinity with

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(a) Lev. 329

(b) Lev. 329

(c) Lev. 199

the hard literalness of many of the Puritans, and the criticisms and intolerance which naturally accompanied it. The tone of much of his theology bears a close relation to the tone of the exegesis. And this, in spite of his reputation as the founder of the historical method of Biblical interpretation, has a wooden quality and essentially materialistic outlook, both of which have been features of the narrowest and least tolerant of the Puritans through the centuries. The note is sounded in a postscript to the passage last quoted. When anything in the scripture is "too hard for our examination, we are bidden to captivate our understanding to the words" (a). A statement by Hobbes on the way of salvation may be taken to illustrate what such literalness may involve. "The Kingdom of Heaven is shut to none but sinners, that is to say those who have not performed due obedience to the laws (of nature); and not to those neither, if they believe the necessary articles of the Christian faith" (b). Here the reference is to articles; in Leviathan to one article only - that Jesus is Christ. Repentance is also necessary. The reference to belief as a talisman or an open sesame to salvation finds an echo in Puritan pamphlets and sermons of the time, and in sermons of evangelical nonconformists, of revivalists and hot-gospellers down to our own time; and is in direct contradiction to the sacramental doctrine of the prayer book. As Hobbes elaborates his conception of faith, however, rationalising upon the irrational and literal foundation, he parts company even with

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(a) Lev. 199

(b) E. II. 500

the Puritans. For him faith was not a mystical experience, coming by divine inspiration, but an act of calculated policy. It is opinion admitted out of trust of other men, or the admitting of propositions upon trust; and, he concedes, it may, depending on the reputation of the authority trusted, be as "free from doubt as perfect and manifest knowledge" (a). As far as our religious faith goes the opinions that we take on trust are those of the contributors to canonical scripture, whom we accept as speaking for the deity. We accept also as authentic and authoritative the recorded words of the Saviour.

In fairness it ought to be said that the Papists and Anglicans fell victims to the danger of literalness occasionally, and at times when it was avoided by the Puritans. This was true to a considerable extent of the meanings placed by the former on the sacraments; and here Hobbes sided generally with the Puritans. Baptism, for instance, according to Hobbes and the Puritans, does not pertain to the essence, but is in memory and for a sign. Further, if the will be there, the act may be dispensed with in case of necessity (b). Again sacraments are for "signs and commemorations" and not for "sealing, or confirming, or conferring of grace" (c). This seems to be reasonable doctrine, but an opposite view is certainly suggested by a literal reading of certain passages of the New Testament.

Hobbes evinces yet a third and contradictory attitude to the Bible and its interpretation; one of veiled criticism and even

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(a) EL. Pt. I, VI (7)      (b) E. II. 363      (c) E. IV. 341, 342



disparagement, and of partial scepticism. Throughout his long discussion of the "Word of God" and of "Prophecy" in Leviathan there is an undercurrent of disparagement which seems unmistakable. The term "Word of God" in fact has been appropriated by the Puritans to describe the canon of Scripture, a collection of ancient books, the composition of which as it happens is fixed by the law(a) and in a heathen state where there is no Bible, scripture could never be cited against the authority of the sovereign. In the Bible itself the Word of God sometimes means the scripture, and sometimes signifies "the dictates of reason and equity"(b), and sometimes has other meanings. The unum necessarium for salvation is assent to the doctrine that Jesus is Christ, not to believe the doctrines of Christianity, then which "there would be nothing in the world so hard" (c). As for prophets, even the sovereign prophets, Moses, the High Priest, and the pious kings, although they were all spoken to by God, in what manner God spoke to them is not manifest, nor is it intelligible (d). Again such a critical argument as that against the authorship of Moses of the Pentateuch, although on the face of it unexceptionable since it exposed a traditional error which the Puritans had taken over, was none the less an uncanny anticipation of the gibes of Thomas Paine, and the destructive work of the Higher Critics.

Hobbes shows constantly a tendency to pare down the scope

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(a) Lev. 203  
(d) Lev. 231

(b) Lev. 225, 227

(c) Lev. 222, 223

of revelation, and to reject a miraculous in favour of a naturalistic interpretation. With his contempt for magic and mystery, he casts <sup>doubt</sup> ~~down~~ on the sorceries and enchantments of the magicians of Egypt recorded in the Book of Exodus. He suggests that enchantments are impostures, and in support argues that nowhere in the Bible is there a definition of the term, so that it may be intended to describe an imposture. He proceeds: "those texts that seem to countenance the power of magic, witchcraft, and enchantment, must needs have another sense, than at first sight they seem to bear" (a). The Book of Job could not be history (b), and the devils which in the New Testament were said to possess men, were not really devils (c). Although Christ addressed diseases as though they were persons or devils possessing human beings, "yet this does not argue that a fever is a devil"; In discussing the words "spirit", "angel", and "inspiration" Hobbes dismisses traditional meanings as "idols of the brain", which are "nothing at all there where they seem to be; and in the brain itself nothing but tumult" (d).

Hobbes does not deny directly the authenticity of biblical prophecy, but as we have seen he does his best to disparage prophets, and suggests that as there have always been so many more false prophets than true ones, it were better to disregard pretended prophets (e). "And consequently men had need to be very circumspect, and wary, in obeying the voice of man, that

{a} Lev. 258  
{d} Lev. 311

{b} Lev. 205  
{e} Lev. 233

{c} Lev. 37



his design can be <sup>in</sup> "torturing so many texts of Scripture" (a), a practice which amounts to an "undervaluing and perverting the Scripture". Hobbes certainly made a practice of interpreting Scripture to suit himself, and this in spite of his most scathing denunciation of private interpretations, and denials that anybody had the right to attach any meaning to Scripture that was not official.

Who, according to Hobbes, has the right to interpret the Bible? The short answer to this question is clear. "It remains that there must be some canonical interpreter, whose legitimate office it is to end controversies begun by explaining the Word of God . . ." (b). This interpreter is the civil sovereign, and it is natural that he should enjoy this prerogative, as in general he is interpreter of the mind of God, the mediator between God and men, and the mouthpiece of God on earth. But may the sovereign delegate his prerogative? It is clear that Hobbes had in mind the legitimate interpretation of the Bible by private citizens, since, as we have seen, he makes provision for this, and lays down rules to be observed in interpretation. He would not presume to guide the sovereign whose discretion in this matter would be absolute. What then is the position? While plenty of scope may be allowed for aberration, and for difficulties in argument unclarified, it is possible that his directives on interpretation may be held to apply to the theological experts to whom the sovereign is said to delegate

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(a) Clarendon, Brief Survey of Leviathan, Survey of Ch. 35, 36  
(b) E. II. 275



the technical details of interpretation; that is in England to clergymen duly consecrated by the laying on of hands (a). We may assume that nobody else has the slightest right to meddle, and must accept without question what the bishops say on behalf of the king.

Private interpretations of scripture, Hobbes insists, are not only vain and undesirable, but in effect treasonous and tend to the dissolution of the commonwealth. This is <sup>the</sup> a burden of the early part of Behemoth which traces the rebellion of "Presbyterians and other democratical men" who claimed the right of private interpretation. In De Cive he declares that if all men were permitted to be their own interpreters, they could not obey their prince before they had judged whether his commands were conformable to the Word of God or not, "and thus either they obey not, or they obey for their own opinion sake; that is to say, they obey themselves not their sovereign" (b). And in fact, as a matter of history, the Sects "rose against his Majesty from the private interpretation of the scripture, exposed to every man's scanning in his mother tongue" (c). In this matter Hobbes even finds himself in agreement with the pope, whose policy was to exclude the vulgar from reading the scripture. With this Hobbes compares the policy of Moses on the occasion of the giving of the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. Moses "suffered no man to go up to Mount Sinai to hear God speak" (d). Events, Hobbes argues, have proved the pope's policy to be wise,

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{a) E. II. 297  
{d) E. VI. 190

(b) E. II. 292

(c) E. VI. 167

"for after the Bible was translated into English, every man, nay every boy and wench, that could read English, thought they spoke with God Almighty... and every man became a judge of religion, and an interpreter of the scripture to himself" (a). Heresy, in fact, is simply a private opinion, and originated when among the converts to Christianity the ex-philosophers became pastors being most skilled at disputation, and endeavoured to turn the scripture to their own heresy, to the great scandal of unbelievers (b).

To hold a private opinion contrary to official doctrine is, then, according to Hobbes, treason and heresy; and by arguing in this way he condemned himself. He, like the Puritans, appealed to the Bible to support his doctrines; and like them also he invoked the Fathers only to support the interpretation which he himself placed on scripture. The Bible was the principal authority, and everything else was at best only corroborative. This at any rate was his attitude when the Bible was being called in seriously and in detail. And, we must add, this appears to be quite the most important leaf he has taken out of the Puritan book. If the Bible had not been used as a calendar of battle cries, and the mightiest weapon in disputes, his well packed polemical discourses would scarcely have followed quite the same pattern. Again and again his handling of Bible "truth" was purely personal and individual, and as we have seen, he was roundly denounced by many critics for torturing and

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(a) E. VI. 190

(b) E. VI. 174

perverting the scriptures. His exegesis is one of the most novel and interesting features in a museum of idiosyncrasy. No amateur theologian could have flaunted private interpretations of scripture more boldly. At this point he meets the Puritans and is in full accord with them. And yet this is the principal ground for his assault upon them. He undertook to prove out of the Bible that the great exponents of biblical Christianity were in error; and that Bible proofs of theological novelties were irrelevant and also an impertinence, since the same authority who had established by law an official religion, had also laid down an official interpretation of scripture, which interpretation was the only one having meaning and application for the subject.

One word must be added about the Puritans and the state. History fully justifies Hobbes in classing many of them on the Erastian question with the Roman Catholics. There were of course exceptions, but the outlook of the Presbyterians on this question was identical with that of the Romanists. Baxter has been quoted already as a supporter of theocracy, and he was a moderate man. Further he sought to justify the taking up of arms against the king. There is a prima facie duty of "due obedience to rulers", but there is also a right and duty of resistance, where rights of contract are invaded by the king (a). Catholic unity subsists not in submission to the civil sovereign; but in holiness. "To be united in the main, and sanctified by the

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(a) Baxter, A Holy Commonwealth or Political Aphorisms

uniting spirit of Christ, our principal differences were healed already" (a). The Admonition of Parliament of 1572, coming at a time when as Keble complains the influence of the court induced an attitude of outward submission and lip service in all theologians, coupled with its demand that "instead of Archbishops and Lord Bishops, you must make equality of ministers", the merely luke-warm concession to royal supremacy: "Not that we mean to take away the authority of the civil magistrate and chief governor, to whom we wish all blessedness, and for the increase of whose godliness we daily pray: but that Christ being restored unto his kingdom, to rule in the same by the sceptre of his word, and severe discipline; the prince may be better obeyed, the realm more flourish in godliness ..."

The unctious and veiled admonition, we may conjecture, would not have been in the least acceptable to the queen, and the suggestion that Christ should be restored again to his kingdom, to rule again by the sceptre of his word, implies total dissent from the Erastian and submissive status of the Church of England. And in fact at the end of the century Richard Hooker saw fit to devote the eighth book of Ecclesiastical Policy to refute the Puritan assertion "that to no civil prince or governor, there may be given such power of ecclesiastical dominion, as by the law of this land belongeth unto the supreme regent thereof" (a).

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(a) Hooker, Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. VIII, Statement of Puritan's Seventh Assertion.



THE NEW AGE

The new science of the seventeenth century presented religious minded people with a problem. We have seen that the Christian religion in all its phases rested on authority for the validity of its doctrine and claims; and the champions and exponents of all its sects and parties and shades of opinion recognised this, and made their appeal to authority in order to support their particular point of view. Opinions differed considerably as to what was the true authority, but that there must be correspondence between any particular assertion and form of doctrine, and the utterance or declaration or practice of some authority, was of the essence of every argument. The new science, on the other hand, discarded authority, at any rate in so far as it was merely arbitrary, or was accepted because of its antiquity, or for any other non-scientific reason. The new science had begun to be based on induction as the only proper and useful foundation in the search for new knowledge. And the new science was already beginning to produce results of revolutionary significance. A brilliant hypothesis of Copernicus had been verified by Kepler and Galileo, and as far as Galileo was concerned the verification was by observation made possible by the use of his new telescope; and at the same time Harvey was proving his theory of the circulation of the blood, making use of inductive methods: a long series of dissections, investigations of animals and the foetus, investigation of obstructions in blood vessels, and investigation of diseases.

The leaders of religion could not, or ought not, to ignore these developments, and on the other hand they could not deny the very essence and principle of their faith. At every point the new science challenged the old faith, and one by one ancient accepted beliefs crumbled before the searching onset. To many a thoughtful mind it must have seemed clear that science and faith were incompatible, as the growing discrepancies between the fabric built on observation and that founded on authority became more apparent. How was this problem faced by prominent thinkers of the century? In the minds of some as might be expected, there was produced an irresoluble conflict. These were the unhappy victims of change, who clung in sentiment to the past and yet were children of their age; who could deny neither faith nor reason and gained as their reward the worst of both worlds - a morbid self-preoccupation and the devastation of doubt. The disintegration of international faith, the disintegration in their souls, is reflected in their literature. The harsh obscurity of much of the religious metaphysical poetry is perhaps a measure of the intensity of inner conflict which produced it.

At the other end of the scale were those who regarded the new science with suspicion and reserve, at any rate so far as it tended to unsettle faith. For some of them, unrepentant champions of the old order, Cardinal Bellarmine is a representative spokesman. He stood by the Council of Trent, he defended the system which it confirmed. Wegg Prosser in "Galileo and

his Judges" gives us the substance of a letter by Bellermino to the Carmelite Father Porcarini. "When there shall be a real demonstration that the sun stands in the centre of the universe, and that the earth revolves round it, it will be necessary to proceed with great consideration in explaining those passages of scripture which seem to be contrary to it, and rather to say that we do not understand them, than to say that a thing that is demonstrated is false". For science, the hint of an honourable mention is in reality a hollow gesture, because it was Bellermino's conviction that whatever science said, or seemed to say, in direct contravention of the sacred pronouncements of the Council of Trent, must be false; and any opinion of this nature could be stated only hypothetically and not categorically, since there could never be any "real demonstration" out of harmony with Catholic doctrine lately confirmed oecumenically. As to the scripture, the text "the sun rises and sets and returns to its own place, was written by Solomon, who was not only inspired by God, but was also the wisest and most learned of mankind in human sciences, and in the knowledge of created things, and it was not likely he could be wrong".

Suspicion of the new science was not found only in champions of the old faith. The attitude of Bellermino appears to be the one taken up by Raphael in the eighth book of Paradise Lost; and Raphael here may be understood to speak for Milton. Adam is advised to know the seasons and to read the book of nature; this is of immediate and practical importance; but

"... to attain, whether heaven move or earth  
Imports not, if thou reckon right; the rest  
From man or angel the great architect  
Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge  
His secrets, to be scanned by them who ought  
Rather admire."

There is the suggestion that the heavens have been left an unsolved mystery, so that God might gain mirth by the "quaint opinions" of those attempting to solve the mystery. The question is dwelt on at some length, which is an indication of the importance which the writer attaches to Raphael's opinion: "What if the sun", Raphael asks

"Be centre of the world, and other stars,  
By his attractive virtue and their own  
Incited, dance about him various rounds?"

Again this imports not. "Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid," Adam is bidden; "Leave them to God alone". And the reason is:

"That not to know at large of things remote  
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know  
That which before us lies in daily life,  
Is the prime wisdom."

The paramount significance of the new discoveries and method, and the intimate bearing they would ultimately have on the most practical affairs of every day life, had not penetrated. Science was regarded, and regarded with suspicion, solely as a potential disturbance to faith.

There are, on the other hand, important men of religion to whom the revolutionary new thought does not appear to have caused any disturbance. Either they did not feel its impact as a challenge to faith, or it passed them by altogether. I



have not discovered anything in the works of Baxter, for example, to suggest that he realised the profound significance of the scientific developments of his century. He was a lucid theologian, who, in the traditional way of theologians, made use of a priori arguments to arrive at conclusions of great certainty to himself. He was without scepticism, and in intellectual temper antithetical to the new spirit of enquiry and experiment. And what was true of Baxter, must have been true also of more extreme Puritans, who were too narrowly engrossed in theological dispute to take heed of the current of outer events. What was the attitude of the Laudians? The Archbishop himself appears to have been a man of extremely wide interests; and his policy for the church rested on the necessity for outward uniformity, which had nothing in common with the intellectual tyranny which the most aggressive of the Puritans would impose. He was, moreover, on terms of intimacy with the frequenters of Great Tew, that home of speculative minds; with men like John Hales and Sir Henry Wotton. Laud's great work for the University of Oxford, his dispute with Fisher, and his handling of the threatened defection of Chillingworth to Rome, all bespeak a man of breadth and open mind. His defects and miscalculations were political and not intellectual; nevertheless, as far as his faith was concerned, and his church activities and formulations, he does not appear to have been affected by the new science so as to modify his beliefs or his course of conduct in any way. He was perhaps in the same class as the scientists to be considered next.

