NEW WINE IN OLD WINESKINS: HOBBES’S USE AND ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS RHETORIC

Nicholas J. Higgins

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2014

APPROVED:

Steven Forde, Major Professor
Richard Ruderman, Committee Member
Elizabeth Oldmixon, Committee Member and Graduate Advisor
Martin Yaffe, Committee Member
J. Michael Greig, Chair of the Department of Political Science
Mark Wardell, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate School
Thomas Hobbes’s knowledge of religious doctrine, typology, and use religious rhetoric in his writings is often glossed over in an over-eager attempt to establish his preeminence as a founder of modern political theory and the social contract tradition. Such action, however is an injustice to Hobbes himself, who recognized that in order to establish a new, and arguably radical, political position founded upon reason and nominalist materialism he had to reform people’s understanding of religious revelation, and Christianity specifically. Rather than merely move to a new epistemological foundation, Hobbes was aware that the only way to ensure religion does become a phoenix was to examine and undermine the foundations of religious thought in its own terms. This reformation of religious language, critique of Christianity, and attempt to eliminate man’s belief in their obligation to God was done in order to promote a civil society in which religion was servant of the state. Through reforming religious language, Hobbes was able to demote religion as a worldview; removing man’s fear of the afterlife or obligation to obey God over a civil sovereign. Religious doctrine no longer was in competition with the civil state, but is transformed into a tool of the state, one which philosophically founds the modern arguments for religious toleration.
Copyright 2014

By

Nicholas J. Higgins
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The very act of writing an acknowledgements note has inevitable perils. The summation of years of research below began well before my graduate career. To this end, it is impossible to acknowledge everyone, and therein lies the peril: forgetting. I will always appreciate all who have played a role in my intellectual development, even if left unnamed.

I would first like to thank my committee: Drs. Forde, Ruderman, Oldmixon and Yaffe. This work is not without its challenges and false starts. Dr. Steven Forde’s patient guidance helped direct me down clearer paths. Additional gratitude to the “brain trust” of Ben Gross and Jeremy Backstrom; as well as Angie Nichols, John Pascarella, and all others who were subjected to my occasional wrestling matches with Hobbes.

I would like to thank my parents; James, for his assistance in editing and posing questions about my arguments. To this day I can only hope I reach the level of Godliness, grace, and intelligence he possesses. Terri, whose constant prayers are finally answered, or at least this stage of them. I would like to also thank her for her assistance with the bibliography.

Finally, but certainly the one who bears the most praise, is my wife Anita. Her constant support, both physically and emotionally are truly the only way I survived this process. The process of writing this dissertation was concurrent with a few surprises, namely the arrival of children; AnnaMae, Mary Katherine, and James. Without a doubt, the greatest joy of this process has been the addition of my children, and while there were many sleepless nights and tired days which may have slowed down the progress a bit, my wife’s hard work and sacrifice continued to let me pursue my studies and this dissertation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2  RHETORICAL REFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Westminster Confession</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Style of Religious Writing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Scripture (as a Way to Doubt Authority)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Reason over Revelation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 All Revelation is Mediated by Man</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 Why Scripture Ought to be Believed</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Hell (As a Reason to Compete)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 God (To Advance Science)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1 Corporal</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Miracles</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Kingdom of God</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3  NUMERIC SYMBOLISM AND THE CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Literary Use of Numeric Symbolism</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Three and the Trinity</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Tripartite Division of the “Train of Thoughts”</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Seven and Perfection ....................................................................................................... 86
  3.4.1 Make Christianity an Opinion ........................................................................... 88
  3.4.2 Knowledge Through Science ............................................................................ 94
3.5 The Meaning of Twelve and Political Order ............................................................ 97
  3.5.1 Ignorant and Rational Fear ............................................................................. 101
  3.5.2 Seeds of Religion ............................................................................................ 104
  3.5.3 The Use (and Abuse) of Religion .................................................................... 114
3.6 Forty and New Birth after Trial ...................................................................................... 116
  3.6.1 Executive Lessons of Abraham ....................................................................... 122
3.7 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 125

CHAPTER 4 UNDERMINING OBLIGATIONS TO GOD ................................................................. 126
4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 126
4.2 Mimicking the Imagery of Creation ............................................................................... 128
4.3 Removing Man’s Obligation to God Through the ‘Time to Come’, ‘Grace’, and ‘Faith’ 133
  4.3.1 Non-Obligation of Future Words and Grace .................................................. 136
  4.3.2 Undermining Obligation of Faith ................................................................. 149
4.4 The Use and Abuse of the Theo-Political Idea of Covenant .......................................... 155
  4.4.1 The Theological Root of Covenant ................................................................. 156
  4.4.2 Alterations to Covenant Idea ......................................................................... 161
  4.4.3 Hobbes’s Theo-Political use of Covenant ....................................................... 164
4.5 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 166

CHAPTER 5 PRIVATE TOLERATION, PUBLIC INTOLERANCE..................................................... 168
5.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 168

5.2 Internal Privatized Conscience ...................................................................................... 172
   5.2.1 Conscience as Opinion .................................................................................... 173
   5.2.2 Private vs Public Application of Conscience ................................................... 175

5.3 External Limits of Conscience ........................................................................................ 178
   5.3.1 Disassociating Action from Belief .................................................................. 179
   5.3.2 Individual Public Intolerance ......................................................................... 184

5.4 Equality of All Religion and epistemological skepticism ............................................... 192

5.5 Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 203

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................ 205
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hobbes was arguably the most vocal of proponents of modern political philosophy, establishing within his work an understanding of civil polity based upon geometric exactitude and scientific precision. Yet, the dominant focus of Hobbesian scholarship has examined only half the story, often completely ignoring Hobbes’s vociferous discussion of religion and even the subtitle of his most famous work, *Leviathan: the Matter, form and power of a commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. The study of Hobbes’s political ideals absent his religious understanding is erroneous, particularly when examining him through the order of his writing, placing the discussion of religion prior (and immediately so) to his fundamental discussion of the state of war and the establishment of civil society (XII and XIII; Stauffer 2010).

In light of this, it must be recognized that the role of religion was not a mere afterthought by Hobbes, but rather a central component of his overall endeavor. Scholars, over the past thirty years, have begun to see the inextricable link between Hobbes’ religious teachings and his political theory (see Warrander 1957; Taylor 1965; Brown 1962; Hood 1964; Martinich 1992; Curley 1988; 1993; Glover 1965; Halliday and Reeve 1983; Lloyd 1992; Foisneau and Wright 2004; Strauss 1996; Strauss 2011; Pacchi 1983. Cooke 1996, Collins 2005, Mitchell 1991) particularly to diminish religious superstition which may threaten a peaceful civil society (Stauffer 2011, McClure 2011, Beiner 1993, Tuck 1991).

Perhaps the most debated issue amongst scholars of Hobbes’s religious writings is with regards to Hobbes’s own religious belief, whether it was Orthodox (Martinich 1992), atheistic (Strauss 1996; 2011, Curley 1988, Cooke 1996), some Christian heresy (Geach 1981) or just a
general theism (Warrender 1957; Taylor 1965, Hood 1964). Much of the discussion of the intersection of Hobbesian religious and political thought is grounded upon this vigorous scholarly debate. While we may never truly know Hobbes’s personal religious beliefs, particularly given Hobbes’s emphasis on the internal and invisible nature of private belief (XLIII.23), this debate has indicated the high level of importance, as well as the complexity of Hobbes’s religious rhetoric.

One may wonder why Hobbes would write on religious topics in a manner that opened his work to such a wide variety of interpretations. Hobbes’s published writing was constructed within certain societal constraints (Miller 1999), particularly the religious norms of 17th century English society (Rivers 2000). Hobbes, like many free thinkers of his time, was “constrained to adopt certain rhetorical tactics because of the threat they were under” (Rivers 2000, 32). These constraints seem to have caused Hobbes to write with an esoteric (Strauss 1988b) and ironic (Curley 1996) style. Hobbes’s use of religious rhetoric throughout his writing has led one scholar to reverse a famous warning of Jesus and argue that Hobbes’s religious presentation was designed “to pour the old wine of biblical Christianity into the new skins of scientific theory” (Martinich 1992, 7; see Mark 2:22).

Martinich’s alteration to the biblical passage appears intentional, and conforms to his overall argument that Hobbes is Orthodox, since Martinich equates the old (Christianity) with wine, and the new (scientific interpretation) with wineskins. Such reading however, destroys the warning of the biblical text. The natural consequence of old wine in new wineskins would not lead to the destruction of the vessel, rather at most it would only deceive people into drinking the old, and arguably better, wine. Martinich, and most other Hobbesian scholars fail
to recognize the radical reformational nature of Hobbes religious project: the apparent overt adherence to religious teachings while subtly redefining foundational religious doctrine and concepts in such a way to bring about a slow atrophy and eventual rendering of the political influence of Christianity inert. Hobbes was not trying to convince people who adhere to modern scientific theory to drink the old wine of Biblical orthodoxy; rather, Hobbes’s goal was consistent with the actual biblical text: trying to convince people who drink from the old wineskin of Christianity to accept the new wine of modern scientific materialism. Hobbes, however, recognized that this new teaching of scientific materialism was inherently inconsistent with Biblical orthodoxy and would “burst” or destroy those beliefs.

Hobbes recognized the serious challenge that religion generally, and Christianity specifically, offered to a political philosophy founded upon materialism. As Hobbes notes:

THE maintenance of civil society depending on justice, and justice on the power of life and death, and other less rewards and punishments residing in them that have the sovereignty of the Commonwealth; it is impossible a Commonwealth should stand where any other than the sovereign hath a power of giving greater rewards than life, and of inflicting greater punishments than death. Now seeing eternal life is a greater reward than the life present, and eternal torment a greater punishment than the death of nature, it is a thing worthy to be well considered. (XVIII.1)

Rather than merely rejecting, or ignoring religion, Hobbes knew he had to address the philosophic worldview offered through Christian revelation if his plan to offer a new foundation would stand. Further, Hobbes was aware that merely casting stones from a different foundation would not, fully, show a reason to reject Christianity and the doctrine of revelation; rather Hobbes had to take Christian doctrine on its own terms and show its own internal inconsistencies (Burns 2011, 824). This premise explains why Hobbes’s examination of Christian doctrine appeared similar to the Protestant doctrine Sola Scripture (Brandon 2002; Brandon
While offering a skeptical view of who the authors of the Bible were (XXXIII.4-8) and denying the principle of divine inspiration (XLV.25), What Hobbes offers is an interpretation of Christianity in its own terms that would, though maybe not for a few centuries, burst the worldview and render it powerless.

Hobbes offers a prescient warning on interpretations of biblical texts, noting, “it is not the bare Words, but the Scope of the writer that giveth the true light, by which any writer is to be interpreted” (XLIII.24). In light of this, Hobbes’ religious rhetoric must be interpreted not merely as an alteration of Christian principles, but as a use and, as Christians may argue, abuse of religious words and concepts, in order to establish a civil peace (XLVII.29).

This dissertation is devoted to analyzing Hobbes’s use and alteration of religious rhetoric and its effect upon the modern political order. Chapter 2 examines Hobbes’s understanding of the key religious concepts of divine revelation, hell, God, miracles, and the Kingdom of God. Through examining Hobbes’s meaning of these religious terms, and comparing the understanding of 17th century English Protestantism as exemplified in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it becomes clear that Hobbes is changing and undermining these terms. Hobbes does this in order to support reason as guide to materialism as the metaphysical foundation for modern science.