Many of the eminent men of science, and perhaps the most celebrated figures in the evolution of the new science, appear deliberately, or without thinking about it, to have kept their religion and their science in separate compartments of the mind. Francis Bacon, himself, belonged to this class; he admitted revelation as a source of knowledge, and condemned the mixing of science with religion - "The taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imagination". Each of these, science and religion, have their own standards and criteria of truth, and the one should not be judged by the other. And later, when the new method enjoined by Bacon had been applied with such startling results, some of the greatest scientists, men like Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, appear to have kept their religion and their science apart, and to have avoided encroachment. Newton was not orthodox, but he was to the end of his days a confirmed Scripturalist. He had not even that degree of scientific scepticism which informed the contemporary deists.

In some Church of England divines, especially in the second half of the century, the impact of the new science helped to promote a spirit of compromise and accommodation. The churchmen called Latitudinarians by their contemporaries, and the Cambridge Platonists, are among this number. There was Benjamin Whichcote who would have introduced the method of induction into the study of theology, who hated dogmatism and who held that "Truth is truth, whosoever has spoken it" (a). There

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(a) Quoted from Pascoe, "The Cambridge Platonists".

was Henry More who argued the need to attend to the voice of reason; and there were the other prominent divines who formed a school of rationalists whose centre of learning was Cambridge. Their aim was to show the essential rationality of the Christian faith in opposition to a new spirit of scientific scepticism abroad. Their appeal was to reason and not to dogmatic authority; and in this respect they were very much children of their age. They attempted to reconcile the seeming incompatibles and to bring again into harmony science and religion, which were in danger of going their separate ways to irreconcilable cleavage.

Thomas Browne represents yet another attitude to the problem of the century. His mentality was such, or so he has assured us, that he was able to accept a paradox, and was undisturbed by the discrepancy between the conclusions of science and the assumptions of faith. "In philosophy", he declares, "where truth seems double faced, there is no man more paradoxical than myself" (a). He was able to dispense with a rigid definition (b); "where there is an obscurity too deep for our reason, 'tis good to sit down with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration"; and in this way reason "becomes more submissive unto the subtleties of faith; and thus I teach my haggard and unreclaimed reason to stoop unto the lure of faith" (c). To believe only possibilities", he says, "is not

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(a) T. Browne, *Religio Medici*, Everyman Edn. P. 7  
(b) " " " " " P. 11  
(c) " " " " " P. 12

faith, but mere philosophy". And have we not in ourselves, obvious to honest introspection, the most baffling of all enigmas and paradoxes; in this frame "raised upon a mass of antipathies" (a). In Christian Morals he stresses the eluciveness and indefinability of truth - "Some truths seem almost falsehoods, and some falsehoods almost truths; wherein falsehood and truth seem almost equilibrionally stated" (b).

In his dispute with Bramhall Hobbes made a statement on paradox. He said: "A paradox is an opinion not yet generally received. Christian religion was once a paradox" (c).

Possibly the operative word here is "yet". A paradox is an opinion which will be generally received; but is not received now. On what ground may an opinion be generally received? I think Hobbes would say that an opinion (not fact of course) qualifies for acceptance if it is in accordance with reason. Many opinions, of course, will never qualify, as being obviously against reason, and not merely difficult; and so are not paradoxes but nonsense; and on this ground many of the "paradoxes" which may have been accepted by Browne, Hobbes would have rejected out of hand. In general Hobbes regarded the enigmatical as nonsensical. He admitted, it is true, the "mysteries of faith", as to which no attempt should be made at rational demonstration. They should be swallowed whole like pills and not chewed. Truths of religion, and mysteries of faith, belong in fact to "the

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(a) T. Browne, *Religio Medici*, Everyman Edn. P. 76  
(b) " " *Christian Morals*, " " P. 254  
(c) E. V.



things whereof there is no science" (a). And with this grudging and somewhat disparaging admission he passes on to more important considerations. On the whole it is his case that all important truth will prove submissive to reason and logic.

It was characteristic that Browne should fail to recognise any disquieting element in nature. He writes exuberantly of "God's servant nature, that universal and public manuscript, that lies expanded unto the eyes of all" (b). Obviously he considered it good to make a study of nature. This of course was the seventeenth century attitude, and perhaps it was taken for granted. But was Browne really a student of nature in the same way as Francis Bacon? Was he openminded? The answer seems obvious that he was not open-minded. He brings preconceptions to the study; he holds for instance that it is a story of flawless perfection according to his own traditional view of what is perfect. And those parts of the story which on the face of it are incompatible with this point of view are naively explained away. In a letter to a friend, referring to disease, he writes: "The mercy of God hath scattered the great heap of diseases, and not loaded any one country with all. Some may be now in one country which have been old in another" (c). The study of comparative disease which is essentially statistical and empirical, is tackled by Browne not as a scientist, but as a religious man determined to make the study fit in his body of

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(a) M. II. 269

(b) T. Browne, *Religio Medici*, Everyman Edn. P. 17

(c) " Letter to a Friend " " P. 157

religious assumptions. In Christian Morals all that is seemingly evil is explained away in much the same fashion: "The wisdom of God hath methodized the course of things unto the best advantage of goodness ..." (a). The book of nature is placed alongside the Bible to be treated with the same kind of reverence, and not to be examined critically. He will gaze at the stars in wonder, accept them as evidences of the power and goodness of God, but he will not enquire into the nature of their revolutions. Like Milton he was unconvinced by the theory of Copernicus, and the observations and proofs of Galileo. "Some have held that snow is black", he writes in *Religio Medici* (b), "that the earth moves, that the soul is air, fire, water; but all this is philosophy ..." and later "I consider therefore, and say, there is no happiness under (or as Copernicus will have it, above) the sun" (c). The standpoint is not far removed from that of Raphael in Book 8 of *Paradise Lost*; but there is a difference. Browne claimed ubiquitous interest; to be in tune with the scientific spirit of the century: "I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathises with all things" (d). And yet his excursions into natural science were as crude, as his prose and the sentiments it expressed were lofty.

In this respect Hobbes can claim no great advantage, nor to have been possessed distinctly of the scientific mind. In various places he expresses at least superficial agreement with

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(a) T. Browne, *Christian Morals*, Everyman Edn. P. 248  
(b) " " *Religio Medici*, " " P. 86  
(c) " " " " " " P. 88  
(d) " " " " " " P. 65

the findings of contemporary science, and was so far an advance on Browne. He agrees with Copernicus that the sun is the centre of the world, and with Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, that the seasons are caused by the earth's motion round the sun (a). He holds that there is no disproof in scripture of contemporary science: "The scripture was written to shew unto men the kingdom of God, and to prepare their minds to become his obedient subjects; leaving the world, and the philosophy thereof, to the disputation of men, for the exercising of their natural reason. Whether the earth's or sun's motion make the day and night..." (b). To illustrate how the artificial man, the commonwealth, maintains his resemblance with the natural, he describes the system of blood circulation as Harvey had propounded it, (c) and he reduces the passions to physiological motions, again with an eye on Harvey. Hobbes's natural science is in Part IV of De Corpore. Having deduced various possible effects from primary definitions, he declares that his intention is to study the phenomena of nature empirically, "and some knowledge of natural causes may be obtained". Like the passages quoted above his arguments show some knowledge of contemporary theory, but this is not comprehensive. He appears, for example, to have been ignorant of Galileo's demonstration that the rate of acceleration of falling bodies is not affected by their mass (d). On the whole his attitude to natural

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(a) E. I. Part IV, Ch. XXVI  
(c) Lev. 133, 134

(b) Lev. 39  
(d) E. I. Part IV, Ch. XXX

science was not really open-minded, humble and inductive, as perhaps the attitude of a scientist should be, but he did none the less strive to be consistent and to give a true and impartial account. The difference between his outlook and that of Browne was profound. To Browne certain subjective religious preconceptions were paramount; and he was not in the least disturbed if nature gave him the lie. He accepted the paradox. To Hobbes it was a rational conviction which presented itself as the whole truth, the objective truth. And he was so sure of his opinion that without a tremor he undertook to force the universe into line.



SPINOZA

The metaphysics of Spinoza are his answer to problems left outstanding by Descartes. The problem of mind and body and their relation is met by the doctrine that both are attributes of substance, or that they are two ways of looking at the same thing. In this way any co-relation between thought and action is explained. The problem for a determinist raised by the notion of free-will, which Descartes could not deny, is solved by Spinoza in his own way as we shall note briefly a little later. It may be asserted very baldly that Spinoza rejected the idea of a transcendant God in favour of an immanent God, and so avoided the theological difficulties which beset the orthodox determinist, and which were not escaped or disposed of by Hobbes, but rather "swallowed whole".

Spinoza is often called a monist in that he rejected the concept of two separate and distinct substances in the universe, and held that all finite things are manifestations of the one infinite basic stuff, which he called substance. Substance is another name for God, who is thus conceived as present and manifest in the whole, and present and manifest in every part of the universe. In spite, however, of this all-embracing concept of God, the unrestricted pantheism of the metaphysics in which everything is conceived as part of the divine and therefore the object of religious thoughts, Spinoza yet draws the sharpest distinction between theology, and philosophy. Until

these are separated the church will always be distracted by quarrels and schisms (a). Hobbes excludes the doctrine of God from philosophy; but both Spinoza and Hobbes bring current religion into their discussions of purely secular matters. This happens at points <sup>where</sup> ~~when~~ secular concerns are impinged upon by what Spinoza might have considered the mundane side of religion: questions concerning the external worship of God, outward morality, the interpretation of scripture, and so forth. As we proceed with a brief account of some of the teaching of Spinoza in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus and the Tractatus-Politicus, we shall see how religious questions are discussed in a way that is strongly reminiscent of Hobbes. Spinoza often echoes Hobbes, and goes further. He demolishes the claims of "revelation" to give truth, which Hobbes had allowed and then distorted or ignored; and Spinoza rejects claims to divine inspiration which Hobbes had written down and discredited. Hobbes disparaged the prophets and prophecy, Spinoza wrote them off. "The prophets", he says, "were endowed with unusually vivid imaginations, and not with unusually perfect minds"; so that "to suppose that knowledge of natural and spiritual phenomena can be gained from the prophetic books is an utter mistake". He claims that he "will show that prophecies varied, not only according to the imagination and physical temperament of the prophet, but also according to his particular opinions; and further that prophecy never rendered the prophet wiser than he

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(a) T. T. P. 163

was before" (a).

The account Spinoza gives of the evolution of society has close parallels with the account of Hobbes. Where they differ the one account illuminates the other. Spinoza has a good deal to say about the condition of men living in a state of nature. In this state "whatsoever an individual does by the laws of its nature it has a sovereign right to do, inasmuch as it acts as it was conditioned by nature, and cannot act otherwise" (b). By laws of nature here Spinoza means the laws of human psychology which explain the operation of the passions. Each individual has a sovereign natural right to express himself absolutely as nature prompts; and the natural right of each is limited only by his power (c). Spinoza in his account of natural right goes much further than Hobbes. Hobbes held that each man has a right of nature to take whatever steps his own reason may suggest are necessary to preserve his own existence. Spinoza, on the other hand, holds that a right of nature is the right to live and act as we are conditioned by nature to live and act. Right is co-extensive with power. "Fishes enjoy the water, and the greater devour the less by sovereign natural right"; likewise the ignorant and foolish live according to the dictates of desire by natural right. By contrast "the wise man has sovereign right to do all that reason dictates" (d). Hobbes agrees with some of this, as we know. He held that men in a natural state could be divided into two groups, the temperate

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(a) T. T. P. 27      (b) T. T. P. 201      (c) T. T. P. 204      (d) T. T. P. 201

(reasonable) and the vainglorious. The latter pursue a common craving to be thought well of and praised by others, and to that extent live according to the dictates of desire.

Like Hobbes, Spinoza holds that reason teaches men to seek peace, and that peace can only be enjoyed in society. To guarantee mutual observance of the dictates of reason, or laws of nature, so that society may be held together, there must be a sovereign. Spinoza and Hobbes agree about this. But Spinoza does not draw such a sharp distinction as Hobbes between prudence and science. Spinoza refers to reason rhetorically as the "light of the mind", as "God's handwriting", and declares its function to be to deduce the unknown from the known (a) (the function, according to Hobbes, of science). "The laws of human reason", says Spinoza, "pursue the true interest and preservation of mankind" (b). With this Hobbes was in complete agreement although he would perhaps have placed more emphasis than Spinoza on prudence, the kind of reason acquired by experience.

Like Hobbes Spinoza teaches that the sovereign, whose existence is necessary for the preservation of society, must be obeyed in all things with little reservation. He must even be obeyed when his command is repugnant to reason, because any harm done is "compensated by the good which he (the subject), derives from the existence of the civil state" (c). Hobbes argues similarly at the end of Chapter XVIII of Leviathan that no amount of subjection to laws can be as bad as the "dissolute condition

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(a) T.T.P. 113

(b) T.P. 294

(c) T.P. 303



of masterless men". The sovereign, says Spinoza, breaks God's laws at his own risk, but without violation of civil or natural right. The duty of obedience is general and paramount, in as much as "no-one can rightly practice piety or obedience to God, unless he obey the sovereign power's commands in all things" (a); in particular the sovereign's laws about religion are to be obeyed. There is no second authority in religious matters: the powers civil and ecclesiastical are united in one sovereign as they were in the ancient Hebrew state. And it must be remembered that in the Hebrew state there were prophets who spoke from God, and might substantiate a rival claim to be obeyed. In modern times there can be no question that the rulers "have absolute possession of the spiritual prerogative" (b). They prescribe the outward forms of religion, choose ministers, define doctrines, and have authority to receive into the church and to excommunicate. It is the sovereign also who gives to the precepts of reason and the precepts of God, to moral precepts the force of law in his dominions. But Spinoza makes it quite clear as did Hobbes that obedience to the sovereign in matters of religion, piety, and morality, extends only to external religion, to outward forms and outward acts. The sovereign has no jurisdiction over "piety itself" (c). This very important provision in Spinoza's doctrine leads directly to a consideration of the limitations to sovereignty which he allows.

Like Hobbes Spinoza distinguishes between Christian and

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(a) T.T.P. 250

(b) T.T.P. 256

(c) T.T.P. 245



heathen sovereigns. All commands of the former (with reservations to be discussed in a moment), including those relating to external religion, must be obeyed. As to heathen sovereigns he has this to say: "if the sovereign power be heathen, we should either enter into no engagements therewith, and yield up our lives sooner than transfer to it any of our rights; or if the engagement be made, and our rights transferred, we should . . . be bound to obey them and to keep our word" (a). If we have submitted to a heathen sovereign, and enjoy the protection which he affords, then we should obey all his commands whether they are against conscience or not. Both Spinoza and Hobbes recommend willingness to suffer a martyr's death in some circumstances, but Hobbes, as is often the case, leans more to the side of Christian duty (or may be interpreted as so doing). We have discussed his rulings on the question of heathen sovereignty. When the sovereign is not a Christian, he says in *De Cive*, "some Christian church is to be followed" in matters spiritual. If necessary the Christian subject must choose martyrdom, rather than obey; but in no case must he offer resistance to his lawful sovereign. The scope of this ruling is much restricted by a parallel passage in *Leviathan*. There we are reminded that faith is inward, and as far as the externals of religion are concerned a Christian subject to an infidel sovereign has the licence of Haman. If the Christian's conscience will not allow him to obey, he should be "glad of any

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(a) T. E. P. 212

just occasion of martyrdom" (a). In no case should he make war upon the sovereign. Hobbes permits this, and one or two other anomalies in his otherwise tightly comprehensive case for obedience, because he is confident the occasion for martyrdom is never likely to arise. No infidel sovereign would be such a fool as to martyr a good Christian, whose religion teaches him submission and obedience.

Spinoza expresses two dicta which indicate the nature of the limitations to sovereignty which he allows. First, "the natural right of every man does not cease in the civil state". The elucidation of this principle reveals a close affinity with Hobbes: "Man ... in each state (the state of nature and the civil state) is led by fear or hope to do or leave undone this or that; but the main difference between the two states is this, that in the civil state all fear the same things, and all have the same ground of security and manner of life; and this certainly does not do away with the individual's faculty of judgment. For he that is minded to obey all the commonwealth's orders, whether through fear of its power or love of quiet, certainly consults after his own heart his own safety and interest" (b). What is implied in this is that so long as the commonwealth has the power to afford protection, it is in a man's best interest to obey the law. Any man who, prompted by reason, has a mind to further his own interest, has a natural right to do so, as well as an obligation laid upon him by the law. Another

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(a) Lev. 388

(b) T. P. 308

implication is that when safety is no longer guaranteed the duty to obey is ended, and the natural right (in Hobbes's sense) to take whatever steps are necessary to preserve life and security may be reasserted. Hobbes, for his part, underlines a man's duty to obey, while teaching at the same time that obedience is in a man's best interest. He tends to equate natural right with the right to make war in order to preserve one's life. On the other hand Hobbes states explicitly what the doctrine of Spinoza implies: that when protection ceases the duty of obedience ceases and the commonwealth is dissolved.

The other dictum is: "The rights of the sovereign are limited by his power" (a). Theoretically the sovereign has the right to do what he likes, but as some actions cannot be done "without extreme peril to itself" it may be denied that the sovereign has the absolute power to do them. This dictum, or principle, embraces a number of particular limitations, most of which are found also in Hobbes. No-one can so utterly transfer his power and his right as to cease to be a man. The commanding of repugnant acts such as "no-one can be induced to do by rewards and threats, do not fall within the rights of the commonwealth" (b). These include parricide, and not striving to avoid death. "Every one has an inalienable right over his thoughts" (c), which is Hobbes's view also, as we saw when we discussed the sovereign's religious prerogatives. In governing his dominions the sovereign must take note of public opinion;

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(a) T.T.P. 258

(b) T.P. 304

(c) T.T.P. 241



and in the exercise of his prerogative to control religion he must delegate the details of interpretation to experts. Finally, and this is very important for Spinoza, the sovereign must allow religious toleration. This subject deserves a paragraph to itself, as Spinoza and Hobbes are here somewhat at variance.

In an interesting passage Spinoza puts his finger on the features of sectarianism which according to Hobbes was the root of religious anarchy as it existed in England in his time. Spinoza's argument is something like this: the Bible was adapted to the intelligence of the people who were intended to read it; and because of this, modern sectaries teach an assortment of contradictory opinions. They take the words of scripture literally, which was not always intended, and so miss the point. One set misses the point in this way and another in that, and so on. But it would not be right because of this to accuse the sects of impiety: they are adapting the words of scripture to their opinions, just as originally everybody was intended to adapt them to his understanding. In short, the sectaries are doing what everybody has a perfect liberty to do. The test of the desirability of any interpretation is a pragmatic one: does it help the individual to obedience? (a).

An argument will be put forward later that there is a strong element of pragmatism in the doctrines taught by Hobbes. But he certainly did not apply any pragmatic criterion to sectarian religious opinion. This might in fact in some cases

have been good; it might even have made for peace. Some of the broader minded sectaries, for instance, were much more inclined to toleration than many of their Anglican opponents. Baxter, for example, taught it almost as an article of faith; and it was the Anglicans who wrecked the Savoy Conference. But as far as Hobbes was concerned, tolerance and broadmindedness in religious matters might be an aggravation of offence. In these matters the sole criterion to be applied was the law. If the law prescribed uniformity it was an offence to follow private conscience, if conscience dissented from the established order; it might well be an aggravation of offence to be disposed to tolerate deviation in others.

The different attitude to the sectaries explains the difference in opinion of these two philosophers on the general question of toleration. Hobbes's opinions on this matter may be said to have been made for him by the anarchical activities of the sects.

Their extreme individualism he felt to be the greatest danger to civil peace, and indeed to the survival of the commonwealth; and because of this he opposed and denounced them and came out on the side of the strictest obedience to the law on religious matters. The law enjoined uniformity, so that for Hobbes uniformity was a condition of worship which must be enforced. It should be stated that he has left no record of opposition to the sects while he was in England during the Protectorate; but of course he was on sufferance, and more important at that time toleration was official policy. Not long after the Restoration,

however, Behemoth appeared and this contains some of Hobbes's most vigorous attacks on the sects. Hobbes, we may say, opposed the sects on political grounds and this was the occasion for a rejection of general toleration. "The truth is apparent", he writes in the Elements, "by continual experience, that men seek not only liberty of conscience, but of their actions; nor that only, but a further liberty of persuading others to their opinions; nor that only but every man desireth that the sovereign authority should admit no other opinions to be maintained but such as he himself holdeth" (a). The fact that "the independency of the primitive Christians" is favoured in a passage near the end of Leviathan as "perhaps the best" form of church government "if it be without contention, and without measuring the doctrine of Christ by our affection for the person of his minister" (b), may have been (as Clarendon suggests) because Oliver Cromwell was an Independent. Hobbes's wording, however, seems to indicate that he admits independency to be the best in the sense of being most scriptural, or as having the authority of earliest practice; and that it would still be the best in the absence of paramount political objections to it. In this question, for Hobbes, politics come first.

Spinoza, on the other hand, had not suffered from fear of civil war, but because of religious intolerance; and although his opinions on church and state relations are as Erastian as those of Hobbes, he is an ardent champion of toleration. It

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(a) El. Pt. II, VI (13)

(b) Lev. 380

was of course the intolerance of religious bodies from which he had suffered, and in Holland at that time the civil authorities were on the whole tolerant. In the light of this it is possible to reconcile Spinoza's Erastianism with his championship of toleration. His own statement of the case is reminiscent of some of Hobbes's advice to sovereigns: that a sovereign should not try to regulate everything by law, but should make as few laws as possible. Spinoza writes: "We cannot doubt that the best government will allow freedom of philosophical speculation no less than of religious belief. I confess that from such freedom inconveniences may sometimes arise, but what question was ever settled so wisely that no abuses could possibly spring therefrom? He who seeks to regulate everything by law, is more likely to arouse vices than to reform them. It is best to grant what cannot be abolished, even though it be in itself harmful". Above all no men should be persecuted "simply because they are enlightened" (a). The plea is heartfelt because Spinoza himself had suffered, and might claim with justification that he had suffered ~~from~~<sup>for</sup> enlightenment. The difference between Hobbes and Spinoza in this matter is explained completely by reference to their different circumstances and experience.

For the rest the parallel between the doctrines of Hobbes and Spinoza on sovereignty and religion can be carried to many details. An enemy state, or an enemy individual, says Spinoza, is one who lives apart (b); and "two commonwealths are naturally

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(a) T.T.P. 263

(b) T.T.P. 209



enemies" as their relation is the same as between two men in a state of nature (a). This closely follows Hobbes. Spinoza's account also of the evolution of the papacy agrees with Hobbes; and so does his rejection of papal pretensions. On the other hand the escape clause at the end of the *Tractatus Politicus* in which Spinoza expresses willingness to submit what he has written "to the examination and approval of my country's rulers", and to retract "anything which they shall decide to be repugnant to the laws, or prejudicial to the public good" (b), is humbler in tone and more consonant with extreme Erastian views than the disclaimer of Hobbes at the end of *Leviathan*. "To conclude", writes Hobbes, "there is nothing in this whole discourse ... as far as I can perceive, contrary either to the Word of God, or to good manners; or to the disturbance of the public tranquility" (c). He does in fact express willingness to expose "the doctrine of the politics" "to the censure of my country" (d) but there is no undertaking to retract anything.

One of the most striking affinities between Hobbes and Spinoza is in their approach to the study of human nature. Spinoza's determination not to laugh or weep over the actions of men, but simply to understand them, is an expression of what Hobbes claimed to have done for the human passions. Hobbes set himself to reduce the study of human nature and society to a science; and the pattern he set before him was geometry.

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(a) T.P. 306  
(d) Lev. 383

(b) T.T.P. 265

(c) Lev. 391

Spinoza had the same respect for mathematics as Hobbes: "If mathematics, in fact, by setting a new kind of knowledge before men had not come to the aid of truth, it might have been hidden forever from the human race". The mathematician's approach to problems is impersonal: and this is the approach of both Hobbes and Spinoza to the study of human nature.

Both Spinoza and Hobbes, with their ardent admiration for mathematics, hold a determinist view of the universe, but Spinoza's conception of the working out of natural laws by no means coincides with Hobbes's doctrine of second causes. In the *Treatatus de Emendatione* he writes; "All things which come to pass, come to pass according to the external order and fixed laws of nature". Spinoza distinguishes between internal and external necessity. Internal necessity is the operation of the self-assertive tendency, which is the endeavour of everything to persist in its own being. A man who lives by internal necessity is fulfilling the laws of his own nature; and to do so is perfectly consistent with free will. Some actions of a man, however, are determined by external necessity, and when this is so the man is not free. Such is the case when the thoughts of a man's mind are occasioned by the affections of his body; his thoughts are then subject to external necessity. Spinoza holds that the more a man lives by internal necessity, that is in obedience to his self-assertive tendency, the nearer he comes to perfection. To follow one's self-assertive tendency is to obey the eternal law of one's nature, and cannot be evil. But

the mind naturally strives after the knowledge of God; so that a mind enclaved by ~~the~~ passion is not obeying the eternal law of its nature.

It is interesting to consider to what extent the eternal necessity of God's nature is consistent with individual assertiveness. "The force whereby each particular thing perseveres in existing", Spinoza writes in the Ethics, "follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature" (a). Internal necessity, in other words, is part of the eternal necessity of God. But internal necessity is exhibited in self-assertiveness, which must therefore be considered a principle of integration and unification with the whole, which is substance. The metaphysics teach us that individuals have merely a fragmentary existence unless conceived as merged in the being of substance; and this antithesis between the reality of substance and the unreality of individual existents conceived as individuals, is explained when we consider that individuals which obey the law of their nature are in process of integrating themselves with the being of substance. To that extent for them unreality vanishes. It may be questioned whether Spinoza's metaphysics in the end reconcile the unity of substance with the infinite diversity of attributes and modes; but obviously he had no intention of obliterating individuality. The doctrine of internal necessity and self-assertion is clear enough proof of this; and as far as the exposition of the doctrine goes, it gives us a picture of

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(a) Spinoza Ethics II (45) Note

diversity in unity, the mosaic of existence which was Spinoza's vision.

Hobbes recognises only one kind of necessity, the necessity of second causes, and it is his ostensible thesis that these operate materialistically. The laws of his determinism are physical laws, and in so far as he recognises Spinoza's eternal laws of nature, whereby, for example, the greater fish devour the less, they are explicable in terms of matter and motion. He would doubtless agree with much that Spinoza has to say about internal necessity, and would go further and elucidate its manner of operation in accordance with his materialism. It is interesting that while Hobbes does not deny that there have been miracles, although his doctrine of second causes absolutely precludes their possibility, Spinoza tends to deny them altogether. "It is shown from scripture that miracles are natural occurrences, and as far as possible must be so explained" (a).

As we have seen Hobbes's determinism and his acceptance of a transcendent God, who was also the First Cause, obliged him to accept the theologian's doctrine of predestination. Spinoza was free from any such obligation, and in fact he held that his metaphysics were an answer to the dilemma of Descartes, who could not reconcile free will and predestination, and could deny neither. Spinoza did not believe in a transcendent God; and his doctrine of internal necessity is quite compatible with liberty of action. A man who does what he wants to do, acts

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(a) T. T. P. 97



by internal necessity. Spinoza holds, still within his determinist framework, that the man might have chosen otherwise: he might have been swayed by external necessity. On the level of appetite he might have been deterred, for example, by a threat, but, as Bramhall would say, elected to obey rather the dictate of internal necessity. On the level of intellect, instead of striving for the knowledge of God he might have listened to the voice of appetite. In this way Spinoza is able to talk of free action by necessity. Just as God, who exists by the necessity of his own nature and acts by the necessity of his own nature, "acts with absolute liberty", so man may; and the more we consider man to be free, "the less we can say he can neglect the use of reason, or choose evil in preference to good" (a). Spinoza is a monist in a sense different from that of Hobbes. Hobbes defines substance as body, and maintains that apart from body nothing has existence in the universe. Hobbes's substance is real enough, but he should have made allowance for other existents, and in fact proceeded with his argument as though other things do have existence: entities for example like what Locke and Berkeley and Hume called ideas. Spinoza's one substance, on the other hand, embraces everything, and he insists on the reality and necessity of the particular existents which are manifestations of substance. His concept in fact allows for an infinite variety of existences, as mind and body, all tending to persist in their own existence or nature. Thus he

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(a) T.P. 294

conceives of the passions obeying fixed laws, as did Hobbes; and of the mind obeying the laws of its nature, pursuing the intellectual love of God, as Hobbes did not. And between the two a man is at liberty to express himself, now through the intellect, and now through bodily appetites.

Spinoza like Hobbes rejected the notion of a will faculty. For him will and intellect are the same. He is consistent about this and uses the term volition to include a thought or concept or idea. "There is in the mind no volition or affirmation and negation, save that which an idea in as much as it is an idea involves" (a). The proof of this proposition may be quoted: "There is in the mind no absolute faculty of positive or negative volition, but only particular volitions namely this or that affirmation, and this or that negation". This agrees with Hobbes, according to whom the will is the last appetite in deliberation; that is to say, the will is simply a particular desire or volition.

Spinoza's approach to human nature has been referred to already: "I have laboured carefully not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions; and to this end I have looked upon passions, such as love, hatred, anger, envy, ambition, pity, and the other perturbations of the mind, not in the light of vices of human nature, but as properties ... as are heat, cold, storm, thunder ... and have fixed causes, by means of which we endeavour to understand their nature" (b).

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(a) Spinoza Ethics II (49)

(b) T.P. 388

Religious ideals like loving one's neighbour as oneself have "too little power over the passions"; so that "such as persuade themselves that the multitude of men distracted by politics can ever be induced to live according to the bare dictate of reason, must be dreaming of the poetic golden age, or of a stage play"

(a). All men are part of nature, and whether a man is guided by reason or desire he "does nothing save in accordance with the laws and rules of nature, that is by natural right" (b). The passions are the body's conations, its self-assertion, the essence of its nature; and they obey fixed laws. In this case there is no sense in saying without qualification that a man does evil when he obeys the dictates of passion; and good when he denies his nature. Good and evil in fact are relative terms, as are sin and righteousness, perfection and imperfection. "We must bear in mind that the terms good and evil are only applied relatively, so that the same thing may be called both good and bad according to the relations in view, in the same way as it may be called perfect or imperfect" (c). This may be referred to the statement in Leviathan which we have already considered: "For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them; there being nothing simply and absolutely so" (d). On the question of sin Spinoza writes: "Not only do I assert that sin has no positive existence, I also maintain that only in speaking

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{a} T.P. 289  
{c} Spinoza De Emendatione

{b} T.P. 292  
{d} Lev. 24

Improperly, or humanly, can we say that we sin against God ... I take for an illustration the design or determined will of Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. This design or determined will, considered in itself alone, includes perfection in so far as it expresses reality; hence it may be inferred that we can only conceive imperfection in things, when they are viewed in relation to other things possessing more reality" (a). In fact "evil is not something positive but a state of privation, and that not in relation to the divine, but simply in relation to the human intelligence" (b). When all things are considered sub specie aeternitatis good and evil disappear.

The most important thing to grasp, then, in considering Spinoza's morality is that all ethical terms are relative. As we know the relativity of ethical terms is fundamental also to the doctrine of Hobbes; and in other respects there is close agreement between their respective accounts of good and bad and sin and crime. Both distinguish good as the object of immediate desire, from remoter good. Each man seeks his own satisfaction or benefit, but sometimes in accordance with the dictates of desire, sometimes in accordance with the dictates of reason; sometimes with an eye on immediate good, sometimes in hope of a greater good to follow. Spinoza differs from Hobbes in holding that there can be no sin in the state of nature. Hobbes as we know, defines sin as acts and thoughts against right

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{a} Spinoza, Epistle XXXII to Blyenbergh  
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reason of which men at all times may be guilty. But in his contention that there can be no injustice, in the sense of unlawful injury, outside organised society, Spinoza is affirming the doctrine of Hobbes, although Hobbes does not use the actual terms justice and injustice quite consistently.

In the stress he lays on motive and intention, and mental states generally in his discussion of morality, sin, justice and injustice, Spinoza again agrees with Hobbes. Obedience, Spinoza argues, is a mental state rather than an outward act. Nothing in itself is absolutely sacred or profane apart from the mind. In this connection Spinoza can be seen again to have taken a pragmatic view: "If by believing what is false a man becomes obedient his creed is pious" (a). We gather that if the state of mind is good the action cannot be bad; nevertheless desirability of conduct will naturally vary with enlightenment. Virtue, Spinoza teaches, follows knowledge. Moral virtue (in the full sense) depends on scientific knowledge. "After we have come to the knowledge of things, and have tasted the excellence of knowledge, she teaches us ethics and true virtue" (b). Hobbes also held that only to the enlightened are his best interests known, and these are realised only in the path of true virtue. But the emphasis placed by Hobbes on the virtue and duty of obedience distinguishes his account from Spinoza's, who allows for individual autonomy in a way that Hobbes does not.

According to Spinoza it is each individual mind which seeks after

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(a) T.T.P. 181

(b) T.T.P. 67

and gains for itself the knowledge which is virtue. Hobbes would make the sovereign the custodian of his subject's morals in so far as they are expressed in actions; and it is the sovereign's conscience which is the public arbiter of conduct.

Spinoza carries one feature of the exegesis of Hobbes a stage further. He is an early advocate of the historical method of interpretation: scripture should be interpreted according to the intention of the author. The occasion and circumstances of the writing, the language used, the environment, and the mentality and preconceptions of those intended to read, should be taken into consideration. "As the interpretation of nature consists in the examination of the history of nature, and therefrom deducing definitions of natural phenomena on certain fixed axioms, so scriptural interpretation proceeds by the examination of scripture, and inferring the intentions of the authors as a legitimate conclusion from its fundamental principles" (a). The main design of scripture is not difficult to decipher, and with this in mind it is possible to see through the superficial disguise of metaphor and parable. It is clear, for example,

that "God adapted revelations to the understanding and opinions of the prophets, and that in matters of theory having no bearing on charity or morality the prophets could be, and in fact were, ignorant and held conflicting opinions" (b). For the basis of theology - that man is saved by obedience alone - to be made known to mankind, there had to be revelation; but in order to

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(a) T.T.P. 99

(b) T.T.P. 40

understand what is revealed we must make use of our reason (a). There are indeed things in scripture which surpass human understanding (Hobbes also taught this), but in the main the Bible teaches only very simple doctrines, and such as suffice for right conduct. Hobbes we know taught that the faith required to salvation is easy; and that the essential purport of scripture should be clear to ordinary intelligence.