Chapter 3 examines Hobbes’s use of numeric symbolism in order to critique Christian themes. By examining Hobbes’s writing in the chapters related to the major symbolic numbers of Christianity, namely, three for the Trinity, seven for perfection, twelve for ruling, and forty for completion, one can further see ways in which Hobbes is seeking to undermine Christian belief.
Chapter 4 examines Hobbes’s specific use of religious language, specifically grace, faith, future words, and covenant in his explanation of the nature and origins of obligation. Through an analysis of Hobbes’s different forms of obligation, and particularly in noting which ones are false, it becomes evident that Hobbes is offering an interpretation of obligation that not only seeks to undermine man’s obligation to God, but also seeks to use aspects of Christian understanding to support his political teachings.

Chapter 5 focuses on the political consequence of Hobbes’s religious teachings, especially that of Toleration. While noting that there is an apparent tension between the idea of toleration and Hobbes’s granting of near absolute authority to the civil sovereign, it argues that Hobbes’s view can best be understood as *inter regentes tolerantia, tolerans intolerantia in plebem; i.e. amongst rulers tolerance, amongst citizens tolerant intoleration*. First Hobbes presents a natural right to private toleration, while maintaining conformity in the public religious sphere. Secondly, Hobbes’s teaching on religion presents an epistemological skepticism of all religion and thus he establishes a fundamental philosophic position that modern liberal toleration requires.
CHAPTER 2

RHETORICAL REFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

For in his life he [Thucydides] was the scholar...whose opinions, being of a strain above the apprehension of the vulgar, procured him the estimation of atheist: which they bestowed upon all men that thought not as they did about their ridiculous religion. Though he were none, yet it is not improbable but by the light of natural reason he might see enough in the religion of these heathen to think it vain and superstitious so that in his writings our author appeareth to be, on one side not superstitious and on the other side not an atheist

Thomas Hobbes

2.1 Introduction

Hobbes’s translation and introduction of Thucydides Peloponnesian War was his first foray into scholarly writing, occurring decades before Hobbes’s more well-known political and philosophical tomes. The intensive study of Thucydides, resulting in such a careful translation, left a lasting impression on Hobbes’s own political understanding, for it “crystallized... many of the ideas fundamental to his later political philosophy” (Schlatter 1945, 350).² Hobbes’s own autobiography traces one of his major political contributions, that of a single all powerful sovereign, to a lesson he learned from Thucydides; for “He [Thucydides] shows me how foolish democracy is, and how much one man is wiser than an assembly” (Curley 1994, lvii, ft. 66).³ While Hobbes did not fully agree with Thucydides’ account of human nature, the decades between these works served as an important time for Hobbes’s development and allowed

² It is not my intention to delve into the debate over whether Hobbes had a humanist period, in which history and consensus is the foundation of epistemology, and then a scientific period, in which geometry and science is the foundation of epistemology (see Strauss 1952, Johnson, 1986, Remer 1992). While there is various emphasis on the degree of the break, there is a common acceptance that the earlier work on Thucydides impacted Hobbes’s later writings.

³ I choose to use the Latin prose as its meaning is clearer than the dated and poetic English, which states “He [Thucydides] says Democracy’s a foolish thing, than a Republic wiser is one king” (Hobbes’s Verse Autobiography, lvii).
Hobbes time to ruminate on the complex portrayals of human nature, hope, and fear
(Ahrensdorf, 2000; Curley 1994, xi).

Given the introductory quotation, it could be argued that one lesson Hobbes learned regards rhetorical presentation of religious material. Not only did he realize the constraint of societal norms (Rivers 2000) in presenting non-standard or novel religious opinions, he also saw that religious belief should fall neatly between the two extremes of sheer impiety and superstitious omen mongering (Strauss 1952, 75). Hobbes’s goal of introducing a new epistemology based upon scientific materialism required a reformation of religious ideas and rhetoric. To undertake such an arduous task, Hobbes had to balance extremes: He had to significantly alter the standard orthodox interpretation of Christianity; but do so without completely defacing the structure beyond recognition so as it would be accepted as legitimate interpretation by society. As this chapter argues, Hobbes’s goal is precisely the action that Jesus warns about in Mark 2:22 “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins...;” To offer an interpretation of Christianity which appears, at least upon first glance, consistent with orthodox interpretation, yet, which would insidiously and eventually burst the philosophic worldview of Christianity. In so doing, Hobbes would convince people who drink from the old wineskin of Christianity to accept the new wine of modern scientific materialism recognizing that this new teaching of scientific materialism was inherently inconsistent with Biblical orthodoxy and would

---

4 Hobbes, in his introductory remarks on Thucydides’s Peloponnesian War, notes that the consequence of Thucydides religious opinions, and their variance with the “vulgar” opinion, led to his death. Hobbes therefore was well aware that any overt rejection of standard English religious doctrine would lead to his persecution and possible death. As Coady notes, “Heresy was just as liable to lead to persecution as total unbelief” (1986), and as Hobbes notes about Thucydides, the vulgar have difficulty in disaggregating novel religious interpretations from outright atheism.
“burst” or eliminate these religious beliefs effectively “reforming [the] definition of religion... [to] the definition most conducive to civil harmony” (Curley 1994, xi).

In order to succeed in the ruse, Hobbes had to carefully examine and re-interpret biblical terms and phrases in such a way as to be able to use known standard and orthodox terms,\(^5\) but defining them in a non-standard way.\(^6\) The reformation of religious terms provides an appearance of religious faithfulness, while being disingenuous and establishing new philosophical foundations. In order to prove this assertion, this chapter will examine Hobbes’s understanding of the key theological concepts of Scripture, Hell, God, miracles, and the Kingdom of God. It will become clear that these ideas are at variance with the standard and orthodox teachings of English Protestantism, as exemplified in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and are redefined in order to support reason as guide to materialism as the metaphysical foundation for modern science.

2.2 Westminster Confession

In order to show Hobbes’s rhetorical shift, it is necessary to employ a contemporary and widely recognized document of Christian teaching. Establishing what that document is, however may be difficult as Hobbes lived in the tumultuous times of the English civil war, which was rooted in religious disagreements (App. III.1; Braddock 2009).\(^7\) Due to the variety of

---

\(^5\) This re-interpretation is unique as Hobbes use “certain texts of Holy Scripture, alleged by me to other purpose than ordinarily they use to be by others” (Letter Dedicatory), thus the new definitions are grounded upon scriptural words.

\(^6\) It is becoming increasing clear the importance of language and rhetoric in Hobbes’s presentation (Skinner 1996; Petit 2008, Cantalupo 1991, Mathie 1986; Johnston 1986). Hobbes whole presentation is one of a rhetorical flourish, where words, definitions, and arguments are all carefully crafted in order to lead inevitably to his overall point, similarly to the much praised science of geometry. Few of these books delve into the religious rhetoric of Hobbes despite that Hobbes’s contemporaries noted that a dominant part of his religious writings are spend defining and discussing words and terms from Scripture (Lawson 1678).

\(^7\) For a detailed analysis of Hobbes’s historic interaction with religious ideal during the period of the English Civil War see Jeffrey Collins 2005 “The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes”.
interpretations of protestant Christianity that existed throughout the realm of England, it was impossible for the King and members of Parliament to not notice, or even be embroiled in these debates. In February 1641, King Charles I declared “because his Majesty observes great and different troubles do arise in the hearts of his people concerning the government and liturgy of the Church, his Majesty is willing to declare that he will refer the whole consideration to the wisdom of his Parliament which he desires them to enter into speedily” (quoted in Mitchell 1882, 107). In the fall of 1641, following the direction of their Sovereign, the House of Commons in declared its determination that “a general Synod of the most grave, pious, learned and judicious divines of this island, assisted by some from foreign parts professing the same religion with us, to consider all things necessary for the peace and good government of the Church” (quoted in Murray, The Calling of the Westminster Assembly). Therefore, in late 1643 an assembly of church leaders from England and Scotland were called together to discuss establishing a unified set of doctrines. After four years they published The Book of Public Worship and, amongst other things, a creedal statement known as the “Westminster Confession of Faith” as well as the Westminster Catechisms. The Assembly was made up of

---

9 It is difficult to find a detailed historical account of the Westminster Assembly, as most of the works that attempt to deal with it spend their primary focus on the theological outcomes and meaning of the Westminster Confession and Directory for Worship. For works which deal, at least partially, with the history around the doctrinal standards, see Mitchell (1892) The Westminster Assembly: Its History and Standards; Hetherington (1843) History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, 1843, Warfield (1931) The Westminster Assembly and it’s Work; Crowly (1973) Erastianism in the Westminster Assembly; It is the most recent and comprehensive compilation of original source documents that also has attached the best analysis (Van Dixhorn and Wright 2012).

10 The Assembly created two catechisms, the shorter, more simple and designed for children and beginners in the faith, and the larger which is more comprehensive, however as Van Dixhoorn notes “Both catechisms, then, were (1) to be used on an ecumenical, or creedal, level to promote religious and political unity between England and Scotland and, (2) on a theological level, to instruct God’s people in matters of faith and duty, with the Larger Catechism giving the more exact and comprehensive instruction.” (Van Dixhoorn 2000, New Horizons)
30 lay members, 20 representatives from the House of Commons and 10 House of Lords, as well as 121 clergymen members from the various religious sects, (Presbyterians, Independents, Episcopalians, and even those with Erastian tendencies) (Hetherington, 1843; Crowly, 1973). It can be truly said that the members both geographically and liturgically represented of the British Commonwealth.

The Westminster Confession was officially approved and accepted by the Parliament of Scotland 1647, and by the English Parliament in 1648 with minor changes on the issue of marriage, synods, and added scriptural proofs. While King Charles I did not formally recognize it because of the continued Civil War and counter factional pressure between parliament and the army, and his fleeing until his subsequent beheading on January 30, 1649. However, in both 1650 and 1651, King Charles II agreed to the Solemn League and Covenant, which included the Westminster Confession.

Despite Hobbes’s contemporary writing with the working of the Westminster Assembly, Hobbes was remarkably silent on the specific work of the assembly. Hobbes, as a royalist

---

11 Erastianism, named after Thomas Erastus a Swiss theologian, is a term designating a position of church subordinance to the civil state, or as Merriam Webster define it “the doctrine of state supremacy in ecclesiastical affairs”. Hobbes himself has been strongly linked to this position (Dumouchel 1995, 52; Collins, 2000, Collins 2005, Martinich 2009). Within the Westminster Assembly there were a small, but vocal contingent that “consistently supported the right of the state to establish the form of religion” (Crowley, 1973)

12 While the King never officially approved the work of the Assembly, it must be remembered that as indicated this synod had both Royal and Parliamentary approval at the outset, and while the final ordinance, though having passed both the House of Lords and Commons, did not receive Royal approval at that time, in 1648 Charles I entered into an engagement with the Scottish Covenanters, who subscribed to the confession. Upon his death, Charles II twice, in 1650 and 1651, agreed to the terms of “The Solemn League and Covenant” which states that he “shall endeavour to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith,” which is specifically referring to the Westminster Confession passed in 1647, as evidenced by its naming two other documents which were a part of the Westminster Assembly’s work. While it is argued that these agreements were purely utilitarian, as Charles II had no intention of keeping the Covenant (Hetherington, 1843), it is clear that both from the outset as well as upon completion, the work of the Assembly was supported and ratified by both parliament and king.