P A R T    V

THE RELIGIOUS CRITICS OF HOBBS



THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS

To the enthusiast of the seventeenth century the religious teaching of Hobbes may well have appeared almost impiously matter of fact; but to the broad churchmen, the Latitudinarians and Cambridge Platonists, his dogmatic monomania, as they conceived it, was like a deadly irritant in the body ecclesiastical. At almost every point their outlook and belief was in opposition to the creed presented to the world in the Elements of Law, De Cive, and Leviathan. The minds of the Cambridge Platonists turned from crude transcendentalism hinged on a conviction of the reasonableness of faith; but they held firmly to orthodoxy and to traditional and common interpretations of orthodox heads of doctrine. Acceptance of orthodoxy entailed belief in some miracles, and these the Cambridge Platonists did not deny; and they did not lose sight of the high-calling of Christians, especially Christian leaders. The religion of Hobbes, by contrast, was individual, in parts hardly orthodox, rather mundane, and clearly implying disparagement at many points of the faith and hope of generations of believers. To name what was still a hotly contested doctrine, and a point-of-departure of the Cambridge Platonists, they were almost solidly opposed to predestination, and were denounced particularly because they introduced Arminianism to Cambridge. All were Arminian with the doubtful exception of Culverwell whose position is not clear. They hated the decretum absolutum, the fearful doctrine of Calvin, and this is not so much because it proclaimed election,

as because of the black doctrine of reprobation. Hobbes, as we have seen, made special provision to mitigate this side of the doctrine, as he held punishment in hell to consist of an allotted span on earth with the ordinary amenities, in which punishment will be the experience of grief and discontent of mind, "from the sight of eternal felicity in others" (a); but his rigid determinism invading religion was enough ground for the sharpest division between his point of view and that of the Cambridge Platonists.

There were other grounds also for difference: Hobbes's harping exegesis, his contempt for every other point of view, his intolerance. Lastly, and by far the most important, there was his doctrine of good and bad. It was this challenge to religion and morality, this pernicious and corrupting doctrine, which was taken up with the most jealous zeal, and as far at any rate as Cudworth was concerned under the impulse of terror. To Cudworth and his friends it was again a case of Origen contra Celsum, with a difference. Although the notorious scoffer of the second century composed his True Word to combat a threat which he felt the Christian religion offered to the unity of the empire, just as Hobbes was moved by a similar fear for the realm of England, Celsus scoffed openly as a professing foe. Hobbes on the other hand appeared as a wolf in sheep's clothing, professing orthodoxy, and observing outward conformity, attending episcopal church services, and interlarding the whole of his discourse with

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(a) Lev. 247

scripture. This was a far more insidious, a far more deadly peril; hence the fear in the heart of Cudworth.

In the Church of England of the seventeenth century the Cambridge Platonists filled a role somewhat like that occupied by the gnostics in the second century. The comparison is of course a loose one because although gnosticism was condemned by the early church as heresy, the Cambridge Platonists were not considered heretics and would have repudiated the charge with scorn. Perhaps it would be fairer to compare them with Origen, who taught and laboured in Alexandria in the very days of the gnostic flood water, and had he not been one of the greatest of Christian fathers, would have been the greatest of the gnostics. The motto of the Cambridge Platonists was the same as that of Origen, and may be summed up in the words of Ficino quoted by F. J. Powicke in his Study of the Cambridge Platonists; "Religion and Philosophy are identical" (a). It may be said about these men that they were men of affairs, interested in all that was going on around them, and expressing themselves freely and openly in sermons and lectures and writing; and also they were marked by tolerance, breadth of mind, and reasonableness. They did not close their eyes and minds to discovery and science; were open to the new method of Bacon and the critical method of Descartes; like Plotinus and Porphyry, and before them Plato himself, they had the profoundest respect for science according to the true significance of the word. They were keenly inter-

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(a) F. J. Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists, P. 13

ested in and greatly influenced by the works of the Neo-Platonists, but here it must be stressed that they did not derive their doctrine from this source. First they were Christians, and orthodox Christians. They drew on the works of the ancients only as they found in them corroboration for doctrine and interpretations which they felt to be contained in scripture on a broad and reasonable interpretation. They exalted reason, not only as it has a place in the affairs of every day, but as entering into religion. Reason they held to be the divine faculty, and one which had never been lost in man though dimmed and overlaid by the fall; and in this view we may recall they contrasted sharply with Hobbes, who denied that there is a reasoning faculty, but implied that all men are endowed with the capability to reason, which is a process of thought or calculation.

The Cambridge men held that faith could never be divorced from reason, because the faith of the gospel is a reasonable faith, just as conscience is the voice of reason. They speak of the natural light and the eye of reason; and they hold that the Christian faith and Christian doctrine are not in any way repugnant to reason since God has not put this faculty in man to deny its integrity. Like Descartes a little before them, whom as a philosopher they respect and even venerate, they hold that there is no real incompatibility between the claims of faith and religion and the new scientific method and the new discovery, both of which are amenable to reason and can be harmonised and shown to be complementary. Their interpretation of the Bible



was reasonable; it was neither literal, nor allegorical, but anticipated the modern historical method. And they agree in emphasising the end of religion and the hallmark of the Christian these were neither orthodoxy, nor to be possessed of infallible doctrine, nor conformity, episcopacy, or any such external credentials; but to make men and women better people; to quicken moral sensibility and elevate moral standards.

Of the group of men we are considering the one who stressed most the need for wide tolerance and open-mindedness, was Benjamin Whichcote. As far as doctrine was concerned there should be certain essentials agreed on, after which there should be the widest degree of individual opinion and choice. He was not the first to advocate this wholesome doctrine; it had been put forward before by John Hales, by Henry Wotton, and by Chillingworth, all associates of Laud; and was held also by Baxter. Laud himself had implied the same kind of thing when he had said: "It ought to be no easy thing to condemn a man of heresy" (a). Such doctrine was natural for Whichcote, since he insisted that the end of religion is the development of nobility of character. He was not one of the critics of Hobbes, but his view of human nature and the moral law was the exact reverse of Hobbism, as the popular conception had selected and dressed up the philosopher's opinions. Whichcote's view of human nature was elevated, since he held that the natural light of reason, though dimmed, had never been and never could be extinguished.

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(a) Quoted by A.S. Duncan-Jones, Archbishop Laud. P. 59

As for the moral law, this was written in the hearts of men, and was eternal and immutable as Cudworth was to attempt to prove in a long treatise. The teaching of Whichcote was reproduced by John Smith, the former's pupil and close friend. But more than Whichcote, Smith stressed the mystical nature of our divine knowledge, which, he said, comes to us through direct union and communion with God. The "truths" of our religion are commendable to ~~the~~ reason quickened and enlightened, but they come directly by revelation from God.

Ralph Cudworth, the most learned of the group, is from our point of view the most important, because a great deal of his intellectual force was directed to the refutation of Hobbes as he was read and understood. Brought up a strict Calvinist, at Cambridge Cudworth broke away from the effect of his early training, and adopted Arminian beliefs. His opposition to Hobbes was inspired by a deep rooted fear, fear of the effect his ethical doctrine might have on public morals and the condition of the Christian church in England if it became widely accepted; and there was plenty of ground for fear because of a rapid spread of Hobbism in a certain intellectual stratum, and a growth of scientific scepticism. For years Cudworth pondered the menace and then brought out "The True Intellectual System of the Universe" which outlines his metaphysics in a veritable granary of erudition. The kernel of the system is that existing eternally in the mind of God are intelligible ideas, which by an act of the divine will are communicated to finite consciousness; in the creature they are the notions which reason takes cognisance of,

abstract ideas of good and bad and so forth. The existence of these eternal ideas so communicated guarantees the community of notions of morality throughout the world.

It is easy to see how the doctrine of morality propounded later rests upon this essentially Platonic system of metaphysics. The title of the work on morality is "A Treatise on Eternal and Immutable Morality", which was published after his death. A synopsis of the first chapter in the Contents of the edition published in 1731 states the case very well: "That good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest, cannot be arbitrary things without nature made by will. Everything must by its own nature be what it is, and nothing else. That even in positive laws and commands, it is not mere will that obligeth, but the natures of good and evil, just and unjust, really existing... No positive command makes anything morally good or evil, just or unjust; nor can oblige otherwise than by virtue of what is naturally just". In Chapter 3 he argues that moral good and evil, just and unjust, do not depend upon the arbitrary will of God. "Everything is what it is immutably by the necessity of its own nature"

It is interesting to note that while Hobbism led to scepticism, the doctrine of Cudworth did not lead him, at least, either to retreat from current science, or to attempt to explain it away. Like the rest of the Cambridge Platonists he was able to accept it without misgiving because he recognised no incompatibility between science and his faith. In Chapter 3 of Book II he treats of the ancient ancestry of the atomical and mechanical

philosophy. The ancestry is ancient and also respectable. In Chapter VI it is shown that this philosophy refutes the assertions of Protagoras that knowledge is sense, and knowledge "is but phantastical and relative". Oudworth approves of mechanical philosophy which banishes "unintelligible corporeal forms and sensible qualities" and "solves all the phenomena of the corporeal world by those intelligible principles of magnitude, figure, site, and motion, and thereby makes sensible things intelligible". The intelligible principles of magnitude, figure, etc. are of course some of those eternal ideas which God has communicated to rational creatures. Plato had argued in the same kind of way about mathematics two thousand years earlier. Oudworth's affinity with Descartes and to that extent his sympathy with current thought is shown by some of the arguments in Book IV. In Chapter I it is argued that the immediate objects of intellection are not things without the mind, but the ideas of the mind itself; here also he foreshadows the doctrine of ideas held from Locke to Hume. In Chapter III is the contention that even simple corporeal things, passively perceived by the sense, are known or understood only by the native power of the mind. We may recall an observation of Descartes in the Meditations about the perception of a piece of wax. "I understand by the sole power of judgment, which resides in my mind, what I thought I saw with my eyes" (e). Chapter V argues that the intelligible notions of things, though existing only in the mind, are not

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(e) Descartes, Meditations, II



figments of the mind, but have an immutable nature; and if there is any meaning in this argument it seems to reiterate the main contention of the true Intellectual System.

What Cudworth seems to mean is that our knowledge of the eternal and immutable ideas which exist in the mind of God, is through the medium of other ideas in our own mind. These have been communicated to us by God, but they are in the mind and have no independent existence. To assert that ideas in our mind are not figments of our imagination, but have an eternal and immutable nature, is to deny directly at least some statements of Hobbes. It would, however, be very difficult to work out from the writings of Hobbes a consistent account of ideas as the term was used in the seventeenth century. He writes often of our conceptions and cogitations and the like, as entities, and presumably mental entities, of which notice may be taken, and which may be given names (a). But on his premises, and according to his explicit theory of knowledge, it is hard to find any meaning for these terms. He speaks also of the moral virtues, while giving repeated warnings of the danger of the use of abstract terms. There is ground to suppose that a word like "honesty", on a fair interpretation of Hobbes's doctrine, is simply a shorthand term for a certain kind of behaviour, and the intention to behave in that way. His emphatic nominalism would appear to preclude the possibility of anything like a Platonic Idea; and just as he wrote off sensible ideas, or as he called them

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(a) E.I. Ch. II

phantasms, so we must assume he would officially have dismissed all the rest of the so-called ideas in the mind. On the other hand his doctrine of good and bad presents us ultimately with a universal and changeless pattern of behaviour dictated by the law of nature, and necessary for our preservation and happiness. In *De Cive*, as we have seen, virtue is made equivalent to good manners or habits (a); that is to the kind of behaviour which all critics of Hobbes's doctrine of good and bad would have called moral.

The final position of Hobbes as he pursues his doctrine of good and bad is not very far removed from that of Cudworth. Both recognise a universal and changeless moral code. They differ mainly over the ground for their belief, and over the emphasis they place on means and ends. Cudworth purports to hold a priori that the code is good in itself by virtue of its own nature though presumably in line with orthodox teaching he would not deny that virtue brings an extraneous reward in this world or the next. This was Christian doctrine. To behave morally is a priori the right thing to do, and it is also in one's best interest. The benefits which accrue to moral behaviour are nevertheless derivative and secondary. The important thing is that the duty is laid upon us to do good rather than evil. What is good is good eternally by virtue of its nature (and, Cudworth could add, not because God said so), and is expressed in the tenets of Christian morality. Hobbes holds that the moral code is good

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(a) E. II. 47

because in fact it is the only means to another good thing, peace. He stresses consistently the utilitarian nature of morality, and this viewpoint has often been distasteful to theologians. That peace is good he has been taught by hard experience; and that the social virtues he details in *De Cive* are the only means to peace may be taken also as strongly suggested by observation and experience. Hobbes has discovered his moral code empirically, though he ascribes to it an eternal and immutable validity. He is therefore, on the important question of the status of morality in exactly the same position as his earnest and tireless critic, who nevertheless has learned nothing from experience but has accepted current doctrine uncritically.

HENRY MORE

Henry More like Cudworth was a writer, but unlike Cudworth he was popular and widely read, whereas the burdensome labours of the former received little attention. In Henry More there was a far stronger mystical strain than in any others of the group, even than in John Smith; and it was because of this strain that in the middle of his career he fell under the spell of occultism; but he was never so much a victim that his rational self was unable to assert itself. In the end he gave himself to the belief that the necessary precondition to divine knowledge is inner purity, and his thirst became not after human knowledge, nor after the occult, but after a mystical knowledge of God by self purgation. With this may be compared the exposition in Levithan of the appropriate relation between men and the deity. To know God, for More, was the very end of existence. Herein lay happiness and beatitude. Hobbes, for his part, was severely practical. It is not possible, in the first place, to know God as he is incomprehensible (a). It is proper on the other hand, and in fact necessary, to obey his commands in so far as they are made known to us in the scripture, because we are weak and he is all powerful. We honour him also fittingly since "honour is nothing else but an opinion of another's power joined with goodness" (b); and as worship "is an outward act, the sign of inward honour", very properly we worship God (c). To obey,

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(a) Lev. 11

(b) E. II. 210

(c) E. II. 210



honour, and worship God in the circumstances is our duty; but it is not necessarily our privilege or our pleasure; it is certainly not the reason and end of our existence.

More's attitude to the new science remained fairly consistent throughout his life. He did not close his mind to the new thought, though at a certain stage curiosity tended to be overlaid by occultism. He held that the best of the scientists, the members for instance of the Royal Society, tended by their experiments to strengthen the ground of faith rather than the reverse. It should be noted however that at a certain point he turned his back on Descartes for whom formerly he had had the greatest respect and admiration. More criticised Hobbes more politely than Cudworth, and does not seem to have attached so much weight to the menace of Hobbism. In a treatise on the Immortality of the Soul he devotes a chapter to prove the necessity to answer Mr. Hobbes; and in the next chapter he commences to answer Hobbes's arguments against immaterial substance. The opinion of Hobbes he refers to as a "sullen conceit that some have taken up concerning Incorporeal Substance, so if it were a contradiction in the very terms" (a). The proofs he gives of immaterial substance are from the nature of God, the phenomenon of motion in the world, and apparitions. He considers the latter established beyond reasonable doubt. His proofs need not concern us, as they have at most a persuasive power like those of Cudworth, but in them he fulfills the purpose of his treatise

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(a) Henry More, The Immortality of the Soul, Book I, Ch. X

which was "to handle the matter only within the bounds of natural light, unassisted and unguided by any miraculous revelation" (a). Here he proclaims his faith in the sufficiency of reason which was in no way impaired by the mystical strain in him. He believes also that his treatise confining itself to rational arguments, will none the less agree with the divine oracles.

The epistemological foundation of his arguments may be discussed briefly, as showing his close agreement with Cudworth, and his acceptance of the theoretical Platonism which had seized the imagination of these theologians, and which was at the very opposite pole <sup>from</sup> ~~of~~ thought ~~of~~ Hobbes. It is little wonder that these men denounced Hobbes, and yet they should have been the last to undertake to criticise his doctrine, because they could not possibly understand his point of view.

In axiom I of Chapter 2 More declares that "whatever things are in themselves, they are nothing to us, but so far forth as they become known to our faculties or cognitive powers"; and this axiom he holds must be evident on the first perusal because "as nothing, for example, can concern the visive faculty, but so far forth as it is visible; so there is nothing that can challenge any stroke to so much as a touching, much less determining, our cognitive powers in general, but so far forth as it is cognoscible". Two inferences can be drawn from this; the first is that the things we know are things in themselves, self-

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(a) Henry More, The Immortality of the Soul, Preface.

subsisting, having the quality of cognoscibility, and are not for instance the objects of sense which are sensible. What we know in fact are ideas, and not in the sense that this word was used by Locke and Berkley, but rather in the sense of Cudworth. Locke's ideas were inclusively the objects of our apprehension, whether sensible or abstract; Cudworth's ideas, on the other hand, were purely abstract notions; and so with More. According to More you see a table and a chair; but you know the universal 'chairness', just as you know goodness and justice and equality. The second inference is that there is a great deal that we do not know and cannot know; but this does not rule out the existence of the unknowable. He illustrates this, Axiom XVIII, with reference to the inscrutable metaphysician's substance, which Locke cleared away together with a great deal of additional lumber. More says: "The subject, or naked essence or substance of a thing, is utterly inconceivable to any of our faculties"; but we know very well that everything must have a naked essence. To arrive at the truth of the existence of all such unknowable things it is necessary to make "a silent appeal to a man's own mind". And it is such an appeal which assures us of the existence of incorporeal spirit, <sup>the</sup> and true nature of which is neither more nor less intelligible than that of body (Chap. I)

CUMBERLAND

We shall consider now another critic of Hobbes, who although not a Cambridge Platonist - he repudiated "the short and easy way of the Platonists" - criticised Hobbes specifically because of his doctrine of morality. Cumberland asserted a moral creed of his own, which on the important question of the status and character of moral laws was no different from that of Cudworth; but the writer's approach and method of argument was a departure. In both respects we shall see that Cumberland was very close indeed to the doctrine of De Cive and Leviathan, and if he had been more open-minded and charitable in his attitude to Hobbes, Cumberland might have come forward not as a critic but as an apologist.

In De Legibus Naturae Cumberland gives a hazy and prolix definition of laws of nature and the gist of it is that the laws of nature, or moral laws, are not arbitrary or individual or simply contemporaneous, but universal and eternal. This was of course exactly the position of Cudworth, but in supposing that it constituted a direct contradiction of the moral teaching of Hobbes, Cumberland was in error, as Cudworth had been. As we have seen Hobbes reached a conclusion which was no different from that of his critics, that moral laws are of universal and changeless validity and applicability.

So far Cumberland was on the same lines as the Cambridge Platonists, but he parted company with them in the kind of arguments he used to establish his position. He made no



a priori assumptions as to the eternal existence of moral laws in the mind of God, but commenced his proof from the data of sense and experience. By a study of nature it is possible to discern certain guiding principles which do not vary; in particular it can be observed that nothing in nature is constituted to act or behave in a way to hamper its own survival. And so we may assume that human nature also is so constituted as to produce behaviour which tends to the survival of the race; and beyond that he holds that men are by their nature so constituted that their behaviour will tend to their best estate, to general well-being and happiness. The kind of behaviour most conducive to this end Cumberland holds to be general benevolence. He is able therefore to put forward as an ethical theory, that "no action can be morally good which does not in its own nature contribute somewhat to the happiness of men". In this the question of motive is left out. Is moral behaviour that which I conceive to be for the general happiness, and so intend it to be; or is it behaviour which in fact conduces to general happiness. The two criteria are by no means the same. Cumberland I think would answer this difficulty by calling in right reason. That must be our guide. It is a faculty developed by observation and common sense. Truly moral behaviour must and will commend itself to right reason as the kind of behaviour conducing to general happiness; and right reason is a reliable guide. Such behaviour will in fact tend to promote happiness. Enlightened motive is therefore an

essential ingredient in moral behaviour; whereas misguided motive may well result in well meaning action being morally bad.

The close parallel between this reasoning and the arguments of Hobbes can be recognised at once. Cumberland purports to establish his doctrine empirically, but at certain stages he makes use of non-empirical arguments. The proposition, for instance, that nothing in nature is constituted to act in a way to hamper its survival may be suggested by observation, but could hardly be proved. Some facts might even tend to refute it. On the other hand we may accept the statement that general benevolence is the kind of behaviour most conducive to human well-being and happiness as a generalisation based on empirical observation, and on the same plane as the assertion of Hobbes that virtuous behaviour is a "necessary means to peace". Indeed if we substitute general well-being for peace as the most desirable end to be accomplished by the conduct of men in society there is very little difference between the teaching of the two men. The doctrine of both is utilitarian, and if it is argued that the tone of Cumberland's treatise is the more elevated because of the insistence of Hobbes on the selfishness behind the most virtuous behaviour, it must be pointed out that the very same motive is implied in the arguments of Cumberland. General well-being and happiness certainly include the well-being and happiness of the individual, just as general peace means individual safety and security. The parallel between the two can be seen to be even closer when we consider that the specific

virtues mentioned by Hobbes as conducing to peace are "modesty, equity, trust, humanity, mercy" (a), all of which are surely included in the general term benevolence.

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(a) E. II. 47

SAMUEL CLARKE

We shall consider now Samuel Clarke, a Church of England divine who inherited a great deal from the Cambridge Platonists, and as a critic of Hobbes prolonged the attack of Cudworth. We have already considered some of his criticisms of Hobbes's determinism, and we shall now consider shortly his arguments against the Hobbeian morality. Clarke's attack was delivered in sixteen sermons preached in St. Paul's at the Robert Boyle Lectures for 1704 to 1705. The sermons were published together with the title "A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God" and were said to be in answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, the Author of the Oracles of Reason, and other deniers of natural and revealed religion. It is interesting that certain metaphysical pronouncements of Clarke seem to go a long way in the direction of Spinoza's monistic thesis: "The self existent being must of necessity be but one" (otherwise he is not an absolute and infinite being) "there cannot therefore be two independent principles, God and matter" (a). And to this extent the justice and propriety of Clarke's righteously worded assault upon Spinoza, if not upon Hobbes, may well be questioned. Clarke levels vigorous attacks at Hobbes's materialism, which, he says, leads directly to atheism. This may be true, but Clarke overlooked the fact that in practice, and especially when he was working out his political and ethical doctrine, Hobbes tended to shelve or overlook the rigidly monistic materialism of De Corpor

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(a) Samuel Clarke, Discourse concerning Being and Attributes of God, Argument VII



and the early sections of <sup>*The Elements of Law*</sup> ~~De Cive~~ and Leviathan.

In his ethical teaching Clarke stresses that moral values are eternal and antecedent to any laws designed to enforce their observance. This he held to be proved from the natural sense in everybody of being under such obligations, from the judgment of men's consciences, from the judgment that all pass on the action of others, and from many other circumstances (a). He held also that eternal moral obligations are antecedent in some respects, even to the will of God (b). His arguments at this point are specifically directed against Hobbes whom he accused of making the laws of nature "no further obligatory than the civil power shall think fit to make them so" (c). It is necessary to repeat that, for Hobbes, the laws of nature, as universal precepts of motive and behaviour, are antecedent to any human law, and, as far as any man is able to say, eternal; and Hobbes explains the universality and constancy of moral values by reference to the laws of nature which dispose men to moral conduct. Supposing Hobbes to make morality a purely arbitrary matter of law (which is a misrepresentation of his doctrine) Clarke makes use of an argument which simply misses fire. "To say that laws are necessary to be made for the good of mankind, is confessing that certain things tend to the good of mankind, that is, to the

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- (a) Samuel Clarke, *The Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*, Proposition I, Proof  
(b) " " " " " " " "  
(c) Samuel Clarke, *The Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*. Proposition I. Grounds of Mr. Hobbes's Scheme (3).

preserving and perfecting of their nature" (a). Surely this is exactly the argument of Hobbes in De Cive, except that he held the "certain things" tend to the good of mankind by promoting peace (b).

So with the rest of Clarke's laborious arguments in support of a system of morality antecedent to human laws. The angry shafts of the divine widely miss the target. He makes in one place a statement with the triumphant air of condemning Hobbes out of his own mouth, but in fact he simply reiterates what was implicit in all that was said in De Cive and Leviathan about the laws of nature. Referring to De Cive 14:10 he says: "The obligation of these things (not to murder one's parents, to honour agreements, and so forth) he (Hobbes) is forced to deduce entirely from the internal reason and fitness of the things themselves, antecedent to, independent upon, and unalterable by all human constitutions whatsoever" (c). Hobbes was not forced to deduce anything. He made certain statements about the laws of nature quite voluntarily, and it might well be argued, gratuitously. It is sufficient here to quote again from De Cive: "The laws of nature are immutable and eternal" (d). Hobbes was under no obligation to make this statement and the truth of it can be and very frequently has been called in question. An impartial examination of this part of Clarke's

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(a) Samuel Clarke, Discourse concerning Being and Attributes of God, Argument XII (5)

(b) E. II. 46

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attack leads to the opinion that he wasted his explosive artillery in demolishing a doctrine of morality which he attributed to Hobbes, but which in fact Hobbes did not hold.

A second ground which Clarke finds for criticising the Hobbesian morality is less easy to answer. Clarke's case against Hobbes is this: he denied that there are eternal and changeless moral laws enjoining upon mankind those principles of thought and behaviour which are intrinsically good. Hobbes invested the sovereign power in the state with the prerogative, and placed upon him the duty, of enforcing morality by the law: the sovereign in short was the sole interpreter of God's moral laws, and the sole arbiter in moral questions. With regard to this second criticism it must be admitted that in this connection Hobbes does somewhat complicate his account; but very fundamental parts of Hobbes's account are entirely ignored by Clarke. He disregards, for instance, the crucial distinction which Hobbes draws between inner and outer morality, the importance he attaches to inner morality, and the fact that over inner morality as over inner justice and injustice the sovereign has no jurisdiction. Two main difficulties present themselves, both of which have been fully discussed. First it is not absolutely clear what happens to the laws of nature once the commonwealth has been formed, and the sovereign invested with absolute authority. Secondly there is the problem of the sovereign who issues immoral commands. We have seen that Hobbes's handling

of these questions is not altogether happy, but because of the partiality of Clarke's attacks and his disregard of essential elements in Hobbes's case, the onslaught fails.



SHAFTESBURY, HUTCHINSON, and BUTLER  
FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS OF HOBBS'S MORALITY

We turn now to another kind of critic. Those we have considered were the critics of Hobbes's ethical theory from the side of his doctrine of moral laws. They alleged that he had denied them universality, or indeed any reality, reducing them to the status merely of private wishes, or the wishes of the sovereign power. They failed in fact to follow Hobbes's arguments through to their conclusion. The critics we shall now consider objected to the slur on human nature implicit in Hobbes's selfish doctrine; and, as Clarendon put it, his "positive and magisterial assertions against the dignity and probity of mankind" (a). Bramhall complained in *Catching Leviathan*, "He hath devised us a trim commonwealth, which is founded neither on religion towards God, nor justice towards men; but merely upon self-interest, and self-preservation" (b) and in so doing he had impugned the honour of the race and lowered its dignity.

These critics held that moral behaviour is natural to men, because man is a social animal. They agreed that in man there is a kind of inner sense, called variously "the natural sense of right and wrong", "the moral sense", and "conscience", which informs man as to what kind of behaviour is good and desirable, and also guides or impels him to behave himself in that way. They held in common with the Cambridge Platonists that moral laws have a reality and validity of their own, apart from

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(a) Clarendon, *Brief Survey of Leviathan*, Survey of Chs. 13-16  
(b) E. IV. 286

private idiosyncrasy, custom, the will of the sovereign, or even the will of God. At any rate Shaftesbury writes about virtue, that it is not dependent "even on the supreme will itself, which can no way govern it; but being necessarily good, is governed by it, and ever uniform with it" (a).

Shaftesbury, the first to be considered, was a pupil of Hobbes, and is regarded as one of the important founders of eighteenth century deism. In his moral treatises he attempted to "establish virtue" on principles which ignored or disregarded the "truths" of the Christian religion. As to the nature of moral laws, the author's view is stated thus in the *Moralist*: "For being, in respect of virtue, what you lately called a realist, he endeavours to show that it is really something in itself, and in the nature of things, not arbitrary or factitious ... not constituted from without, or dependent on custom fancy or will; not even on the supreme will itself" (b). In other words, as Cudworth argued, good, and for that matter evil, are eternal and immutable, taking precedence even to the Almighty; he is bound by fixed and changeless standards of morality as much as all his creatures. To establish the priority of the canons of goodness, Shaftesbury uses the analogy of the canons of taste - aesthetic taste. The latter he appears to assume must be accepted by everybody as timeless and changeless; but here he reveals a serious weakness in his argument. What it implies is that there can be no serious difference of opinion

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(a) Shaftesbury, *The Moralist*, Part II, Sec. (3)  
(b) " " " " " "

over matters of aesthetic appreciation. In "Characteristics, Advice to the Author", he argues that symmetry and proportion are "founded still in nature, let men's fancy prove ever so barbarous or Gothic ..." (a). In this observation of course the question is begged. The word, Gothic, as it is used here, means mediaeval or "romantic", as opposed to classical, and a great many competent critics would not agree that the artistic and architectural products of the Middle Ages were barbarous in the contemptuous sense in which that word is used by Shaftesbury with his admiration for contemporary styles. He seems to give his whole case away.

As to morality, Shaftesbury's argument is that it is harmonious. Just as artistic beauty consists in proportion and balance, so in the inner life of a man beauty of character consists in a balance or harmony of his appetites and passions under the control of reason; and on the social plain the individual is a unit in a larger organisation, and he must be careful to harmonise his interests with the larger interests. To show how this can be and is a fact in human relations, Shaftesbury argues that just as on the artistic level man is possessed of an aesthetic sense, so on the social level he has a "natural sense of right and wrong", by which he can apprehend the value of actions, and the beauty of harmony in society resulting from moral behaviour (b). He accounts the establishment of virtue

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(a) Shaftesbury, Characteristics, Vol. I, Soliloquy or Address to the Author

(b) Shaftesbury, Characteristics, Vol. II

on these principles to be a necessity prior to the preaching of religion, because the principles will appeal to "those who are not yet brought to own a God, or future state". "We begin surely at the wrong end when we would prove merit by favour, and order by a deity" (a).

In these words Shaftesbury rejects the a priori method of the Platonists, although the conclusion~~y~~ he arrives at as far as his doctrine of morality is concerned is identical with theirs, and is the conclusion also of Hobbes: moral values are changeless and universal. Where Shaftesbury, and moralists who share his particular outlook, differed from Hobbes was in the assumption that moral behaviour is natural to men, because man is a social animal. As we know, Hobbes denied categorically that men are born fit for society, although they are naturally gregarious. The qualities which comprise fitness for society have to be learned by reason and experience, and are found only in enlightened adults. Spinoza also taught, even more trenchantly than Hobbes, that in the natural state men tend not to society and harmony, but to discordant self-assertion. Men are "more led by blind desire than by reason", and anybody (like for instance Shaftesbury) who thinks otherwise must be dreaming of the poetic golden age, or a stage play" (b). When all this is said, however, we must repeat that Hobbes, and for that matter Spinoza, reached a point of complete agreement with Shaftesbury in their acknowledgement of immutable and eternal

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(a) Shaftesbury, *The Moralists*, Part II, Sec. (3)  
(b) T.P. 289





put forward arguments analogous to those of Shaftesbury, but who approached explicitly much closer to Hobbes, and help to show that the doctrine he put forward was not so far removed from the opinion of more orthodox moralists. In an "Enquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue", Hutcheson largely reproduces the argument of Shaftesbury and criticises the view that reason informs us as to what kind of behaviour is to our own advantage in the long run. Reason, he says, is too weak for this, and our natural instincts too strong. God, he says, has not left morality to the doubtful discretion of reason; he has given virtue a beautiful form to attract us (a). Just as we have a sense of beauty to appreciate the order and harmony in nature and in works of art, so we are endowed with an inner sense, which he calls the moral sense which is essentially aesthetic, and which recognises virtue and prompts us to order our conduct accordingly (b). In an Enquiry concerning moral good and evil he proposes as a criterion by which the morality of actions is to be judged, the estimate of disinterested on-lookers. Actions which appear benevolent to others whether they are beneficiaries or not, are morally good (c). The accent therefore is on appearance and not on intrinsic merit of actions; and he has prepared us for this view in the Preface to the first mentioned treatise. Religion, he complains, has recently acquired "so austere and ungainly a form, that a gentle

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(a) Hutcheson, An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, 1725, Preface

(b) " " " " " " " " " " " "

(c) Hutcheson, An Enquiry into Moral Good and Evil, Introduction

man cannot easily bring himself to like it " (a). His intention is to show that the pursuit of virtue is natural. Before we pass on it is sufficient to remind ourselves that Hobbes taught that in pursuing virtue we obey the promptings of the laws of nature which are discovered by natural reason.

Joseph Butler, who flourished somewhat later than Hutcheson and who is the last moralist we shall consider in this section, almost reproduced certain arguments of Hobbes using a different terminology. He argued that human actions are of three kinds: those prompted by self-love, those which tend to benefit individuals and are prompted by natural benevolence, and those which tend to promote the welfare of the community. He nowhere condemns the first kind of actions. The last he holds are dictated by conscience. In a sermon he draws an analogy between "the nature of man as respecting self, and tending to private good, his own preservation and happiness, and the nature of man as having respect to society, and tending to promote public good, the happiness of that society" (b); and he adds that "to aim at public and private good are so far from being inconsistent, that they mutually promote each other" (c). In another sermon he expresses the opinion that man has a natural "propension" to "carry him to society, and to contribute to the happiness of it" (d). Behaviour tending to promote the

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- (a) Hutcheson, *An Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, 1725, Preface  
(b) Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons preached at the Roll's Chapel*, published 1813                      Sermon I  
(c)        "            "            "            "            Sermon I  
(d)        "            "            "            "            Sermon II

happiness of society he holds to be moral behaviour, and the instinct toward it is conscience (a). Later there is a passage which is very close indeed to Hobbes, but traverses much of the more radical teaching of Spinoza about human nature. Butler argues that "as brutes have various instincts", by which they are carried on to the end the author of their being intended them for" so "does not man likewise act agreeably to his nature, or obey the law of his creation, by following that principle, be it passion or conscience, which for the present happens to be strongest in him". He concludes the argument with the assertion that although men may follow passion their best interest lies in following conscience (b).