13 For a concise description of Hobbes view of the Assembly please see Collins 95-98 and 152-155.
supporter often railed against Presbyterians, which he expressed through an interlocutor in *Behemoth*, “I understand now how the Parliament destroyed the peace of the kingdom; and how easily, by the help of seditious Presbyterian ministers, and of ambitious ignorant orators, they reduced this government to anarchy” (EW 6.298). Of course, the exclusivity of blame in this accusation is far from accurate and as Collins notes Hobbes’s “inaccurate effort to blame the entire civil war on the unpopular Presbyterians served an obvious polemical purpose…the demonizing of the Presbyterians provided Hobbes with sufficient cover to lob shots at the Episcopalians as well” (Collins 2005, 153). This makes more sense when one realizes that the primary disagreement between the Presbyterians and Episcopalians had to do with the structure of church polity, not doctrines of belief. As Van Dixhoorn (2012) notes “Disagreements over doctrine rankled assembly members. Disputes about church governance divided them” (82). This is not to say there were no differences of opinion on doctrines, for numerous doctrines were discussed at length, and show different interpretations of history, tradition, and theological method (Van Dixhoorn 2012, 21), but these differences found common ground in the words of the Westminster Confession, and therefore it was this doctrinal standard which the unified position of the Church of England during the authoring, and especially the time of publication of the English version of the Leviathan.  

Viewing Hobbes’s statements through the lens of the contemporary theological debates clarifies Hobbes’s own statement; that he admittedly uses Scriptures “alleged by me to other

---

14 It must be noted that King Charles II, who in 1650 had subscribed to the Scottish Covenant, which included the Westminster Confession, upon the Restoration began reversing this position, and in March of 1661 under Charles II’s driving force, Parliament issued the Act of Recissory, which abolished all acts of the Long Parliament, which included the Westminster Confession. It was not until William of Orange gave royal assent to the Scottish Parliaments ratification in 1690, that it again had royal authority.
purpose than ordinarily they use to be by other” he is fully writing in “due submission” to the church (Letter Dedicatory), and that he took “great care not to write anything contrary to the public teaching of our church” (Letter Dedicatory OL). 15 Given the concurrent establishment of a unified set of doctrines for the whole English realm, it is worth considering this statement, and all of Hobbes’s religious interpretations, in relation to the Westminster Confession.

2.3 Style of Religious Writing

It is becoming widely accepted that Hobbes’s religious teachings are an essential element of his political goals (see Warrander 1957; Taylor 1965; Brown 1962; Hood 1964; Martinich 1992; Curley 1990; 1992; 1996; Glover 1965; Halliday and Reeve 1983; Lloyd 1992; Foisneau and Wright 2004; Strauss 1996; Strauss 2011; Pacchi 1983; Cooke 1996; Collins 2005; Mitchell 1991). However, much of the scholarly literature on Hobbes’s religious teaching has been preoccupied the debate over Hobbes’s particular religious beliefs: whether Orthodox (Martinich 1992), atheistic (Strauss 1996; 2011; Curley 1992; 1996 Cooke 1996), heretical (Geach, 1981; Coady 1986), or generally theistic (Warrender 1957; Taylor 1965, Hood 1964; Tuck 1991). Despite this disagreement, all sides acknowledge that Hobbes’s purpose in writing on religion is to diminish religious superstition which may threaten a peaceful civil society (Stauffer 2011; McClure 2011; Beiner 1993; Tuck 1991; Curley 1996). In light of this intention, it

15 Hobbes’s careful expression of adherence to the “public teaching of our church” arose at a time when there was much dissent in the church. While the Westminster Confession was designed to, and did, assist in presenting a uniform religious position throughout England (Hetherington 1843, 278-279), the nature of the English Civil war made it difficult to argue for a universally held public teaching throughout England. Hobbes takes refuge in this as a defense for his own teachings, noting that when the Long Parliament abolition the High Commission “there was no longer any power among the English to determine authoritatively what was heretical, but all kind of sects appeared, writing and publishing whatever theology each of them wanted...[Hobbes] was already living in Paris, using the freedom to write now made generally available” (App III.1). While historically it would be accurate to say that the Public teachings of Hobbes’s time found uniform expression in the Westminster Confession, Hobbes seem to indicate that the prominence of religious disagreements means that there was no “public teachings” which he was subjected to, allowing complete freedom in religious presentation.
must be recognized that the role of religion was no mere afterthought, but rather a central component of his overall endeavor.

Given the wide variation in interpretation, it is necessary to explain why the design and style of Hobbes’s religious writings are not clear and concise. This is best understood as a consequence of the earlier lesson Hobbes learned from Thucydides. Hobbes’s use of external religious wrapping upon his esoteric/ironic teaching is both for Hobbes’s own safety as well as to attempt to convince gullible religious followers into replacing the divine virtues of Christianity; establishing a whole new set of wholly secular virtue built upon the metaphysical foundation of modern science.

It is important to realize that fear and threat of religious persecution impacted Hobbes’s writing. Given the recent events of the English civil war and its long lasting religion-based schism, full rejections of Christianity would cause undue persecution (Curley 1990, 1996; Cooke 1993; Strauss 2011). In this way, Hobbes wrote carefully and with a hint of irony. As Curley notes Hobbes’s religious sentiments are seen through “suggestion by disavowal” (1996) a method by which the author raises a critique or conclusion through specifically denying it as a conclusion which may not have otherwise occurred to the reader. It is a form of rhetorical irony designed by the author to raise a conclusion which the author is not required to defend since it has been ostensibly disavowed. Curley notes that this rhetorical device is utilized within Hobbes’s religious teaching, particularly the critique of religion generally or the gentile religion specifically, leads to subversive conclusions about Christian doctrine. Those implications, though specifically disavowed by Hobbes, are still left on the mind of the readers, leaving them to question what, if any, the differences exist between the criticized gentile religion and the
exempted Christian. This also allows Hobbes to conceal his innovation through crafted religious rhetoric, using common doctrinal concepts but attributing new understandings and interpretations to them. Therefore, readers may upon initial glance view Hobbes’s doctrines as appropriate expressions of legitimate or orthodox Christianity and in doing so, come to believe non-standard understanding of religious phrases, without intending to do so.\(^{16}\)

Of course, the assertion of an esoteric and ironic discussion of Hobbes’s writings may be argued to be imposed by modern scholars; however, Hobbes himself indicates that not only do such writings exist, but that they are frequently found within the realms of religious debates:

Wherein I pretend not to advance any position of my own, but only to show what are the consequences that seem to me deducible from the principles of Christian politics (which are the holy Scriptures)...For it not the bare words, but the scope of the writer, that giveth the true light by which any writing is to be interpreted; and they that insist upon single texts, without considering the main design, can derive nothing from them clearly, but rather casting atoms of Scriptures, as dust before men’s eyes, make everything more obscure than it is... (XLIII.24)

Hobbes notes that interpretation should not be focused merely on “bare words” but must be interpreted contextually, as well as through the overall purpose of the text. The recognition that religious rhetoric is often used not to illuminate and inform, but to purposefully obfuscate the true teachings of the author is consistent with an esoteric teaching. Contextually, this warning is to be applied to religious leaders, pastors, and even laity who use religious rhetoric in their arguments, showing that such beliefs are often grounded in repetitive appeals to cherry-picked passages in order to provide apparent support for their teachings, or at least to obscure opposing arguments. This warning provides a method of how to read other religious

\(^{16}\) Petite, in a footnote, concurs that these two reasons where explanatory of Hobbes’s references to God (Petite, 2008, 165 note 6).
authors generally; it is also a guide to careful readers on how to study and examine Hobbes’s own religious writings. Interestingly, Hobbes raises the above statement as the concluding comment and transition between Part III on the Christian Commonwealth and chapter XLIV entitled “Of Spiritual Darkness from the Misinterpretation of Scripture.” Its transitional location is indicative of how the Christian Commonwealth quickly becomes clouded into spiritual darkness.

This warning is not merely about how others utilize Scripture, but is in fact an admission of Hobbes’s use as well. Not only is the statement a transition, it is presented within the context of Hobbes’s ownership of his own arguments. The paragraph begins: “Wherein I pretend not to advance any position of my own, but only to show what are the consequences that seem to me deducible from the principles of Christian politics…And in the allegation of Scripture I have endeavored to avoid such texts as are obscure or controverted interpretation” (XLIII.24). Here Hobbes brings his own writings to the forefront of the mind of the reader and indicates that his readings may also cast “dust before men’s eyes [to] make everything more obscure than it is” (XLIII.24). Hobbes’s use of Scripture is often derived from passages which are of obscure interpretation; from that, he builds his novel interpretation. It is important to remember that Hobbes use of an enemies’ style is a specific and willful attempt to dishonor them, for “To imitate one’s enemy is to dishonor” (X.31).17 Hobbes provides a guide to interpret his arguments: one must not examine partial texts and statements which appear as

17 Honor and Dishonor are difficult to understand in Hobbes. Honor and dishonor, generally, are held to be the actions which express the individual’s evaluation of the others power, and may be appropriately understood in contemporary context as ‘respect’ (see X.23-30). Honoring is not necessarily tied to a true evaluation of another, for “to flatter, is to honour” (X.22) and it can arise out of either (or both) love and fear (X.24). Thus, the conception of imitation of ones enemy as dishonor seems to assume such imitation is done sarcastically, in order to disrespect the enemy.
sand in the eyes of the reader, but rather one should examine those statements in light of the main design of the work. One must take those atomistic grains of sand and place them into a coherent structure as a sand castle.

It is with this that it is necessary to turn to the second half of the Leviathan, a staggering section both in length and subject. These two parts, III and IV, are devoted to Hobbes’s religious interpretation and deal largely with scriptural interpretation. It has been recognized that Hobbes’s arguments in the second half, particularly his discussion of prophecy, miracles, and Scripture indicate an unorthodox (Curley 1996, Cooke 1996) or at least non-standard interpretation. It is with that in mind that I will examine Hobbes’s attempt to undermine the foundation of all Christian life and doctrine through subservience of revelation to reason, denial of scriptural revelation, re-interpretation of Hell so as to remove a conflict about the fear of death, his understanding of God as physical as mean, and his denial of miracles, and finally the rejection of the Kingdom of God in order subject all religious thought to the power of the sovereign.

2.4 Scripture (as a Way to Doubt Authority)

Thomas Hobbes recognized that in order to alter the religious discourse and present a novel interpretation of Christianity, it is necessary to attack and weaken the foundation of Christianity -- the Holy Scripture. The problem, as Hobbes saw it, was: “Not only can the original Scripture – the Bible – no longer provide a solution to man’s earthly problems (if it ever could), but worse, humans continue to think that it should” (Strong 1993, 131). In order to change the way people view the Scriptures, it was necessary to leave behind the idea that Scripture is “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith
and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” (WCF 1.4). Christian teaching not only says that Scripture is a source of knowledge of God for man’s salvation, faith, and life, it is the only source for that information (WCF 1.1). Hobbes realized that if he was going to alter people’s opinion of the Bible, the novel interpretation cannot be imposed as an outside source, rather the presentation must be shrouded by Scripture, even as it is brought to undermine itself. As Hobbes was aware, “That which is perhaps may most offend are certain text of Holy Scripture, alleged by me to other purpose than ordinarily they use to be by others” (Letter Dedicatory).18

Within this text, Hobbes clearly indicates his hermeneutic goal: to interpret Scripture in a new way, for a different purpose, clearly in disagreement with the way others used to interpret it. This is why many scholars have noted that Hobbes consistently applies the reformational standard of “Sola Scriptura” (Brandon 2002; Brandon 2007; Strauss 2012). However, it is erroneous to argue that merely because Hobbes operates within the realm of scriptural language, that he is consistent with the doctrine of Sola Scriptura (Springborg 2012), for Hobbes denies the foundational premise of Sola Scriptura, that of divine inspiration (XLV.25), and presents a skepticism of its authors(XXXIII.4-8), leading to questioning of its claims to truth (II. note 18). Hobbes also frequently engages in a discussion under the guise, or premise of Sola Scriptura, in order to show that even if such a position were granted, it would not undermine Hobbes’s teaching, for he is attempting “to examine the definitions of former authors, and either to correct them where they are negligently set down, or to make them himself” (IV.13).

18 Emphasis added.
Thus, Hobbes’s interpretation is both different and novel compared to how his contemporaries interpreted Scripture.

Hobbes admitted that Christendom has undergone spiritual darkness for four causes: demonology introduced from the heathen poets, mixing other religious thought and Greek philosophy with Scripture, bringing uncertain traditions and history into Scripture, and ultimately not knowing Scripture (XLIV.3). For Hobbes, modern Christendom is “yet in the dark” (XLIV.2). Therefore, Hobbes establishes a means to get out of the darkness. In writing the *Leviathan* it may require for him to either correct earlier writers, including sacred writing, or if these writings cannot be corrected, to establish totally new doctrine: for “it is for any man that aspires to true knowledge, to examine the definitions of former authors, and either to correct them where they are negligently set down, or to make them himself.” (IV.13).

For Hobbes, the goal is not to be completely innovative, as that would make it more difficult for people to accept his teachings. Rather, he would provide an interpretive framework that would allow laity to proclaim the faith of the fathers, all the while comfortably ignoring the tension that historically existed between the metaphysical foundations of Christianity and modern scientific materialism. Thus, “the Bible would not be in itself the basis of the answer, but something like the Bible might” (Strong 1993, 131). In order to successfully do this, Hobbes must provide an interpretation based upon the pre-existing religious concepts, and consistent with the surface teachings of Christianity.

Hobbes is well aware that addressing the foundation of Scripture is the necessary precursor to his more detailed religious arguments. The first chapter of Part III, “Of a Christian Commonwealth”, is entitled “Of the Principles of Christian Politics” (XXXII), which begins with a
reflective summary of the first two books, noting “I have derived the rights of the sovereign power, and the duty of subjects, hitherto from the principles of nature only” (XXXII.1). This statement, however, is not as clear cut as it may seem for Hobbes, for while only 10% of all scriptural references in the English publication of the Leviathan occur in the first two books, 57% of all scriptural references “identified as particularly important in an index of Biblical citations at the end of the Latin Leviathan” (Curley 1994, 575) occur in the first two books.19 This has led Cantalupo (1991) to argue that “Hobbes claims that part three differs from the previous two parts because it focuses primarily on Scripture. However, this difference is one of degree and not, as Hobbes claims, of kind” (141). While it begins in what seems to be a new thread, it would be foolish to disconnect the second half from the first.

2.4.1 Reason over Revelation

This is seen primarily in Hobbes’s discussion of the relation of Scripture and reason. It is interesting that the chapter, entitled “Principles of Christian Politics” never deals with politics, governance, or rule. Rather, first it addresses the relationship between Scripture and reason and second the issue of divine revelation to man. Hobbes establishes not only the connection with the previous two books, but with his project generally, by presenting the relationship between reason and Scripture: “we are not to renounce our senses and experiences nor...our natural reason” for natural reason is the undoubted word of God and is the Talents, in relation to Jesus Parable, that man is given to serve God (XXXII.2). Hobbes immediately sets the

19 These percentages were derived from the counting of all Scriptural references in the English version of the Leviathan, divided by the number of references in the first two books. The information was derived from the Index of Biblical Citation found in Edwin Curley’s edition of the Leviathan. (1994, 575-584). There are 872 uses of Scripture listed, with 126 of them only in the Latin (i.e. noted by OL or being in the Appendix). 78 occurrences occur in the first two books. Additionally there are 14 citations deemed critical, of which 8 appear in the first two books.
framework for his analysis of Scripture: reason is the final judge of legitimate interpretation.

Nothing should

be folded up in the napkin of implicit faith...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; but when it seemeth so, the fault is either in our unskillful interpretation or erroneous ratiocination” (XXXII.2).

While this statement may seem similar to that of numerous Christian leaders, including Aquinas, it is a complete misuse of Jesus’s parable. Cook (1996) recognizes that this section of Hobbes’s argument is closely associated with re-ordering the relation and role of reason in Christianity, for “the meaning Hobbes gives to the parable is a bold misuse of the text, but it clearly intimates the role reason is now to play, not as a complement to faith, but as its master” (116).20 The idea that reason is now the master of faith and operates on a different presupposition is clearly evidenced by Hobbes subsequent statement that the mysteries of religious if “swallowed whole” and be not examined their foundations are like “wholesome pills for the sick...[which] have the virtue to cure,” however when examined by reason to discover their constituent parts “are for the most part cat up again without effect” (XXXI.3).

It is necessary to recall Hobbes’s definition of reason. He defines reason as “nothing but reckoning (that is, adding and subtracting)” (V.2). By making reason a pure method without teleological goal, Hobbes’s understanding of reason is “that in which our thinking leads us, not to recognize one or another truth.... But to recognize the connection that ties different truths together” (Pettit 2009, 42). Pettit notes that there are three effects of this definition:

---

20 Paul Cooke (1996) provides a detailed analysis of this section of Leviathan (114-116).
demystifying reason; setting reason as merely a skill of habituation, not a faculty; and most important for this study, connecting reason to modern science (Pettit 2009, 44).

In arguing that God’s word is consistent with or above reason is not to make a truth claim over God’s word, rather it merely says that a particular method can make connections between propositions and Scripture, as Cooke says “Hobbes’s reason, then, does not discover ‘truth’; it creates it” (Cooke 1996, 100) based upon the presupposition of the senses (I.1-10). Reason is acquired, not through any innate sense, but through industry of imposing names and proper method (V.17). Reason leads to science by moving from names, to connections, to syllogism “till we come to a knowledge of all the consequences of names appertaining to the subject in hand; and that is what men call SCIENCE” (V.17). Thus, the imposition of reason as the standard for interpreting Scripture is an attempt to not only subject Scripture to science, but also to allow Hobbes to “impose names” or new meanings on Scriptural words.

Establishing reason as the hermeneutic to interpret Scripture is a consequence of Hobbes’s general understanding of human nature. For Hobbes the two parts of human nature, the passions and reason, lead to two types of learning, mathematical and dogmatic (EW 4.XII). Dogmatic learning, as exemplified by most interpreters of Scripture, produces “nothing [that is] not disputable, because it compareth men, and meddleth with their right and profit” whereas mathematical is not subject to such disputes because “truth, and the interest of men, oppose not each other” (EW 4.XII). This constant debate and disagreement of dogmatic doctrine leads people to constant battles of beliefs, and may lead to physical altercations. This explains why Hobbes attempts to place reason as the hermeneutic of Scripture: it would remove the dogmatic and replace it with a learning that is “is free from controversy and dispute” (EW 4.xii)
and thus lead men to the rational anxiety which leads to a stable society.\(^{21}\) Not only has Scripture been subjected to the analysis of reason, such reason is a rejection from the Aristotelian version of truth claims and is merely a process most closely related to the modern scientific process, which Hobbes is seeking to implement (Pettit 2009, 44).

Hobbes seeks to undermine Scriptures, not as written words, but as revelation from God. This is accomplished by the dissection and examination of truth, removing the supernatural mystery of religious teachings, particularly of revelation, by engaging in a form of modern Biblical Criticism (Malcolm 2002; Malcom 2005). Through a careful examination of each constituent part of Biblical authorship (XXXIII.4-19), as well as the meaning of central ideas such as Hell, God, Miracles, and the Kingdom of God the ‘cure’ for unbelief will be “chewed, [and] are for the most part cast up again without effect” (XXXII.3). When one unthinkingly accepts the whole teachings, it has the effect to ‘cure’ the unbelief, for one does not see the false or faulty connections. However, when one starts using reason to analyze the parts that make up the whole arguments -- the definitions, connections and syllogisms -- one will reject it as sour and be vomited out.\(^{22}\) While there are many times when reason and divine revelation concur, the difficulty arises when they contradict, or appear to contradict each other. Hobbes notes that these contradictions appear because of faulty computation or “erroneous ratiocination” (XXXII.2 and see V.1 for definition of ratiocination). Hobbes is careful not to reject Scripture

\(^{21}\) The discussion of the difference between ignorant and rational fear and their relationship to religion, see Chapter 3.4.1

\(^{22}\) The metaphor used by Hobbes has a similarity to famous Biblical warning in Revelation 3:16 “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” which is a warning about not faithfully and energetically, following the commands of God. Being lukewarm is similar to lackadaisical, and thus not faithfully accepting the religious teachings. Thus, it seems Hobbes is tacitly recognizing that the use of reason, which will examine the parts of religious thought, will cause the person to doubt his faith, becoming lukewarm in belief, and thus will be spit out.
outright; rather, he attempts to interpret Scripture in a new way, but within the language of itself.

2.4.2 All Revelation is Mediated by Man

2.4.2.1 Direct Revelation

In subjecting revelation to reason, Hobbes address the issue of the source or beginning of revelation, noting that God speaks to men in two ways: either immediately or by mediation of another man. Direct revelation, however, cannot be objectively proven and relies merely on the subjective claim of the individual “to whom he hath so spoken” (XXXII.5). If the recipient of direct revelation says that God spoke to him in a dream, it merely means “that he dreamed God spake to him” (XXXII.6), and this is not a reason to actually believe the person’s claim, for dreams are natural (XXXII.6) and are typically imaginations that come from sleep (II.5), or are the remnants of sense perception that is decaying in memory (II.2). Therefore, claims of God’s revelation through dreams is not in fact supernatural or direct revelation from God, but is either the imagination of sleep, similar to dreams of world domination or flying; or they are an expression of a decayed understanding of the sense perceptions received through that person’s life and any such claims are only the persons recounting of previous experiences. Additionally, the recounting of sensory experience is exacerbated in that it is a lower quality that is vague and less certain in comparison to the original. If the former, than all dreams of God’s revelation are imaginary and not real; if the latter, they are decayed recounts of physical experiences, and thus derived from the senses in the natural world, not actually from God.