Beside Butler's "propension" in men carrying them to society we may place Hobbes's laws of nature, which are discovered by reason, are the foundation of morality, and have, almost all of them, a direct social bearing. What are they? To seek peace to perform covenants, to strive to accommodate oneself with others, to abstain from vindictive revenge, to show no hatred or contempt for others, to abstain from pride, to cultivate modesty to be just, in fine to do to others what you would have them do to you. Could there be a finer statement of social morality? There are, in fact, important analogies between the ethics of Butler and the moral teaching of Hobbes, although it would be

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- (a) Joseph Butler, Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel, published 1693, Sermons II and III  
(b) " " " " " Sermon III



a mistake to overstress agreements. Butler, of course, would have repudiated the very suggestion of agreement, and was sternly critical of Hobbes. For all that some agreement can be found, and this fact alone is sufficient comment on the many blind and prejudiced attacks which have been made on Hobbes's moral doctrine. If we equate the opinion of Hobbes that reason persuades men to rational good in their own interests, with Butler's doctrine that the natural "propension" in men to social behaviour, that is conscience, when followed promotes the best interest of the individual, it can be recognised that the gap between the two moralists is not so wide as has been supposed.

PART VI

THE LEGACY OF HOBBS

It has been said by students of Hobbes that he contributed in an important way to eighteenth century deism, and the opinion has been expressed by modern authors as well as by others closer to the philosopher in time. In his "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century", Leslie Stephen names as the starting point of deism the variations of opinion inherent in Protestantism. Already in the middle of the seventeenth century this variation had given rise to a critical spirit, while at the same time a tendency to rationalism, had shown itself; both these developments led naturally and inevitably to deism. As for Hobbes his contribution was the discovery that "the Bible itself must be submitted to the test of historical criticism". The reference here is to Chapter XXXIII of Leviathan, and after Hobbes Spinoza went a good deal further in the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus. In his Discourse concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, Samuel Clarke introduces the section on the deists with a catalogue of the different sorts of Deists. We need mention only categories (1) and (2). They are (1) Believers in an impersonal prime mover, who sets in motion a "series of future necessary and unintelligent causes", but who is not at all concerned with the government of the world. (2) Those who believe every natural thing is "produced by the power, appointed by the wisdom, and directed by the government of God", but do not allow "any difference between moral good and evil actions of men". It is

possible that Clarke would have placed Hobbes in (2). We cannot of course agree with this because Hobbes allowed more difference than most people between moral good and evil actions. On a strict interpretation of his determinism we might cautiously assign him to category (1). Hobbes, for his part, would probably have denied that he belonged to either category. In these two definitions, however, we have perhaps the twin <sup>deities</sup> duties of Hobbes: the mechanist's prime mover; and the God of Calvin and of Luther's Letter to Erasmus, ordaining to the last detail every single event of the temporal universe.

The authority of Samuel Clarke as to the membership of the deist school, and the phases of belief represented, is considerable, as he lived through the time of deist growth and influence, and himself in process of time went a long way toward their point of view and away from orthodoxy. There is further, in the works of Hobbes, in addition to a new and critical approach to scripture, a tendency to naturalism, in his accounts for instance of the origin of religion, and of angels, devils, and the like. These accounts certainly appear to support a claim that he is one of the founders of deist thought, which in due course was to make a clean sweep of every orthodox trapping, and to claim for itself that it was "natural religion". How far is this view to be accepted?

Before discussing the contribution of Hobbes to deism, we may consider for a moment in what direction his influence may be seen clearly to lie. A consideration of this will enable us to



assess more accurately the true measure of his legacy to natural religion. There is certainly good ground for asserting that he influenced the shaping of Latitudinarian thought. We find, for instance, his Erastianism very closely reproduced by prominent Latitudinarian churchmen, by Stillingfleet and Burnet, although both no doubt would have repudiated any debt to Hobbes. Erastianism was older than Hobbes, and was an accepted principle of Church of England polity; but Hobbes gave to it a special twist which we find reproduced at the turn of the century, and earlier. There are obvious affinities between Hobbes and, say, Stillingfleet, who echoed Chillingworth, and saw in the Church of England order a de facto legality, and not a divine and absolute prescription.

Again we may consider the feud between the Latitudinarians and more bigoted elements in the Church of England. When in 1668 some of the broad churchmen, led by Tillotson and Stillingfleet, united with Bates, Manton, and Baxter to prepare terms of accommodation, the move was rejected by Parliament which was under the dominance of an extreme faction. It is certain that Hobbes if he had expressed an opinion would not have sided with the high-churchmen, who both secretly and openly were advocates of an independent prelacy. In 1689, as Cardwell records, Convocation considered comprehension, and it was again rejected. The stumbling block now was ordination, and the staunch episcopalian view is expressed in Pricoeux's contemporary pamphlet. "We as divines are best able to do it as it

ought, without prejudice to the church; whereas if we cast it into the hands of laymen they may, instead of altering circumstances, strike at essentials, and so make a breach upon the religion itself to the undoing of all" (a). This can be weighed against the thesis in Leviathan that in the early church ordination, or the laying on of hands, had no magical significance, and was the prerogative not of the Apostles or bishops, or even of the presbytery, but of the whole congregation (b). And Prideaux's esoteric style, "we as Divines" calls up inevitably the taunt against "unpleasing priests" (c). There is no support whatsoever in Hobbes for the outlook of the opponents of comprehension, and much to be found in bitter derogation of their claims and pretensions. All of this places him, as far as the dispute in the Church of England is concerned, substantially on the side of the Latitudinarians.

Apart from a general if unconscious and unacknowledged borrowing by the Latitudinarians, there are many echoes of the views of Hobbes in the writings of individual controversialists; men like John Spenser, whose "Discourse concerning Prodigies" arrived at very much the same assessment of such alleged phenomena as Hobbes; or like Joseph Glanville. These writers were members of the Established Church like Hobbes himself, and they evince an approach to religion which was closer to that of Hobbes than the outlook of the champions of natural religion.

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(a) E. Cardwell, A History of Conferences, published 1840. P. 410  
(b) Lev. 897  
(c) Lev. 62.

Most significant perhaps is Coward. In 1702 he published "Second Thoughts concerning the Human Soul", which in its arguments revives a suggestion made in different forms by Locke, Hobbes, and Descartes. As far as Hobbes is concerned the suggestion is that all bodies may have rudimentary sense. His object is to provide for difficult implications of his materialism. There is no "immaterial substance", in fact the term is a contradiction, and therefore there is no entity called soul or mind as popularly conceived. Coward's "Second thoughts" was answered by Nichol's "Conference with a Theist", and by John Turner who wrote "Vindication of the Separate Existence of the Soul". Coward was charged with deism, but like Hobbes he gave public adherence to orthodoxy and called in the scripture to support his arguments. His most notorious work was "The Grand Essay", in which he set out to bring reason and religion into harmony and to prove, (1) that the existence of any immaterial substance is a philosophic imposture, and impossible to be conceived; (2) that all matter has originally created in it a principle of internal or self-motion; and (3) that matter and motion must be the foundation of thought in men and brutes. Much of this is strongly reminiscent of Hobbes, but with his opening words, such was the climate of respectable opinion, Coward repudiates altogether the influence of Hobbes. "The notion of immaterial substance has so universally prevailed for several ages, that to contradict it will savour of no less than Hobbism, in the opinion of many sober well-meaning men,

I believe, as well as of all furious bigots" (a).

With reference to this disclaimer a distinction ought, perhaps, to be drawn between the important and also permanent contribution of Hobbes to English thought, and what came to be called Hobbism. This term in fact was almost a synonym for irreligious scurrility. Trading upon an unacknowledged debt to the serious thoughts of Hobbes, Coward puts forward the maxim that "Where philosophy (or school divinity) cannot be reconciled to solid reason and the Holy Scriptures, it ought to be totally rejected" (b). There is no breath of disloyalty to the Bible, which was the deists rallying point; and like Hobbes Coward makes a naive use of the holy text to prove his point. God must be a physical substance, because he is constantly alleged in the Bible to be equipped with physical organs, to have eyes, and feet, and mouth, and nose, and nostrils. To show how orthodox must be his materialist thesis he denies, as did Hobbes, that omnipotent God can create immaterial substance, as such an act would imply a contradiction. This he says is the reason "gross thinkers" have given for the denial of this power to God. Coward agrees with them and adds further reasons of his own, and then complains that the critics of his earlier work have taxed him, not merely with deism, but with atheism; so that not only his complexion of thought, but his reward, he shared with his ill-used master.

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(a) William Coward, Grand Essay (1)  
(b) " " " " "



There are plenty of indications of the influence of Hobbes upon churchmen, and that he contributed in a significant way to the stream of orthodox thought. And this it has been our intention to illustrate. Now let us return to deism. Did Hobbes contribute to this movement either directly, or through the modifications which he helped to effect in Christian outlook and opinion? Leslie Stephen argues that inevitability of the evolution of deism. The argument is that the variations in Protestantism gave rise to a rationalising spirit, an allegorical interpretation of scripture, comprehension; and these processes of thought embarked upon in all seriousness and loyalty to Christian orthodoxy, had the effect inevitably of undermining orthodoxy and led to deism, of which the logical development was free thought. It is noteworthy that this stream of thought leading outside the Christian fold was contributed to by all kinds of believers, the moderate and the extreme. The high-churchman, Hammond, wrote "The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion", and this kind of thought strongly coloured the outlook of Baxter; Burnet also writes of the revolution in Puritan belief so that many of the Republicans began to profess deism (a). The thought derives in fact from Richard Hooker, and is congenial to the exponents of the natural light, which is consistently held to be the light of reason. The theory almost amounts to a declaration that reasonableness is natural and

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(a) Burnet, History of Own Times (quoted Robertson, History of Free Thought, Vol. I, P. 619)

innate; and as theory or simple belief is traceable through a great diversity of divines and philosophers: Descartes, Culverwel, Bacon, Hooker. Even Calvin gives passing assent. This is the orthodox rationalist stream leading to deism, and Hobbes is outside it. He did not rationalise his faith; he purported to accept it dutifully as lawful and prescribed, although at many points he seemed to mould it shamelessly to meet the exigencies of his argument. The fact of revelation is an article of prescribed faith, and the mysteries of religion are not to be allegorised or treated or tempered, but swallowed whole like wholesome but distasteful pills.

There is another current of thought leading to deism, with which Hobbes appears to have closer sympathy. It is traceable through the ancestors of the Latitudinarians on one side, and bears mention of a great assortment of names: Hales and Chillingworth, Baxter again, to mention only three; and of the Latitudinarians themselves, Tillotson, Tenison, Stillingfleet, Burnet. These are the men who sought to find a common ground for all who differ. Tillotson was said by the deist, Collins, to be owned as head of all the English free-thinkers. We have seen that the Latitudinarians owed much more than they would care to own to Hobbes; but their affinity with Hobbes was of a nature different from the quality of religious speculation which led to deism. Hobbes contributed to the Latitudinarians, but not through them to deism. It would be foolish, however, to deny that the deists owed anything to Hobbes. His latent scepticism

and his obvious distaste for the seamy side of revelation, aided significantly the development of new speculation, and helped to change the climate of thought. But his influence on the movement must not be over-rated.

Deism has a far closer affinity with pantheism, the religious outlook of a philosopher like Spinoza, than with anything in the writings of Hobbes. The movement derives directly from Herbert, whose influence on Spinoza was considerable. In his *Critical History of Free-thought*, Farrar considers, in a discussion of Hobbes, that "the amount of thought contributed by him to deism was small". "The deists", he says, "more generally followed Herbert, in wishing to elevate religion to a spiritual sphere, than Hobbes who degraded it to a political expedience" (a). The deists believed in a personal God, and so did Hobbes without any equivocation, but as we have seen incongruously and without fervour. He accepted, or he claimed to accept, the prescribed faith and order of worship, and this of course necessarily carried with it belief in God. But if God there had to be for Hobbes, then as mechanist and determinist he might with more consistency have contented himself with the abstract prime mover, necessary to explain the temporal universe according to scientific theory. This side of the doctrine has already been discussed, and the incongruity and dilemma to which he was brought. God, said the deists, is proclaimed by nature. He is a necessity of nature and reason. For Hobbes he was a

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(a) A. S. Farrar, *A Critical History of Free Thought*. P. 172



necessity of science. "It is impossible to make any profound enquiry into natural causes, without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal." (a). For the deists God was a personal God because such a belief was natural to man and innate in man. Hobbes's acceptance of the personal God was formal, and, apart from official assent to accepted belief, was urged upon him by the necessity of supporting the national religion. If philosophically this was of no significance, it had nevertheless a profound social and political importance, and could be and should be utilised as a powerful reinforcement to civil discipline and peace.

While the materialist philosophy robbed the personal God of significance and even credibility,<sup>and</sup> might have drawn Hobbes open into the camp of the free-thinkers and atheists; his political instinct held him firmly to outward religious professions and also to an intellectual assent. His critics were not slow, however, to judge the implications of his materialism, as we have seen, and flung the word atheist at him in their tracts and pamphlets. There was in fact no place for the God of the deists any more than for the God of the Christians, in a great part of the system of Hobbes; in that profanely logical cosmos where accidents only are generated and destroyed, and not body, which is in fact indestructible (b). What place can this hold for the anthropomorphic creator or for that matter the prime mover? This part of the philosophical edifice seems to be satisfied

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(a) Lev. 53

(b) E. I. Ch. VIII



only by a much more modern conception of the beginnings of things. Dr. Sherlock in his "Practical Discourse of Religious Assemblies" addresses his opening section to the "Speculative Atheists" who are said to have developed the principles of their master, Mr. Hobbes, who "though he had no great opinion of religion in itself, yet thought it something considerable when it became the law of the nation" (a). Speculative atheists are distinguished from practical atheists, the deists, "men who admit the existence of God, yet never go to Church".

With much less inconsistency than can be claimed by any purely political organisation, and most religious bodies, the Church of England has stood for peace. And this persistent corporate quality as reflected by its divines, has brought it as a whole much closer to Hobbes than could possibly have been conceived by any of his outraged contemporaries. Their largest end has been the pursuit of peace, and on this ground alone the extensive correspondence between the principles of Hobbes and the creed and constitution of the church as interpreted by moderate churchmen and broad churchmen, is explained. From the Restoration to Georgian times spokesmen define the church's position in terms which seem to echo many sober utterances in Leviathan. In his Treatise on the Pope's Supremacy Isaac Barrow argues that there is no single universal church, and single ecclesiastical supremacy; and it follows that the church varies from state to state, and that in each state the secular

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(a) Sherlock, Practical Discourse of Religious Assemblies, 1681

ruler appoints and provides for the government of the church and the order of worship.

In *Irenicum*, published shortly after the Restoration, Stillingfleet maintains that the form of church government has not been clearly revealed, as it has no single foundation, but is derived from the law of nature, positive law of God, and human law. Of these the law of nature provides in a general way that there must be a society of men for the worship of God, and that worship must be seemly; the divine positive laws show the lawfulness of episcopacy, but not the necessity. Of the three the human law has the most significance as far as the duty and conduct of the individual is concerned. No form of church government has unalterable divine right, but there is for the country one lawful form and order. It is this which ought to be accepted and followed as no claim to higher sanctity and higher authority can be made for any other.

Of the broad churchmen who in the uncertain days of the Revolution pursued peace as their highest aim, Burnet stands out. He was a champion of the Revolution and an advocate of occasional conformity; and yet at a slightly earlier date he had argued the unlawfulness of resisting the king's authority. In the address to the reader of "*A Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland*", he had summed up his arguments in four points, and the first two are of considerable interest in view of his later actions. "The first", he says, "examines the opinion of resisting lawful

magistrates upon the pretence of defending religion"; and the second "considers the authority of laws, and the obedience due to them, together with the king's supremacy in matters ecclesiastical". The views here expressed are almost identical with those of Hobbes. And yet this unequivocal position was seemingly abandoned. Having fled to Holland Burnet did all he could to foster the Revolution, which meant the forcible overthrow of the lawful monarch; and in "History of my own Time" he seeks to justify the action. He pleads the doctrine of force majeure, and de facto authority. "The subject may be safe in every government, that bringeth them under a superior force" (a). We are reminded of Hobbes's provision for these circumstances. Allegiance ends when the subject no longer receives protection, and is brought under the dominion of another sovereign (b). In an anonymous pamphlet of 1691 Burnet was hotly denounced for advocating the principle of doing evil that good may come, and that "possession and strength gives a right to govern". The writer suggests that there is such a thing as wicked usurpation which cannot be justified or whitewashed; just as at the crucifixion the Jews "like wicked Ahab, took possession of the vineyard, and all by such providential principles as yours and Hobbes's" (c). The slur on Hobbes here is misguided and unjust. The theft by Ahab of Naboth's vineyard was just the

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(a) Burnet, An Enquiry into the Measures of Submission to the Supreme Authority, 1688

(b) Lev. 116

(c) Anonymous Pamphlet 1691. Providence and Precept



kind of "injustice" which the fool, who "hath said in his heart there is no justice", would argue "may ... sometimes stand with that reason, which dictateth to every man his own good".

Hobbes denounces this kind of argument as specious and false. Even a successful usurpation, because it is the kind of action which invites others to make a similar attempt against the usurper, and so tends to his destruction, is against reason, and against the law of nature (a). Looking back over history, however, it seems clear that the Revolution of 1688 was necessary to preserve peace in the church and in the realm alike.

Apart from the many individual parallels that might be cited, a strong case, already argued, can be made out for a material contribution by Hobbes to Latitudinarian thought in general. This view is supported by the motive which prompted their rationalising. They attempted a synthesis to arrest the disintegration of the church. Hobbes also deplored the religious fragmentation which he witnessed around him, and this because he saw in it a great social evil and a great political danger. It was to preserve church unity that the Latitudinarians were led to accept the role in the church of the secular authority. Hobbes would place a big religious stick in the hand of the secular sovereign; and they would call in the secular arm to uphold the prestige of a church in which the apostolic fire was burnt out, and which in the interest of peace was ready to compromise. While the church was dominated by

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(a) Lev. 75



their influence an attempt was made to compose by ~~state~~<sup>statute</sup> the religious differences in protestant England. There was the Toleration Act, the Occasional Conformity Act, and the Schism Act. By these processes of Parliament in effect, the canonical facts of defection and error were expunged by the civil legislature, and were treated as though they had never been. Nothing could be more in harmony with the most imposing of Hobbes's theological dicta.

The Occasional Conformity Act and the Schism Act were repealed in the reign of Queen Anne when Jacobites and High-churchmen had again come into favour; and it was the high-church elements who had blocked comprehension in the reign of Charles II and after the Revolution. So that a movement which was intended to promote peace in the church and in the realm, and by which a new authorised religion, duly consecrated and rendered binding by the secular seal, was to embrace episcopallians and dissenters in one community, came to nothing. Burnet refers to the "happy direction of providence" which led to the shelving of comprehension, as this would have furnished the Jacobite clergy then under suspension with the ground they needed to make a schism in the church. "They would have pretended that they still stuck to the ancient Church of England, in opposition to those who were altering it, and setting up new models" (a). Cardwell also argues, from a different standpoint from that of Burnet, that "it would have been dangerous to the safety of the

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(a) Burnet, History of Own Times, Vol. II. P. 33

church, and fatal to the cause of the Revolution, to have supplied so powerful a party (the non-jurors) with ... the plea that the national religion had been adulterated" (a). Comprehension in these circumstances would have defeated its purpose, and as Hobbes might have counselled had he lived through those times some other expedient ought to have been tried upon the initiative of the secular authority. No expedient was in fact adopted except drift, and this we may account both an evil and a benefit to the church. Laissez faire and drift in the church led first to the Wesley movement, and later to the Tractarian movement, both of which started at Oxford. These movements occasioned for the church, one a further serious loss to non-conformity after the death of Wesley, and the other an exacerbating internal war. But both served to throw into better light the true and most beneficent role of the Church of England. It was not a dynamic religious organisation inspired by the crusading spirit, and marked by evangelising zeal; it was part of the state, integrally bound up with all its institutions, so that to the state it added a certain tone. Both must grow together, and the one truly reflected the other. The church was not an irritant to provoke sudden change, but a quiet leaven.

Burnet's championship of the Revolution, and his case against the non-jurors, were founded on the fact of superior force and the principle that sovereignty is a question of fact and not of right, and that duty and allegiance are owed to the king de

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(a) E. Cardwell, A History of Conferences, published 1840 P.421

facto rather than the king de jure. Hobbes would have agreed with him, and would have maintained further that de facto power carried with it de jure prerogatives. It was perfectly natural, and perfectly in accordance with his principles, that at the proper moment he should return to England and submit to Oliver Cromwell. Had he lived through the Revolution, he would have experienced not a moment's unrest about the legality of the new sovereign's position; so that the arguments of the non-jurors would not have interested him. He owed allegiance to the sovereign whoever he might be, and superior force would certainly decide the issue. In any case an exiled monarch was in no position to give him protection. The loyalty of the non-jurors on the other hand was personal and sentimental. They clung to their oath for conscience sake. Hobbes was not interested in conscience but in the reality of power. He would probably have suspected the motive of the non-jurors and considered their scruples knavish and trifling.

The non-juring controversy raged with bitter intensity from the Revolution until deep in the Georgian era, until in fact a split in their own ranks considerably weakened their case and the country's interest in it. But their pretended succession in opposition to a schismatic Church of England was kept alive until the middle of the nineteenth century. A glance at the activities of some of the leaders is revealing as showing that in spite of a sincere personal loyalty, in fact because of this loyalty, they were a real danger to the state. Hickeys, citing



the primitive church, maintained the right to resist persecuting princes; Howell in his writings was actually seditious and suffered for it. Their zealous and courageous expressions of opinion serve to underline the dangers of an allegiance which is owed to persons rather than institutions, and to remind us that society is held together by other ties than personal fealty. Self-interest must claim a large share of influence; and long before the dispute under consideration Hobbes had maintained just this, and that the contract on which the state is founded was made between men and men and not between a man and his sovereign. The contract also had been made in the interest of the subject and to secure his protection. When protection ceased the contract must be regarded as automatically dissolved and a new one entered into.

The issue between non-jurors and churchmen accepting the new regime became identified with the antipathy and antithesis between High Church and Low Church; and consistently the High Church party advocated independence for the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and as consistently (or almost as consistently) the Low Churchmen proclaimed Erastian belief. Notice may be taken of Bishop Trinnell's Charge to his clergy in 1709 in which he condemned the independence of the church, and denounced certain High Church principles as "the power of offering sacrifice" and "the power of forgiving sins". In 1717 began the famous Bangorian controversy, with a sermon by Bishop Hoadly before George I in the Chapel Royal. Hoadly had written against the



non-jurors, and was a supporter of the Hanoverians. He opposed High Church principles and practices, but in his famous sermon he went beyond the Erastian bishops, and expressed views in fact directly opposite to the doctrine of Hobbes. He argued a separation of civil concerns and duties from religious concerns and duties, and his object was to cut the ground from the Georgian non-jurors. "In all your civil concerns the public good, the peace, the happiness of that society to which you belong, will easily and safely conduct you both to know and to do the will of God. In all your religious concerns that effect your eternal salvation, and your title to God's favour, your role is plain and evident. Christ is your sole law giver, and your sole judge as to these points" (a).

One of the effects of this dangerous doctrine tending to the abrogation of the civil authority in church matters, was the silencing of convocation for a long time. The Lower House, which had strong High Church elements, passed a resolution condemning the sermon on the ground of its anti-Erastian tendency. For this occasion dislike of Bishop Hoadly overcame their own opposition to civil control. They had an occasion to harm a member of the Upper House, and an ecclesiastical opponent, and they seized it. On the advice of the bishops the king prorogued convocation indefinitely, and this action saved the Upper House from dilemma. To go against the Lower House would

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(a) Hoadly, A Preservation against the Principles and Practices of the Non-Jurors, 1716, P. 100

have implied assent to the anti-Erastian views expressed by Hoadly; and to these the bishops were opposed.

The Bangorian affair illustrates the strength of Erastian belief; and shows in a remarkable way how uncannily Hobbes had anticipated the evolution of thought in the Church of England, dictated by the unanswerable logic of events. To assert that Christ is the only law giver in religious concerns, without stipulating that he must speak through human agents, and who these agents are, and who alone has the prerogative to give expression to the laws relating to religious concerns, and to put them into force, is the most direct denial of the sovereignty which unites within itself both church and state. This is the doctrine assented to by Richard Hooker, proclaimed by Hobbes, acknowledged by the great body of Anglican divines, and put into practice in the Established Church of England.

At this time the majority of the bishops were broad and low churchmen, as was natural since they owed their dignity to sovereigns whose titles dated from the Revolution and after. Some high churchmen with Jacobite leanings were promoted in the reign of Queen Anne, but they remained in the minority. Many of these were sympathetic to the case of the non-jurors, and Luke Milbourne in his Legacy of 1722 states their position: "I cannot with the Bishop of Bangor admire the long and extraordinary lenity of the government to them (the non-jurors): much less can I think that he (the Bishop of Bangor), though he has plundered Hobbes, and Locke, and Sydney, and the authors of the rights of the Christian church, has said anything that may

convince men of the Christian nature of Revolution principles. I am satisfied that they refused to take the oaths proposed to them out of a true principle of conscience". Among the bishops sympathising with this point of view Atterbury was a favourite of Queen Anne, a Tory and High-Churchman with Jacobite leanings, which however he managed to suppress on the accession of George I at whose coronation he officiated as Dean of Westminster. Blackall, also a Tory and High-Churchman, was created Bishop of Exeter in 1708, and Burnet wrote of him that "he seemed to condemn the Revolution and all that ~~had~~ been done pursuant to it" (a). One of the most notorious champions of what Burnet called "the other side" was Henry Sacheverell whose violent sermons against false brethren, the Erastian broad churchmen and partisans of the Revolution, and in favour of non-resistance, were preached in 1709.

The cause of the non-jurors wilted and at last died, precisely because it lacked the backing of the state. Its case was different from that of the nonconformists. The latter had become separated from communion with the Church of England on questions of church order and discipline, and some doctrinal points; they had never questioned the special position and prerogatives of the sovereign. They were not subversive; it was their custom in service to pray for the king and his government; they were law abiding; they have not been looked upon as schismatic bodies because the history of their origin suggests

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(a) Burnet, History of Own Times, Vol. VII

that it would be more accurate to call it expulsion rather than secession. Their leaders earnestly desired accommodation and this was refused. Since the Revolution they have been viewed tolerantly by the legislature and the Establishment, and latterly with respect. As protestant bodies there is a tacit understanding on all sides of their standing in relation to the state, and on many public and ceremonial occasions they are joined within the aegis of the official church. It would not be inaccurate to say that in the performance of certain of his functions the Archbishop of Canterbury acts for them.

None of this was true of the non-jurors. They did form a schism. They assumed the status of a rival apostolic episcopal body, and were widely regarded as such. They challenged the state, and challenged the main body of the Church of England which was incorporated in the state. They had much on their side: zeal, devotion, disregard of worldly ends, intense personal loyalty, integrity of motive. And on the other side,

there was much in the role of the Revolution and Georgian church involving acceptance of authority and subservience, which if in the long run it promoted the benefit of church and state, and the essential cause of religion, provided ground if not justification for the later recriminations and sneers of Tractarians. And yet the non-jurors failed, split into factions, and clinging pathetically to their claims and pretensions at length sank into insignificance. And, let it be repeated, this was only because the state was not behind them. The Roman Catholic



Church in England had, and still has, behind it many states, or parts of many states, to say nothing of the papacy; the nonconformists had earned the goodwill and benediction of the state. But from the beginning the non-jurors were in the wilderness; from the beginning their cause was hopeless. In England there could be only one episcopal church styling itself the Church of England; this was the church having the official acknowledgement and sanction of the sovereign legislative authority.

Such a statement reads almost like a truism, and the reason for this is of course that the Erastian principle is taken for granted in England, if not to the extremity to which it is pushed in Leviathan, a long way in the direction of the extreme. The notion of a Church of England separated from the state has no place in our conceptions, because the church after separation would not be thought of as the Church of England, but some other community. May it not be stated as a simple empirical truth that many centuries of history have invested the name "Church of England" with a connotation which precludes the thought of separation or disestablishment. The non-jurors made a great psychological miscalculation when they insisted on regarding themselves, rather than the Erastian bishops and their subordinates in the hierarchy, as forming the true Church of England. Union with the state is the crux. Disunion and separation mean dissolution. It is an interesting commentary on the waning fortunes of the non-jurors that according to

Southey many of them attached themselves at length to the Methodist movement, and in this sturdy current were brought back into useful religious function. That they should take this course is perhaps a little surprising in view of Wesley's well known refusal to separate himself from the parent church which acknowledged a Hanoverian king as its supreme governor. The desertion by the non-jurors of a lost cause is, however, perfectly natural.

It has been noted that non-juring sentiments were to a large extent incorporated in the outlook and programme of the High Church party; and at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was an important recrudescence of these sentiments. Walter Lock records in his biography of John Keble that "the traditions of the family were cavalier and non-juring", and quotes from a letter by Keble to Pusey, "I cannot think that the non-juror's position was so very bad or useless a one. I seem to trace our present life in good measure to it" (a). Stemming from this theological source, his enthusiasm and energy were concentrated in opposition to the theory and practice of secular authority extending to control the ecclesiastical body. Writing of the Irish Church Bill by which certain bishoprics in Ireland, deemed redundant, were suppressed by Parliament, he says: "to the mass of bishops and clergy it seemed an act of spoliation. The grievance was that bishoprics may be suppressed to any extent by the sovereign at the request of a body of laymen, any number

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(a) Walter Lock, Keble, P. 4

of whom may be heretics, contrary to the express protest of the episcopal body" (a). Newman points to this as the compelling motive for Froude's participation in the Tractarian assault upon liberalism in the church. "According to Froude Erastianism - that is the union (so he viewed it) of church and state - was the parent, or if not the parent, the servicesble and sufficient tool, of liberalism. Till that union was snapped, Christian doctrine never could be safe" (b). In his Remains Hurrell Froude recapitulated in great detail the history of the contest between Thomas Becket and Henry II, from the standpoint of one commending without reserve the martyred Archbishop, and condemning the king. For the Tractarians as a whole the weakness of the Established Church was in her subordination to the state; and this so degraded her standing in their eyes that even as a young clergyman Newman could feel no tenderness for his church. "I felt dismay at her prospects, anger and scorn at her do-nothing perplexity. I thought that if liberalism once got a footing within her it was sure of the victory in the event" (c).

To its successors, the Oxford Movement has bequeathed a bitter opposition to state sovereignty and state control. It is seen, for example, in the outraged writings, which continued late in the century (especially after the Purchas and Ridsdale suits), against the appointment of a secular court, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, to hear ecclesiastical

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(a) Walter Lock, Keble, P. 78  
(b) Newman, Apologia, Part IV  
(c) " " Part III

appeals; and it is seen in the incongruous regard for the Presbyterian Church of Scotland which has always defended its independence of the state. Extremists of the movement may justly be charged with having reduced religious controversy to an unhealthy level of narrowness and bigotry.

The Church of England has resisted all changes and inroads clamorously demanded by extremists. It is, for instance, no nearer disestablishment than it was in the days of Archbishop Tillotson, in fact it is more firmly established than then; as the parent non-jurors were, man for man, of a nobler calibre and more widely respected than the Victorian High Anglicans; and the non-jurors might have tipped the scale. In fact the church remains the Church of England, with the character and calling which this ancient title connotes; just as Hobbes said that it should if it was to perform a truly useful if subordinating function in the state. The church is to guard the morals of the community; to quicken understanding and sensibility in the interest of good behaviour, friendly intercourse, and social peace; to remind its congregations perpetually of those Christian standards which are enshrined in the beauty of its liturgy, and in the holy text which is authorized and commanded to read in churches.

When he was a young clergyman, the historian, W.F. Hook, preached a sermon before the Bishop of Winchester. The year was 1828, and ten years were to elapse before the famous Assize Sermon of Keble started the Oxford Movement. Hook dealt with



the Union of Church and State, and anticipated and rebuked the revolutionary spirit which was to be evinced by Keble and Newman and Froude. "The zeal of innovation", he says, "is no less a distemper of the mind, than the bigotry which blinds us to existing errors. Truth is never found in extremes." The case for union is founded on the vital interest of the state; and there must be the strongest doubt whether the state (not the church) could "sustain and survive a separation from an ally (the church) so interwoven and bound up with all her institutions" (a). He has emphasised, without consciousness of doing so, exactly the crucial element in Hobbes's Erastianism. It is altogether in the interest of the state, and for the security of the state, that Hobbes insists on ecclesiastical and civil union. Separation and autonomy spell weakness and civil wars; he saw it approaching with remarkable clarity, and then lived through it. No church, least of all the Church of England, no religious body calling itself a church, must lift itself up in pride and demand independence. Christian leaders, on the contrary, in all submission, must accept a humbler role, and the state would benefit, the state would prosper, the state would be secure. Sovereignty is, and must be recognised as, one and indivisible; and although immediately authority is either bestowed by the governed or forcibly imposed upon them, and rulers enjoy their prerogatives because of the coercive power that has come into their hands, and because of the consequent

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(a) W. F. Hook, Sermon before Bishop of Winchester 1822

submission of their subjects; none the less it is a universal truth that sovereign powers, of whatever complexion, are ordained by God. This is the true and essential burden of Leviathan; there is also about it an authentic apostolic ring.

We may now briefly consider Hobbes's view of the status of the church in the light of his ethical doctrine. It is a commonplace that in ethics he was a hedonist, but this description must be understood in a special sense. Certain aspects of his morality have already been discussed, and now we may proceed to relate this, not only to his most important contribution to the theory of ecclesiastical polity, but also to later developments in ethical thought.

Moralists as a whole may be divided roughly into two classes: the intuitionists and the utilitarians. The intuitionists are those whose doctrine of morality is based on opinions as to the intrinsic nature and value of actions, and who hold that the aim of human existence is to live virtuously. This was the view of the cynics and stoics; it was also the view suggested by many criticisms of Hobbes, for example by those of Bramhall and Eschard and Oudworth. The utilitarians on the other hand base their judgment of an action upon its result or effect. Does the action produce pleasure or pain? happiness or misery? Socrates, as far as records go, was the first of the utilitarians, and so to a modified extent was Plato. Later there were the Epicureans. All of these considered ethics from the point of view of the individual.

In the seventeenth century Hobbes propounded a system of utilitarian morality, but with a difference, of which we shall remind ourselves in a moment.