Hobbes then argues that those who claim to have seen visions are merely experiencing a dream in a state between waking and sleep (XXXII.6). These people “if they be timorous and
superstitious, possessed with fearful tales and alone in the dark, are subject to the like fancies, and believe they see spirits and dead men’s ghosts...whereas it is either their fancy only, or else the knavery of such persons as make use of superstitious fear to pass disguised in the night” (II.7). Therefore, claims of direct revelation through visions are nothing more than fancy, through false thoughts, mistaken dreams, or actual physical people attempting to deceive others. It is this last conclusion that is most important for Hobbes, for it opens up the possibility that claims of divine revelation through visions are attempts at victims of deception. This is consistent with Hobbes’s account of the origin of religion: “this ignorance of how to distinguish dreams and other strong fancies from...sense” did serve as the foundation for “the greatest part of religion” (II.7). It is therefore ignorance, not willful deceit, which establishes the first “true believer,” and because he is a true believer, the passion is real and easier to convince others. Ignorance as the foundation is perhaps the kindest critique, but it is also the best – ignorance is correctable by reason.

Hobbes also recognizes that there are those who intentionally deceive, whether it be the person receiving the vision, or someone pretending to be a ghost. For “evil men, under pretext that God can do anything, are so bold to say anything when it serves their turn” (II.8) and these people are purposefully deceptive for “they think it untrue” yet continue to propagate it to others (II.8). While reason is not able to correct the founder of deceitful religions, Hobbes does argue that reason solves this problem as well; for “it is part of a wise man to believe them no further than right reason makes that which they say appear credible” (II.8), for all fanciful claims based upon unsubstantiated dreams or talks with spirits defy reason and should not be believed.
2.4.2.2 Indirect Revelation

Hobbes is aware that most believers admit, as stated in the Westminster Confession, that “for the former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased” no modern man receives direct revelation (WCF I.1). Therefore, mankind must rely on the “Holy Scriptures” as the source of God’s will (WCF I.1). However, the reliance upon indirect sources leaves Hobbes to raise a quandary; for “to say God hath spoken to him in the Holy Scripture is not to say God hath spoken to him immediately, but by mediation of the prophets, or of the apostles, or of the church” (XXXII.6). The Westminster Confession attempts to pre-empt this type of argument by stating “The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof” (WCF 1.4). However, this requires them to return to individualist direct confirmation (arguably different than direct revelation, though both would find their source in God and be given to the individual), stating “our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts” (WCF 1.5). Hobbes would reject this argument as circular, for “The Spirit of God is meant God himself” (XXXIV.4) which would make the Westminster Confession’s argument that full persuasion of God’s revelation is found through God’s revelation. Thus, Hobbes’s criticism addresses a fundamental complexity in the protestant view of Scripture: either it requires God’s direct confirmation in each individual or it is based upon the authority of other men. Hobbes attempts to lower the heavenly focus of revelation to the earth.
Given human nature, it is “hard, if not impossible to know” (XXXII.5) if another is the true recipient of direct revelation, rather it is more plausible that a “man pretend to me that God hath spoken to him” (XXXII.5). Of course, there are many people who claim to speak by the authority of God: prophets. Hobbes dispels the idea that a prophet is a servant of God who predicts the future, for it is used “most often of good men, but sometimes also of the wicked” (XXXVI.8). Further, the very act of prediction is not a supernatural gift, rather it is foresight and prudence. As Hobbes states earlier, “the best prophet naturally is the best guesser” (III.7).23 Not only does this understanding of prophecy deny that the prophet speaks from some divine insight, it actually makes prophecy a learned skill, for “he that is most versed and studied in the matters he guesses at” is “the best guesser,” therefore a prophet (III.8). A prophet is nothing more special than a prudent man; while this is a rare quality, it certainly has no divine connection, for “prudence is a presumption of the future, contracted from the experience of time past” (III.10).24 A prophet should be understood as “him to whom God speaketh immediately that which the prophet is to say from him to some other man or people” (XXXVI.9).

A prophet, at least in the Biblical sense, must be recognized as someone speaking supernaturally for God. While we have already shown above how Hobbes places doubt on the possibility for a man to have received divine inspiration, it is necessary to understand how he transforms prophecy from a divine speaker into a power of the sovereign. Hobbes quietly divides prophets into those who were extraordinary and those who had a perpetual calling

---

23 Hobbes is aware that prophets are both “prolocutor” as well as “predictor” (XXXVI.7). The job of proclamation, as discussed below, is clearly derivative from the power and authority of the sovereign.

24 Hobbes, having translated Thucydides, if agreeing with Thucydides opinion, would present Themistocles as the greatest prophet (See Thucydides 1.90-138)
Those who were extraordinary heard from God in visions and apparitions, or, as I have shown, earlier merely their own fancies and decayed natural sense perceptions.

Hobbes divides perpetual prophets into two categories: those who were “supreme” and those who were “subordinate” (XXXVI.13). Subordinate prophets are those mere men who were private citizens but claimed to speak for God. Hobbes rejects that these people fit the category of prophets, because “I find not any place that proveth God spake to them supernaturally;” rather, these people are no different from any other private citizen for God ‘speaks’ to them as to “all other Christian men,” and they are called to nothing more than to the same “piety, to believe, to righteousness, and to other virtues all other Christian men” are called to (XXXVI.15). Thus, subordinate prophets do speak in “God’s will,” only so far as he speaks according to the command of the “supreme prophet” (XXXVI). In this interpretation, all prophets who were private citizens did not actually speak for God nor through any supernatural power, but “when a prophet is said to speak by the Spirit of God, we ought to understand that he speaks as God, through his supreme prophet... has commanded him to speak” (XXXVI.15 OL note 24). This cast doubts upon the veracity of Biblical prophets and demotes them to a place of equality of all citizens, attempting to remove any authoritative appeal as “messengers of God.”

These Supreme prophets were those who possessed civil sovereign authority, such as Moses, the priesthood, and the kings of Israel (XXXVI.13). While Hobbes is less overt in his

---

25 This type of statement shows Hobbes’s careful use of ambiguity in his writing. While a Christian reading this may be slightly hesitant at the lowering of a prophet to the level of common man, would likely accept the statement that God spoke to them as to “all other Christian men”, i.e. through the Scripture. However, it would be difficult, given the broader statements of Hobbes, that this is the meaning Hobbes gives the statement. For, he has already denied that God speaks to men through inspiration (VIII.21-25; XLV.25) which would indicate reason as the only way God speaks (XXXI.3)
denial of their hearing the word of God, he also admits that “what manner God spake unto them is not manifest,” and while their visions were somehow of a different kind than the subordinate prophets, neither did they, speak to God directly or through inspiration, but they “spake by the Holy Spirit” but that is “to attribute nothing to him supernatural. For God disposeth men to piety, justice, mercy, truth, faith, and all manner of virtue, both...natural and ordinary” (xxxvi.13). Thus, these supreme prophets do speak the will of God, but it is not at all supernaturally revealed. Hobbes then transforms prophecy from the word of God to the word of the sovereign, who “is God’s viceregent on earth, and hath next under God the authority of governing Christian men” (XXXVI.20). This change has practical outcomes for all believers, for “men had need to be very circumspect and wary in obeying the voice of man that, pretend[s] himself to be a prophet” (XXXVI.19). Hobbes recognizes that the existence of prophecy outside the control of the civil sovereign presents a competition for sovereign authority: “For he that pretends to teach men the way of so great felicity pretends to govern them...which is a thing that all men naturally desire” (XXXVI.19). Hobbes then summarizes his criticism and rejection of prophecy: all men seek power, some use vain-glory to attain it by presenting themselves as a recipient of divine revelation. This claim, however, does not stand up to reason and is merely a religious pretension used to seize power from the civil sovereign. Having divided prophets into

26 This careful exposition is less that Hobbes is allowing a man to receive direct revelation from God, rather it is a careful avoidance of placing doubts upon the sovereign commands that assert God’s will. Thus, it is an avoidance of undermining civil power rather than an admittance of divine revelation.

27 Hobbes is aware that political foundings require the authority of a religious belief as the basis for their political rule “to keep the people in obedience and peace” (XII.20). While all examples Hobbes provides are of gentile religions, Hobbes uses of such critiques ought to apply to Christianity as well. This would indicate that Moses’s story of the burning bush, receiving the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai, and other meetings with God were “pretended ceremonies” (XII.20). It is worth noting that even the Biblical stories provide no corroborating witnesses to these meetings as Moses was always alone (Exodus 3:1-2; 19:12). This leads to a question of whether the sovereign is actually viceregent, or if the use of religious rhetoric is provides a justification acceptable to religious believers for the basis of a sovereign’s complete authority.
subordinate and supreme, noting that subordinate act only by the authority of the supreme, Hobbes presents an interpretation of prophecy which is legitimate only when possessed by the civil power. Prophecy as revelation is fundamentally false, and even the Bible places serious doubt upon the word of prophets; for in recounting the story of 1 Kings 13, Hobbes points out that one prophet “was yet deceived by another old prophet that persuaded him, as from the mouth of God, to eat and drink with him” (XXXII.7). It is the principle that Hobbes pulls from this, however, that is most evident of his whole position of prophecy, for “if one prophet deceive another, what certainty is there of knowing the will of God, by other way than that of reason?” (XXXII.7). While posed as a rhetorical question, the conclusion that Hobbes wishes the reader to draw is firmly grounded within the whole course of his argument: reason shows that direct revelation and prophecy is false, those who claim to be are “pretend prophets” (XXVI.20) who claim authority for their own benefit. As Cooke notes, the conclusion is damning “If true prophets can lie, the position of human beings seeking to know the will of God by some means other than reason—by some direct revelation from the Almighty—is very precarious” (Cooke 94, 1996).

The rejection of the religious authority of prophecy is done in order to place the power prophecy has into the hands of the civil sovereign. For those who still ostensibly accept the idea of prophecy, it must be remembered that all prophecy be subjected to the authority of reason, which dictates obedience to the sovereign. Therefore, the belief in prophecy is simply “to observe for a rule that doctrine which, in the name of God, he hath commanded to be taught” (XXXVI.20). Reason is the final judgment of truth, and it is what dictates complete obedience to the sovereign. If religious leaders want to maintain “prophecy” as an idea, it can be resurrected
as the revelation of the words of the sovereign rather. This is clearly opposed to the Christian understanding, as understood by the Westminster Catechism, that prophecy is “revealing...the whole will of God” (WLC 43).