It is probable that the systems of morality set forth by opposing schools, by intuitionists and utilitarians, would have very wide areas of agreement. The intuitionist would hold many kinds of acts and types of behaviour to be good things in themselves, which the enlightened utilitarian would also call good as tending on a long view to increase human happiness. The utilitarian might argue that the intuitionist's virtues owe their quality of being virtuous or good to the fact that they are socially beneficial or advantageous which in the long run is for the good of everybody, though they may not appear to be to the immediate advantage of the individual. There may be a small range of ascetic virtues acknowledged by the intuitionist which apparently are neither to the advantage of the individual nor to that of the community; but on the whole the two systems of ethics would be very close. The antithesis between the opposing schools is not in a difference of opinion about what kinds of action constitute virtuous behaviour, but in their analysis of motive and their definitions of moral terms like "good" and "virtuous". Now let us return to Hobbes. It has been observed that he was a utilitarian in a special sense. He stressed consistently the social bearing of morality. He was not the first but he was one of the most forceful exponents of universal hedonism, or utilitarianism, and modern thought of

this kind is derived to a considerable extent from him. He was fiercely denounced for the selfish nature of his morality, but we have seen that these criticisms were largely misplaced, as leaving out of consideration his account of rational good.

In holding that the moral code is public and universally obligatory, and not private, Hobbes was much closer to his critics than has been generally thought. Remote or rational good, which should be the aim of everybody, depends for its definition and enforcement upon the wish and desire of the legislator, or the state. On a final analysis there is a close relation between morality and law. It must be emphasised, however, that Hobbes held consistently to the fundamentally hedonistic character of his morality. When we behave morally the ultimate end we pursue is the satisfaction of our own desires which means happiness. This end Hobbes holds to be perfectly legitimate. He is in fact not able to conceive of anybody having a different motive. The surrender of immediate good in the interest of remoter good is a policy of practical self-interest. It is only because of the inevitability of conflict of interests, and natural blindness to true interest, that regularisation and powerful sanctions are necessary. And this is where religion enters the picture.

Religion, according to Hobbes, is a means and not an end. As a rule of belief and a rule of conduct the function of religion is to guard the morals of the community. The end of religion, a theologian would probably say, is to promote godliness, and he would mean by this term either good and virtuous behaviour, or a certain outlook and quality of mind which shows



itself in good and virtuous behaviour. Hobbes would agree substantially, although he might not express himself in the same terms. Religion, in other words, tends to promote the kind of behaviour which brings with it national good. It is thus a most powerful reinforcement to the work and intention of the legislator; a sanction of the highest prestige. Viewing religion as a means, it is natural that Hobbes should preserve it intact, and make use of it. It would, indeed, have been most surprising if he had rejected it. Apart from the fact that free-thinkers and atheists were still subject to brutal penalties there is, as we have argued, no reason to suppose that Hobbes was insincere in his professions of religious belief, though these did not have for him the same significance as for many other people.

Although it was perfectly natural that Hobbes should bring in religion as a support to the sovereign's prerogatives and an aid to promote the grand design of peace, it was also natural that he should insist on the strictest control. He had before him the most irrefutable evidence of the tendency of religion uncontrolled to produce the very end it was intended to frustrate to bring not peace but a sword. Uncontrolled religion, the exaltation of private conscience, the claim to private interpretation, the boast of private inspiration, led to fragmentary chaos, civil war. The instinct for religion was so powerful and wayward a sentiment that it must be precisely and strictly provided for and regularised by the state. Controlled in this

way it would be able to fulfil its proper function of uplifting morals and promoting harmony.

Subsequent utilitarians took a rather different view of religion, and tended to discard or disregard religion as irrelevant in their treatment of ethics which they held to be a social science. And further the means to the end they considered desirable, the greatest good to the greatest number, presented no great problem; as they held moral behaviour to be natural to men and to meet with general approval. The human species, according to them, was endowed with a large degree of altruism. Hume may be regarded as the founder of the school of later utilitarians. According to Hume moral conduct is that which is generally approved; and it is approved because it is socially beneficial. "Virtue is considered as means to an end. Means to an end are only valued so far as the end is valued. But the happiness of strangers affects us by sympathy alone. To that principle, therefore, we are to ascribe the sentiment of approbation, which arises from the *Survey* of all those virtues that are useful to society ..." (a). There is in mankind a strong incentive and disposition to moral, i.e. social, behaviour, without the aid of external sanctions, and without in particular the aid of religion. As we know, Hobbes did not regard altruism, by which term is understood a principle of unselfish benevolence, to have any part in the development of human societies.

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(a) David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. III, Part III, Sec. VI

We have observed that Hobbes did not desert his fundamental egoism. Later utilitarians, on the other hand, from the starting point of general approval rather than personal self-interest, reached a position very close to that of the intuitionists. According to Hobbes moral behaviour is behaviour which promotes the benefit of society, or is not harmful to society, and so in the long run benefits the individual. It is behaviour also which may often involve immediate self-denial. But to defer immediate good in the interest of remoter good is against nature, even though private self interest is best served in that way. Nobody can be expected to act unnaturally, so that there is the necessity for enforcement by the highest authority and with the aid of the highest sanctions. Later utilitarians would say that we do good to increase the happiness of society; and there is no mention of personal benefit or reward, but rather the assumption of a universal duty to act in the interest of the majority. Civil laws simply give expression to this duty. It may be asked, why do we owe such a duty? and the only answer can be that to act in the interest of the majority is a good thing in itself, and is a desirable motive for existence. We have seen that Hobbes did regard certain classes of conduct, called virtuous behaviour, to be eternally and changelessly good; but this was because such behaviour alone was calculated to promote self-interest by conducing to peace. This standpoint is quite different from that, for instance, of J.S. Mill.

Later utilitarians diverged widely from their earliest ancestor, Hobbes, and the point of departure was the same as that which from ancient times has marked the division between intuitionists and utilitarians. Disagreement was over the analysis of motive and the definition of good. Our basic motive according to Hobbes is egoistic; later utilitarians arrived at a belief in altruism.

We have attempted to show ~~clearly~~ that the ethical teaching of Hobbes and his views on ecclesiastical polity do harmonise and support each other, although on the face of it there may appear to be incompatibility between them. Beyond this there seems to be the possibility only of artificial reconciliation between the ethics and the Protestantism on the one side, and the materialism on the other. The materialism as it is expounded implies the doctrine of necessity and the doctrine of second causes, which are shown to embrace "mental processes" (thought and feeling) by the rather crude explanation of the operation of the passions. All those non-material accompaniments or co-relates of certain bodily activities, which are indisputably part of "mental processes", are written off by Hobbes as phantasms, or "idols of the brain". It is implied that life would go on just as usual without phantasms, and in particular there would be foresight of evil consequences, and foresight of good to follow, to induce men to moral behaviour. Appraisal of possibilities, anticipation, discrimination, which are all admitted by the ethics as possibilities of the human mind, are



to be explained in materialist terms. Hobbes was not the first thorough going materialist, and of course it has to be admitted that as an explanation of life materialism is one of the possibilities. It must be admitted also that all other explanations that have been put forward by philosophers raise their own special difficulties. But it may be submitted with reserve that materialism is not one of the easiest explanations to accept. Its clean-sweeping economy, like Occam's razor, purports to demolish complexity rather than to explain it. Complexity obstinately survives. It may be submitted also that Hobbes's doctrine of the state and the church, cannot be reconciled convincingly with the materialism.

As a philosopher Hobbes was both theoretical and practical and liaison between the two sides was imperfect. I would suggest that the most important part of his philosophy is that which was inspired by a desire to achieve certain ends; and theory on the whole is subordinated to this desire. The recommendations of the political philosopher, the challenging views on religion, both suggest I think that implicit in much of the thinking of Hobbes is the belief that the consequences of opinions are at least as important as their truth. This is certainly true of his Erastianism. In Chapter XLII of Leviathan which has the title "Of Power Ecclesiastical", his design is to show that the popes as leaders of the church, and their successors, had, and have, no coercive power; and that any claim by religious leaders, as for example by the pope, to have

paramount authority in their sphere independent of the civil sovereign, is vain. We shall see as we read, we know even before we have embarked on the chapter, that the Erastian principle will emerge unimpaired. In all the marshalling of scripture there is not a suggestion of any valid contrary evidence from this source, or any valid contrary interpretation of passages cited. By contrast there is a positive suggestion that texts and interpretations in opposition to the point of view which is asserted, are obscure or contraverted; there is also a categorical claim to allege no texts "but in such sense as is most plain and agreeable to the harmony and scope of the whole Bible. But in fact the opinion is almost forced on us as we read that Hobbes was not really interested in an interpretation of passages from the Bible which was sound in the ordinary sense of being in agreement with what must have been the intention of the author and in harmony with other scripture; but in a quite different sense of being desirable, or needful, or expedient.

In the course of his argument in this chapter Hobbes presents us with a somewhat specious exposition of trinity in unity, the deep mystery of the Godhead; and upon examination the exposition can be recognised as supporting and contributing to the main argument. It was not part of his plan to deny such a doctrine as the trinity, as we have remarked, little as he may have been inclined privately to give it serious consideration; but if the doctrine was to be allowed to stand it must either remain in isolation as a mystery of faith, or it must, as it

were, work its passage. In Chapter XLII the doctrine or conce of trinity, with its peculiar prestige of associations and antiquity, is requisitioned for useful auxiliary work after appropriate modification and grooming. Its employment is to forward the argument against division of authority, although it must have been thought to carry some weight in the opposite direction; and while it is so employed it seems not unnatural to change its meaning and character almost completely. More honest, we are bound to say, is Hobbes's treatment of the doctrine in Chapter XXIX of Leviathan, where it is acknowledged and then left in cold if splendid isolation. "In the kingdom of God there may be three persons independent without breach of unity in God that reigneth; but where men reign, that be subject to diversity of opinions, it cannot be so" (a). It is here almost admitted that the three persons of the Godhead might be claimed as the highest precedent for divided authority. But whatever is the state of affairs in heaven where there is no "diversity of opinions", on earth there cannot be division of authority. For Hobbes no further discussion or argument is possible to counter or offset the conviction that the facts of the case render division of authority on earth practically objectionable if internal peace is to be preserved. In these circumstances the less said the better about an orthodox Christian doctrine which might be interpreted as giving divine sanction to the concept of divided authority, and which on this

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(a) Lev. 176

account (to say nothing of its oddity) would be obnoxious were it not for its privileged orthodox status.

Tacit acceptance of the principle that the consequence of opinion is as important as its truth, is clearly evident in the doctrine of good and bad. In this doctrine the acceptance without argument of the concept that moral values owe their validity and their title to be observed, not to any intrinsic quality they possess, but to the kind of effects they are likely to produce, is in harmony with the principle of pragmatism, which amounts to an acceptance of practical value as a criterion of truth. It would seem on the face of it a heresy indeed to impute such a principle to Hobbes, the geometer. While the pragmatist has in view possible modifications in belief, which are true so long as they meet his elastic criterion, Hobbes's declared aim was to reduce the study of human nature to a science as precise and infallible as geometry. Hobbes, moreover, officially disparaged belief as he disparaged experience. Both are uncertain and not to be compared with science, which is alone concerned with truth. But for all this Hobbes goes a long way, in much of his writing, in the direction of pragmatism; and his younger contemporary, the continental geometer, Spinoza, loans the same way. Why does Hobbes keep a place for religion in the state? we may ask. The answer is perhaps provided for us by Spinoza in his *Tractatus Politicus*. "The commonwealth, then, to maintain its independence is bound



to preserve the causes of fear and reverence, otherwise it ceases to be a commonwealth" (a). Value to the individual, Spinoza argued, is sufficient ground for tolerating all kinds of religious opinions, however contradictory and false (b). Hobbes rejected toleration, at any rate so long as the statutes of Uniformity were operative, but it was on the ground that to support toleration in England was to support discord. This is a practical ground. And in fact while Hobbes, the practical philosopher, is putting his recommendations before us, it is no hard to find positive affirmations of the pragmatic principle we have referred to above. "For doctrine repugnant to peace", he writes in Leviathan, "can no more be true than peace and concord can be against the law of nature" (c).

That the principle of pragmatism and the concept of value underlying utilitarian ethics are much in harmony seems clear; the pragmatic element in the ecclesiastical polity, if we examine many of the arguments and the manner of the exegesis, also seems clear enough. In these two spheres, let us repeat, we are in contact with Hobbes, the practical philosopher. There is also, as we have said, the theorist, who strikes some discordant notes. He accepts a mechanistic view of the universe, and assumes that the method of geometry is the perfect method of science. He enunciates certain metaphysical "truths" about the nature of reality, which are thoroughly materialist

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{a) T. P. 311  
{c)

(b) T. T. P. 181

determinist. He provides also the pattern of the remaining discourse, polemical, political, and religious. The framework is important, but although the practical doctrine is pressed sometimes rather clumsily into the mould, it has a source of inspiration and a direction quite other than the rationalist theory.

The practical philosophy of Hobbes has had a mixed receipt and it is natural that it should. For one thing there has been the hampering incongruity of doctrine which is essentially empirical in spirit being submitted to the form of an artificial and unconvincing rationalism. And then again, although the pragmatism implicit in utilitarian ethics (of the Hobbesian sort) might be fairly widely acceptable, there is the serious difficulty that a theory which may be interpreted as suggesting even tacitly and tentatively, that use and effect in the community is a valid criterion of the acceptability and even truth of religious opinions, is bound to receive little support and much criticism; and this, not because there is anything intrinsically wrong with the theory, but because of traditional habits of thought.

It is certainly arguable that if religion is to remain an influence for good it <sup>must</sup> ~~might~~ be brought up to date. There should be a redefinition and a restatement of creeds in terms that would be most widely acceptable; for if any religion is to be an effective sanction, it must be in command of general agreement.

and assent. In these circumstances some authority must prescribe and who more fitting than the state under the guidance of experts. For the last opinion, of course, we have the recommendation of Hobbes; but we must not go beyond his teaching. He gives no ground to suppose that he considered any possibility of modifications to accepted Christian doctrine, much as he claimed latitude for himself in interpretation; and he held that Christianity (largely as accepted in the seventeenth century) had been revealed by God and was therefore the true religion. In that sense it was as immutable as the moral law.

On the other hand Hobbes's appraisal of the recorded revelation, the Bible, and his assessment of contemporary political exigencies led to certain conclusions. First, although the transcendental authenticity of that part of Christianity which is above reason (though not against reason) could not be questioned, the uninstructed had better not dabble in these matters but accept an authorized statement and interpretation. The reasonableness of this conclusion is more evident when we consider that the prescribed interpretation is one to be settled by experts under authority. Secondly, the revealed laws of God, so far as human intelligences can understand them, do in fact meet the criterion of promoting the benefit of the commonwealth. In other words, the positive laws of God, did we know it, have an end which is the same as that served by the practical principle enunciated in the first conclusion. That Hobbes had reached this second conclusion seems to be proved by

the interpretations which he himself places on certain passages of scripture, interpretations which give support, direct or implied, to Erastianism. If it is objected that his interpretations are insincere and that he is perverting scripture to his own use, the conclusion must be amended to a statement that for Hobbes the true religion is one which serves the end of the state. In other words that the truth of religion must be defined in terms of its utility. In Behemoth there is a passage in which A is represented as contending that the translation of the Bible in the mother tongue ought to be read by everybody, as many parts are easy to be understood and morally profitable. Against this it is argued that although some commandments of God can be understood by anybody, the ordinary men cannot see that they are framed for the benefit of the commonwealth. "Everyman by nature, without discipline, does in all his actions look upon, as far as he can see, the benefits that shall redound to himself for his obedience. He reads that covetousness is the root of all evil, but he thinks, and sometimes finds, it is the root of his estate" (a). Without discipline, therefore, men are not able either to understand the true import of God's laws, or to carry them out. The motive of God as he made his laws was, in fact, identical with that of Hobbes as he wrote Leviathan.

Thirdly, although the fact that Christianity is a God-revealed religion places it in a category by itself, the duty laid upon all inhabitants of Christian countries to accept the

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(a) E. VI. 231



sacraments and obey the precepts of Christianity so far as they concern outward action, rests solely on the fact that it is the religion authorised by law. And furthermore, the inhabitants of non-Christian countries are under a similar obligation to conform outwardly to the rules of their national religion. "I ~~have~~<sup>like</sup> not", says Hobbes, again in Behemoth, "the design of drawing religion into an art, whereas it ought to be a law; and though not the same in all countries, yet in every country indisputably (a).

These conclusions, dictated by the needs of state in the light of which scripture was interpreted, strongly suggest that the true religion, Christianity, has been revealed by God as an instrument of peace and a reinforcement to civil law; that incidentally all other religions also serve this purpose; and that Almighty God is on the side of lawful government if not of the big battalions. A conclusion to be drawn from this is that religion, as correctly understood, like morality, serves a practical and utilitarian end.

To conclude, the function of religion is to be a sanction to induce obedience; and although it comes from God, the authority by which a citizen is obliged to give outward assent is the law. The use of religion is to promote obedience to the law, and it is itself prescribed by law. The circularity of this reasoning is less vicious when we remember, first that the law is a law which binds in the conscience as well as a law which

makes rules for outward behaviour, and second that the religion prescribed by law is admitted to have had prior and a priori validity. There is no express provision in Hobbes, as we have said, for modification and adaptation of religion according to the consensus of enlightened opinion, so as to avoid an inevitable drift from archaic forms and beliefs and the blunting of a wholesome sanction. On the other hand, modifications and adaptations may very well be demanded by a logical extension of his practical philosophy; and he does place religion as a powerful weapon unreservedly at the disposal of the state. Though he does not expressly apply to this means the only worthwhile criterion, its effectiveness; he does see that religion properly is means to an end, and not an end in itself.

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