Given this fact, Hobbes seeks to transform the meaning of Scripture as the “word of God,” moving it away from the concept of direct revelation into an interpretation that negates any fear of questioning its authority. Hobbes recognizes that Scripture is often called the “Word of God” (WCF 1.2); rather than outright deny that this is the case, Hobbes seeks to redefine the concept of the “word of God” through presenting a plausible, but novel, dichotomy and emphasizing the unorthodox choice. Hobbes admits that this phrase, “the word of God” could be understood as “the words which God hath spoken” (XXVI.2). He also presents a different argument that it could mean merely that God is “the subject of those words” (XXXVI.2). While either usage, according to Hobbes, indicates it is the Word of God, Hobbes carefully crafts a dichotomy that is absent from standard orthodox Christianity. For Hobbes, “Considering the two significations of the Word of God... (where it is taken for the doctrine of Christian religion) that the whole Scripture is the word of God; but in the former sense [God the author of the word], not so” (XXXVI.4)

It is well recognized that Scripture’s subject is God (WCF, 1.1 and 6). For standard orthodox interpretations, that is not what makes it ‘the word of God;’ for the incidental nature that something talks about God making it “God’s Word” would make the Apocrypha, and really any theological book, perhaps even works of philosophers such as Aristotle’s Physics, would also be considered God’s word. Standard orthodoxy decides if something is the “word of God” based upon its author, not subject; for while admitting that the Apocrypha speaks about God,
the WCF denies that it is the true word of God because these books are “not of divine inspiration” (WCF 1.4). The standard is that “God (who is truth itself)[is] the author thereof: and therefore…it is the Word of God” (WCF 1.4). Christianity argues Scripture is properly called God’s word because God is the author of those words. Hobbes’s dichotomy then becomes disingenuous, for Hobbes denies that God is the author of Scripture, but still professes it to be the word of God, because he admits God is its subject. This allows Hobbes to present an air of orthodoxy, using the terms of God’s word, but interpreting it in a way that ultimately denies the true Christian belief in divine authorship. Ultimately, he utilizes this as a bait and switch, for no longer is revelation above reason, but rather it is reason. As Hobbes states “The word of God is then also to be taken for the dictates of reason and equity” (XXXVI.6). Hobbes is able to utilize the Christian rhetoric of God’s word, but is in fact meaning a new and modern concept, dictating not only that the Scriptures are to be interpreted through reason, but conflating the two items into one, arguing they are in fact the same thing.

Finally, as if denying divine authorship were not enough, Hobbes also seeks to undermine the method that Christianity argues God revealed his words to the human authors, that of divine inspiration (II Tim 3:16). As the Westminster Confession states, the Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are “immediately inspired by God” (WCF 1.8 also 2), and as proof, it cites Hebrews 1:1 stating “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” Hobbes addresses this in two parts, first by discounting the idea of inspiration and second by undermining the prophets.

Hobbes notes that the opinion that oneself or another has been inspired “begins very often from some lucky finding of an error generally held by others, and not knowing, or not
remembering, by what conduct of reason they came to so singular a truth” (VIII.22). Inspiration is an application of reason, but with the steps forgotten, in order to correct a widely held error. The correction leads people to “admire themselves” (VIII.22). That self-admiration leads to a self-declared desire to speak: “for which he can allege no natural and sufficient reason,” and thus the speaker deems it as super-natural (XXXII.6). That the foundation of inspiration as merely a heightened form of self-admiration is made clearer in Hobbes’s Latin translation, where he states: “If someone says that some new doctrine has been breathed into him supernaturally by God, the wise will understand he is raving, out of admiration for his own mind” (XXXII.6 ft nt 7). This is a very telling critique by Hobbes, for the idea that supernatural revelation is, at its base, merely an overzealous opinion of one’s own worth, means that the authors of Scripture who claim divine and supernatural inspiration are actually falling into a form of “vain-glory which consisteth in the feigning or supposing of abilities in ourselves” (VI.41). Thus, we see the most radical assertion of Hobbes: that a fundamental belief of Christianity, the trustworthiness and transmissions of Scriptures arises from vain-glory, a passion that is dangerous and may undermine the safety and peace of civil society for “the passion for life, the fear of violent death—is subject to contamination by vainglory” (Kahn 2001, 19). This also indicates why Hobbes must address religion generally, and Scripture specifically, for vainglorious belief in inspiration and revelation is a possible undermining of the proper sense of fear, from which he builds his political theory. For Hobbes, the problem with the Bible is that it is “that their main business is, to abstract man from this world, and to persuade him to prefer the bare hope of what he can neither see, hear, nor conceive, before all the present enjoyments this world can conceive” (EW 4.231). This may undermine the self-interest
necessary to achieve peace. Hobbes’s undermining of Scripture, therefore, is to change man’s focus from the follies of the otherworld, to the exigencies of this world.  

Hobbes clearly recognizes the logical conclusion of his critique: if God did not author Scripture, and the human writers were not inspired, then their writings are merely the work of their own minds, and as such claims to divine revelation are merely deception. In this way, Hobbes has not only presented reason as the interpreter of Scripture, he has taken that reason and completely undermined the existence of Scripture as the word of God, the Bible as inspired, and the trustworthiness of the prophets. Since Scripture cannot be rationally shown to be the word of God, this conclusion may lead to undermining the belief in the Bible. However, Hobbes does not directly agree with this. Rather he changes the fundamental discussion by redirecting the conversation. It is not to be discussed whether the Bible is or is not the actual word of God, for that cannot be proven, rather the only question is why it ought to be believed. This, Hobbes argues, means the proper question is by whose authority is the Bible made law (XXXIII.21).

2.4.3 Why Scripture Ought to be Believed

In light of the rejection we have previously seen, one is left with a major question ‘why should the Bible be believed?’ The typical Christian answer is based upon the foundations that Hobbes has already rejected. The Westminster Confession presents the argument in favor of

---

28 This is seen even more clearly in the subsequent section regarding Hobbes’s re-interpretation of Hell.
29 This is not to say there have not been many attempts to provide rational proof for the inspiration of scripture (Montgomery 1976), often focusing on the historical record (Comfort, 2001), however the supernatural components of the Bible are not testable from a materialistic science, and thus requires an individual and supernatural proof. As the Westminster Confession notes “our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.” (WCF 1.6)
the Bible as God’s word, because each individual may “induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture” but full knowledge can only arise from the “work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts” (WCF 1.3).

Hobbes, recognizes that this question is dangerous to his position, for if authority is established by anything else, including the church, the individual, or God himself, then the role of the State as sovereign can be undermined. Hobbes rejects such questions, noting that asking how we know that Scriptures are the word of God or why they ought to be believed is difficult to resolve (XXXIII.21). Hobbes notes that the answer given by the Westminster assembly, of personal belief, is problematic, for “some are moved to believe for one, and others for another reasons, there can be rendered no one general answer for them all” (XXXIII.21). Thus the proper question is “By what authority they [the Scriptures] are made law” (XXXIII.21). For Hobbes, the power and authority of Scripture is limited to where it has been made law by the civil authority (see XLII, and XLIII.5). This is both a denial and establishment of authority, for Scripture alone “has no legal force” (Strauss 2012, 73). Therefore, while it may appear that Hobbes is using the interpretation of Sola Scriptura (Brandon 2002; Brandon 2007; Strauss 2012, 33-38; Curley 1996), in reality it has been subjected to the civil sovereign, for Hobbes’s understanding has successfully begun the combination of the power of the church with that of the state.30 Therefore, Hobbes seeks to undermine Scripture, first by questioning its divinity, or at least any contemporary’s knowledge of the divinity, but has kept it, so long the sovereign dictates it and deems it useful as a moral guide.31

---

30 An analysis of his opening picture clearly shows this.
31 This is an interesting tactic that Hobbes uses, for he does not, within this critique, inherently undermine the teaching of revelation per se, but only whether one can know if something is revealed.
2.5 Hell (As a Reason to Compete)

Just undermining the doctrines of divine revelation and inspiration is necessary but insufficient to inundate new wine into old wineskins. This is because it is possible that specific doctrines of Christianity, even if it is recognized they are not directly God’s word, may still be feared and undermine the goal of a peaceful society.\(^3^2\) Hobbes argues, through the title of Chapter 44, that there arises “Spiritual Darkness from the Misinterpretation of Scripture.” Primary amongst those misinterpretations is the “general error is from the misinterpretation of the words *eternal life*, *everlasting death*, and the *second death*” (XLIV.14), or specifically the doctrine that “The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in Hell fire forever” (WLC Q29). The belief in this doctrine, even if other components of Christianity are doubted, may still influence a “prudent believer [to] think that he cannot run the risk of disobeying God, when the stakes involve the possibility of eternal punishment” (Curley 1994, xlii; see also McClure 2011).

As Hobbes states:

The maintenance of civil society depending on justice, and justice on the power of life and death (and other less rewards and punishments) residing in them that have the sovereignty of the commonwealth, it is impossible a commonwealth should stand where any other than the sovereign hath a power of giving greater rewards than life, and of inflicting greater punishments than death. Now seeing *eternal life* is a greater reward than *life present*, and *eternal torment* a greater punishment than the *death of nature* (XXXVIII.1)

---

\(^3^2\) Something like Pascal’s wager may arise, granting the position that it is impossible to know God’s revelation, however the possible existence of eternal punishment necessitates the adherence to religious doctrines even if reason does not fully support it.
Since Hobbes’s whole political philosophy is built upon the fear of violent death as the fundamental passion upon which civil society and sovereignty is based (XII.14), fear of a worse punishment would fundamentally reject the whole *Leviathan* built upon that foundation, for in such case the reason to join together is outweighed by a worse fear and a better reward. In determining the significance of the word Hell, Hobbes’s “method is quite contrary to the way [he] determines the signification of words earlier in the *Leviathan*” (Cantalupo 1991, 168). Rather than providing a definition and defending it, Hobbes presents a winding explanation that indicates he “is more interested in the journey itself...than in settling any one final, univocal definition” (Cantalupo 1991, 168). It is this journey then that must be examined to understand its conclusion.

Hobbes does not begin his discussion directly with Hell; rather, he takes a more fundamental critique by addressing the concept of the soul, which is the object of both heaven and Hell. Hobbes recognizes that in order to address the question of eternal punishment, he must first redirect the Christian’s belief in the soul, presenting an argument that states it is not immortal, but is indivisibly connected to the body. Hobbes, after having been silent since the introduction on the variance between his religious views and the standard orthodox interpretations of his day, once again brings up a reminder that all his interpretations are with due “submission...to the interpretation of the Bible authorized by the commonwealth whose subject I am” (XXXVIII.2). The presence of this reminder gives us pause to determine what precisely that authorized teaching was. As the Westminster larger catechism states, “God...
created man male and female; formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground and ... endued them with living, reasonable, and immortal souls” (WLC 29).

Once again, similar to his interpretation of “the word of God,” Hobbes attempts to define a view of the soul which utilizes the same word, but means something different. For Hobbes, the soul animates mankind, just as Sovereignty, the artificial soul of the Leviathan “giving life and motion to the whole body” (Introduction). However, when the soul as represented by the sovereign departs, the body no longer receives motion (XXI.21). Hobbes directly explains the link between body and soul noting “the soul...signifieth always either the life or the living creature; and the body and soul jointly, the body alive” (XLIV.15, see also XXXI.6). The previous analogy and statement indicate that for Hobbes, life, or animation, is the same as the soul. This means that this inherent connection between life and soul is tied up solely in the physical body. Death, definitionally, means the end of life and thus, for Hobbes, the end of the soul. Hobbes supports this position arguing that no scriptural teaching exists that posits that “the soul of man is in its own nature eternal, and a living creature independent of the body” (XXXVIII.4). Therefore, the soul of mankind cannot undergo divine reward or punishment, rather any such actions occur on the body of man.

Having argued that life and soul should be understood as the same, Hobbes turns to the possibility of eternal reward and punishment upon mankind for their actions on earth. Hobbes echoes standard doctrine by noting “eternal life was lost by Adam’s forfeiture in committing sin” (XXXVII.2 see WCF VI.1 and 6). For Hobbes, the eternal life which was lost was “an eternal

---

34 This connection stems from the etymology of anima, which is the Latin word for Soul. It is also the root for animation or the imbuing of life. As Aristotle notes “The soul is inseparable from its body” (De Anima 413a) and is a defining characteristic of the thing. The soul is a distinguishing aspect of a life from a corpse.
life on earth” (XXXVIII.2). This must be understood in interpreting the rest of Hobbes’s argument, for it is this eternal life as an earthly reward which Christ restores “by especial grace and restoration” (XLIV.23 see also XXXVIII.3; Strauss 2012, 43). This conclusion leads to three questions: when will this eternal life be given? To whom? And what happens between the time of natural death and such restoration of life? The first and the last will be addressed here, the question of “to whom” is addressed in Chapter three.

Hobbes addresses this by noting that mankind does not have eternal life from the day he is born, or born again, rather eternal life is given “at the day of judgment” where all believers will be Christ’s “subjects in that kingdom, which shall be eternal” (XLIV.27). This means that the period between when a man “die a natural death, and [he] remain dead for a time ” (XXXVII.3) until the final judgment. During this time the soul, as life, would cease to exist. Here Hobbes is careful to present his hetero-orthodox interpretation under views which, though obscure, may make people more likely to accept the view as consistent with Christianity. In this instance, Hobbes view of the soul is not precisely an annihilationist view, since it presents the soul being re-born eternally upon the day of judgment, the view he is presenting is known as Hypnopsychism or Christian mortalism.  

35  To defend Hobbes, scholars have argued that his position is similar to that of John Milton (Henry 1956; Martinich, 266; Strong 1993, 138 and 152). 36  It is worth noting, however that Milton’s view was only stated in

35 This view was not unknown to Christianity as John Calvin (1932) coined a phrase “Psychopannychia” to explain his position. The root of the words is “soul” and “all night vigil”, which is coined in direct opposition to the opinion exemplified by Hobbes. Thus, Calvin’s work title and subtitle is: “Psychopannychia – or a refutation of the errors entertained by some unskillful persons, who ignorantly imagine that the interval between death and judgment the soul sleeps. Together with an explanation of the condition and life of the soul after this present life”. It has become common to refer to the view Calvin critiques as directed towards the concept of “Soul Sleep”.  
36 Scholars, particularly those who attempt to defend Hobbes’s orthodoxy, have tried to tie Hobbes’s view to Milton’s (Martinich, 266) Strong (1993, 138, 152). Perhaps the earliest argument to the effect is Nathaniel Henry
Christian Doctrine, which was published posthumously in 1674, after both English and Latin versions of the Leviathan were written (Burns, 148). It is argued that the reason such publication was delayed was because the position was not orthodox and all standard orthodox Christianity viewed the position as heretical (Burns, 10-11). The standard position of orthodox Christianity, summarized in the Westminster Confession states:

> The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies (WCF XXXII.1).

While this particular point on eternal life may be little more than a theological debate, it is the consequent corollary to Hobbes’s position that is the most radical re-interpretation of religious rhetoric, for if eternal reward is on this earth, so too must be eternal punishment (XXXVIII.7).

It is with this transition that Hobbes begins his analysis of Hell itself. He begins by arguing that within Scripture the location of Hell is unclear (McClure 2011). While Hobbes recounts different interpretations as to the location of Hell before the resurrection, i.e. during who said Hobbes’s presentation of mortalism is “closer to that of the Calvinist than any other” (Henry “Milton and Hobbes: Mortalism and the Intermediate State” 1951, 241). His argument however is based upon both denying that Hobbes’s statement “But if these words be to be understood only of the immortality of the soul, they prove not at all that which our Savior intended to prove” (xxxviii.4) is a qualification of the earlier paragraph (Henry 242). This interpretation however is difficult to make. Further, Henry also supports his cause by arguing since no pamphleteer attacked Hobbes’s position, it meant it was orthodox (243-244). This, however an extension of this argument would be that if no contemporaries saw teachings of Hobbes as unorthodox, then they must be orthodox. This is a very radical statement, and given Hobbes rhetoric it is quite probably that undermining doctrines were not necessarily caught. Further, Hobbes did have a deep discussion Thomas White, which covered the question of annihilation (Johnston, 1989). Therefore, not only is the logic of the assertion questionable, it is factually inaccurate. Mintz notes that More and Cudwell attacked Hobbes, arguing his view denied the immortality of the soul and the life to come. (Mintz, 2010, 84). Henry More wrote a treatise entitled “The Immortality of the Soul” in 1659, directly aimed at Hobbes’s views. Therefore, Henry’s argument ought to be rejected. Thus, such defenders, including “Strong and Martinich emphasize the small point of agreement between Hobbes and Milton (and other) and do not mention the massive and obvious differences in their views of Hell” which “is due to their efforts to demonstrate that Hobbes was more orthodox than many think” (McClure, 2011, 9)
the time of soul sleep: underground, underwater, a lake of fire, a place of separation and
darkness, or the Valley of Hinnin, a place of constant burning waste (XXXVII.6-10). From this
Hobbes derives that Hell is a metaphor (XXXVIII.8 and 11), because “there is no one that so
interprets Scripture, as after the day of judgment all are to be eternally punished in the Valley
of Hinnon; or that if they rise again as to be ever after unground or underwater” (XXXVIII.11).
This is an interesting twist of terms, for Hobbes utilizes his newly, and as previously shown,
unorthodox position of soul sleep to place doubt upon the meaning of Hell. The original
discussion was where the souls went after death, but Hobbes rejects the literal existence of any
such place because he argues souls cannot go there until after the resurrection and day of
judgment, a period that is later in time. This rhetorical flourish begins to open up the new
interpretation which he presents, that Hell is metaphorical (XXXVIII.8 and 11). However, for
Hobbes to call something a metaphor is not a compliment or even an attempt to salvage its
veracity. Rather, the use of metaphor is an abuse of speech and is an attempt to deceive others
away from the typical sense of the word (IV.4). And even more damning, Hobbes argues that
metaphors can “never be true grounds of any ratiocination” (IV.24). Therefore, Hobbes does
not save a biblical interpretation of Hell by arguing it is a metaphor, rather that designation is
his attempt to show that Hell is a false and abusive use of speech that is not rational and
designed to deceive.37

If the location of Hell is metaphorical, then both the tormenters and torments
themselves must be metaphorical. It is this conclusion that is most critical for Hobbes, but also

37 It is necessary to remember that for Hobbes, ‘metaphor’ is an abuse of speech designed to “deceive others”
(IV.4)
most novel. Someone cannot, as Hobbes argues, undergo real punishment in a metaphorical location. Rather the whole Biblical concept of Satan, the devil is indicative of “an office or quality,” not a particular person (XXXVIII.11). Of course the punishments issued by this office; for “the torments of Hell are…weeping and gnashing of teeth… worm of conscience…fire…shame and contempt” (XXXVIII.14) but these too are a metaphorical representation of “a grief and discontent mind” which arises for those who “suffer such bodily pains” and “live under evil and cruel governors” (XXXVIII.14). Through arguing that the tormentor and torment are metaphorical, Hobbes is able to propose an interpretation that posits torments as the bodily sufferings received from the cruel rulers upon this earth. This re-interpretation not only presents the pains and sufferings of Hell in a purely political context, it also places the sufferings of the present life on earth as the punishment typically understood to be in the afterlife.

While some scholars have argued “Hobbes blurs the line between the metaphoric and literal interpretation of Hell...” (McClure 2011, 7), this is not so. In light of his earlier teaching on eternal life, which is a second life for those saved, Hobbes argues that the wicked will not have eternal life after the “universal resurrection” (XXXVIII.14); rather, they will succumb to a “second death” (XXXVIII.14; see also App I.46). This means that while both believer and the wicked will be in a state of soul sleep until they undergo the “universal resurrection,” only the believer will have eternal life, while the wicked persist in a state of “grief and discontent of mind, from the sight of the eternal felicity in others which they themselves through their own incredulity and disobedience have lost” (XXXVIII.14). These wicked will exist in psychological
torment, being powerless to obtain the felicity of God.\textsuperscript{38} After living in this state, the wicked will shortly be “condemned at the day of judgment, after which he shall die no more,” (XXXVIII.14) i.e. the second death of annihilation. The torments threatened in the Bible cannot be everlasting, for whether a person dies once or twice, death is still the ultimate end.

The existence of the second death raises a problem: if the wicked die a second time, they are not subject “most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in Hell fire forever” (WLC 29). This means Hobbes fully rejects the doctrinal standards exemplified in the Westminster Confession. However, in order to appear consistent Hobbes brings a metaphorical interpretation noting that “in metaphorical speech a calamitous life everlasting may be called an everlasting death” (XXXVIII.14). Thus, all biblical language of eternal torments on an individual is a metaphor for annihilation. Annihilation is, for Hobbes, to be preferred over eternal torment (Johnston, 1989 642), because it means that death is in fact the worst action that mankind may face.\textsuperscript{39}

Hobbes recognizes that the standard interpretation of Hell involves eternal torments of individual souls; however, in order to weaken that punishment, and as such remove the competing fundamental passion of fear, which would push mankind toward religion, Hobbes

\textsuperscript{38} It could be argued that the existence of the wicked after the resurrection is no more psychological torment than the existence of man on this earth, for Felicity is “continual success in obtaining those things which man from time to time desireth” (XI.58), but to obtain that desire, man needs power (the means to acquire) (X.1), yet man can never cease to desire power because “he cannot assure the power and means to live well, [or] which he hath present” and thus men upon these earth can never attain felicity because of “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power” (XI.2). Perhaps the only difference is that prior to the resurrection a man can content himself that he, nor anyone else, has felicity; whereas after the resurrection some have felicity, but a type of felicity that is “now...incomprehensible” (XI.58) to any and all mankind. The fact that it is incomprehensible to any living man, also opens up for the possibility that there is no such felicity.

\textsuperscript{39} McClure notes that there is a certain ambiguity “as to how the damned actually will die a second death” however it is the effect of the presentation that is most important for “the overall effect of this ambiguous and confusing presentation is to make Hell appear less terrifying and perhaps less believable or knowable” (2011, 7)
denies that there is an eternal existence of constant torments and punishments of any “individual person” (XXXVIII.14). By making the eternal torments of Hell merely metaphor, Hobbes has completely eliminated the power of religion to have “a greater punishment than the death of nature” (XXXVIII.1). Thus, as understood in Hobbes’s interpretation, fear of eternal death is no longer a fundamental competitor for authority over mankind. While Hobbes continues to claim “submission...to the interpretation of the Bible authorized by the commonwealth whose subject I am” (XXXVIII.2), he recognizes the inherent divided loyalty that the established doctrine from the Westminster assembly places an inherent divided loyalty upon a citizen. Hobbes is careful to appear consistent with religious orthodoxy; thus, he does apparently agree in the eternality of Hell stating “the fire prepared for the wicked is an everlasting fire...but it cannot thence be inferred that he shall be cast into the fire...[is] to be eternally burnt and tortured” (XXXVIII.14). For Hobbes, Hell should be understood to be everlasting, or at least until the end of the human race, because there will always be someone undergoing its punishments. However, these punishments are not the eternal fires, burning flesh, weeping and gnashing of teeth that often is described, rather those biblical metaphors for punishment merely describes the psychological torments of unfulfilled desire, similarly to those who live “under evil and cruel governors” (XXXVIII.14), which will end upon the second death. The fear of Hell then, is no worse than the fear that exists on this earth, and there are no punishments greater than death; thus, the church does not have greater power, even if it is
granted that they do have power over eternal life and eternal punishment,\textsuperscript{40} than the sovereign.

2.6 God (To Advance Science)

Perhaps Hobbes’s most overtly shocking religious claim is his definition and conception of God. His contemporaries saw within this doctrine a novel, and arguably heretical position. As Bramhill noted, Hobbes’s “God is not the God of Christians” (Rogers 1995, 119). Even the most staunch defenders of Hobbes’s orthodoxy admit that “some of Hobbes’s views were nonstandard... especially his view that God is material” (Martinich 1992, 3). Hobbes and subsequent scholars present his position as consistent, or at least not contradictory to the earliest creeds of Christianity (EW 4:305-306; Martinich, 2 and 6). Particularly, Hobbes wrote a lengthy response to the assertions of Bramhill (EW 4:283-384, see particularly 305-314 and 383-384), yet the defense was still a defense of his belief in a corporal God. However, the choice of the earliest creeds is strategic, since creeds arise from theological debates, the earliest church debates had more focus on who Jesus was and the Trinity than on a metaphysical debate of spirit and substance. As Schaff notes, creedal statements “assume a more definite shape with the progress of biblical and theological knowledge” (1919) and thus the use of the earliest creeds are the most ambiguous and least specific, particularly about God, thus making it easier

\textsuperscript{40} Of course Hobbes would not agree to this, for all that is necessary for eternal life is to belief that Jesus is the Christ and obedience to the laws (XLIII.3). Of course the former is less critical than orthodox Christians may think, for it is not necessary to believe that Jesus is the son of God, but only that he is the promised King of the Jews (XLIII.11) a proposition that both gentiles (Matt 27:11,37) and demons (Luke 4:41) assert. This mere propositional belief holds little impact upon the salvation of man, rather it is the secondary component of obedience to the laws of the civil sovereign (XLIII.5) is most central to eternal life. Thus, the power of enteral life and of enteral torment are grounded upon the power of the sovereign and nothing else. Thus, Ecclesiastical power is merely the power to teach (XLIII.5) and therefore is a derivative power of the sovereign’s power (XL.11).
to conform to them.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, as explained above, the later iterations of Christian
Orthodoxy within the Westminster Confession is a more appropriate, and higher, standard. This
explanation of God, that “there is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and
perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts” (WCF 2.1) is directly contrary to
Hobbes’s position.

2.6.1 Corporal

While there is no direct evidence that Hobbes was writing in opposition to the
Westminster Confession, it is worth noting that Chapter XXXIV is presented as an explanation
“to determine out of the Bible the meaning of... the words Body and Spirit” (XXXIV.1), which are
two key parts of the Westminster Confession’s definition of God.\textsuperscript{42} Having framed the
discussion in the words of the Westminster Confession, Hobbes immediately rephrases the
debate as being a discussion about “\textit{substances, corporal, and incorporeal}” (XXXIV.1) to which
he reminds us of his earlier assertion that words are insignificant or meaningless if they “make a
name of two names, whose significations are contradictory and inconsistent, as this name, an
\textit{incorporeal body}, or... an \textit{incorporeal substance}” (IV.21, see also XXXIV.2). Since body “signifieth
that which filleth or occupeith some certain room...[and nothing is] properly a \textit{body} that is not
also part of (that aggregate of all \textit{bodies}) the \textit{universe} (XXXIV.2). It is not, however, the

\textsuperscript{41} Despite the ease to conform, even the earliest commentaries on these Creeds assert that God should be viewed
as incorporeal. Rufinus an early 5\textsuperscript{th} century church father, wrote a commentary on the apostles creed 404. It
became such a widely regarded understanding that it was frequently attributed to Jerome or Cyprian body (Schaff,
34.2). Rufinus, though agreeing that God is the most simple being, as in not being able to be divided, he
vehemently argues that God is incorporeal (33,43). Rufinus states “God’s substance, being absolutely incorporeal,
cannot in the first instance be introduced into bodies” (43).

\textsuperscript{42} Of course such understanding was not exclusive to the Westminster Confession as it was held by all of
Christianity, it is however odd that what Hobbes is really wanting to discuss is the concept of corporeal and
incorporeal substances, however he frames it at the beginning as Body and Spirit. It would seem plausible that he
framed his discussion in direct opposition to the doctrinal standards most recently codified in England.
definition of body that is such a problem, but it is the definition of spirit, for Hobbes presents a
definitional dichotomy that requires the choice of the lesser of two evils. Hobbes defines spirit
as “a subtle, fluid, and invisible body, or a ghost, or other idol or phantasm of the imagination”
(XXXIV.3). This rhetorical presentation is useful for Hobbes for it presents a way for people to
accept his definition merely because they reject its opposition. No religious believer would
willingly accept that a spirit is an idol or some product of human imagination, for that would be
admitting that spirits do not exist. Clearly, if spirits are phantasms of the imagination, then they
are not real, which would mean God is not real. The only option (of the two given) is
acceptance that spirit is in fact body, i.e. a physical thing that takes space and is part of the
universe. Within the English Leviathan, Hobbes never comes outright to claim that God is in fact
a physical body, but the implication was there leading many contemporaries to question his
opinion (Rogers 1995, 121; Mintz 2010, 45). This difference provides a major foundation by
which to assess Hobbes’s overall religious beliefs. It was under the inquiry of these
contemporaries, particularly Bramhill, that led Hobbes to explicitly define God as “a most pure,
simple, invisible spirit corporeal” (EW 4.313 see also Appendix III.5).

It is the final word, “corporeal” that places Hobbes at odds with the historical
interpretation of the Christian church. Hobbes’s concise definition of God does not occur in the
Leviathan until the re-issued, and clarified, Latin version of 1668, Hobbes had been clearly
laying the foundation for such a definition even early in the English work. Hobbes has already

---

43 Emphasis added
44 The importance of this distinction becomes clearer in Hobbes’s Latin version where he once again contrasts
God’s existence with being a figment of the mind or phantasm (XLVI.16 OL; Appendix I.4 and 73)
45 For lengthy discussion of Hobbes’s move to full declaration of God’s Corporality, see Gorham 2013 3-5
presented arguments that “two names, whose significations are contradictory and inconsistent, as this name, an *incorporeal body*, or (which is all one) an *incorporeal substance*” (IV.21).

Hobbes further argues that the reason a man may actually piously engage in such meaningless metaphoric speech to “honour him with attributes of significations as remote as they can from the grossness of bodies visible” (XII.7). Therefore, Hobbes regulates such assertions not only to being meaningless, but to being metaphoric. Once again, Hobbes dismisses a religious concept that doesn’t fit with his materialism as metaphor, which as he argues is designed to deceive (IV.4)

Following the assertion of Hobbes, that God is corporeal, it is important to address the issue of what type of corporeal thing God is. Hobbes asserts that God is Spirit, or as Hobbes defines it “Thin, fluid, transparent, invisible body” (EW 4.309). And by invisible body, Hobbes means an object that can “occupy a certain room or imagined place...is a real part of what we call the Universe” (XXXIV.2) indicating that God exists within the universe and occupies some portion of it. Yet, Hobbes recognizes that it is difficult to describe the body of God, and therefore bows to the incomprehensibility of God, because “the nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of *what he is*, but only *that he is*.” (XXXIV.4). Thus, Hobbes has now asserted that God Exists, as a Body, which occupies space within the universe, but we are unable to know precisely what he is. However, Hobbes also argues that God is infinite

While the argument of God’s corporeality is a primary point of disagreement between Hobbes and the standard orthodox views of his time, it is the implication of Hobbes’s corporeal God that fully undermines religious doctrine, for the assertion that God is corporeal is at odds
with the assertion that he is incomprehensible and infinite. For Hobbes, “God is indeed a perfect, pure, simple infinite substance” (EW 4.302) yet, mankind can have “no idea or conception of anything we call infinite” (III.12). Under Hobbes’s view, there can be no idea about God. Yet, the absence of conception of God is not, as one might suppose, indicative of lack of knowledge, for “the nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of what he is, but only that he is... (XXXIV.4). It is at this assertion, however, that the inconsistency of Hobbes’s account becomes clear. For Hobbes has made a claim as to “what” God is, for he is “body”. Clearly then, the postulate that God is incomprehensible and a corporeal substance would be contradictory.46 Further, the assertion of God’s corporeality places Hobbes’s view of God as self-contradictory with the view of his infinity. Hobbes notes that infinite anything is inconceivable and thus “that we are not able to conceive the ends and bounds of the thing named.” (III.12). However, since God is a body and all bodies “worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man’s body” (I.1) it means that God, though imperceptibly, occupies physical space. If God occupies only some space, then one is easily able to conceive of the bounds of him, therefore he is not infinite (III.12). But, to attempt to maintain that God is infinite, it must be argued that God, as material and body, co-exists in the same physical space of all other bodies, thus sharing space with all and being bound by no known limits. This however would contradict Hobbes’s science “from whence it is manifest, that neither two

46 It must be noted that Orthodox Christianity and the Westminster Confession also argue for God’s incomprehensibility. It should be recognized that there is a difference in Hobbes’s understanding and that of the Westminster Confession. As Hobbes indicates, incomprehensibility is to know nothing of God’s nature. However, the Westminster Confession, in the same sentence as presenting God as incomprehensible shows that man may know some things about God’s nature, attributes, character, and person (WCF.2.1). Thus, for many religious leaders of Hobbes’s time, incomprehensible means inability to fully or completely understand, while for Hobbes it means complete ignorance of God’s nature, let alone attributes and character.
bodies can be together in the same place, nor one body be in two places at the same time.” (De Corpore 8:8 see also III.12). The assertion that God is in all places would make Hobbes a pantheist, a conclusion that even Hobbes views as atheism: for those “philosophers who said the world (or the soul of the world) was God spake unworthily of him, and denied his existence.” (XXXI.15). From Hobbes’s own mouth we see that those who say that the whole world is God, in fact deny His existence. While Hobbes does not explicitly make the accusation that all of the world is God, his view of a corporeal God leads him to have to choose one of three options, all of which lead to a denial of the orthodox view of God: either God is corporeal and infinite; therefore all things are God making Hobbes an atheist; or God is Corporeal and not infinite; or God is infinite and not corporeal. Hobbes, in other writings asserts the former, defining God as “corporeal and infinite” (EW4.306).

There is one final complication of Hobbes’s view of a corporeal God, that of being Eternal. While it may appear to be tangential, it is necessary to recognize that for the Westminster Confession and even the early creeds, God is the creator of the world. And while Hobbes does frequently provide similar statements that God created Adam and other living creatures (XXXV.3; XXXVIII.2 and 15; XLIV.14 and 15;), such position requires the confessor to determine from what did God create. This question, still frequently debated in modern religious scholarship, is important because Hobbes himself asserts that “to say the world was not created, but eternal, (seeing that which is eternal has no cause) is to deny there is a God” (XXXI.16). For Hobbes, the necessity of belief in God as creator is essential to the belief that God exists. Yet, it is not merely that God is creator, but from this assertion it seems necessary that God be creator “ex-nihilo”, or “of nothing” (WCF 4.1). For, if God’s creation be merely taking
the pre-existing matter and forming it into the world, then one asserts that the matter is eternal. This concept of ex-nihilo creation was the dominant protestant interpretation in the 16th century, being held formally by the Anglican Church (Bishops Books 4) and Calvin (1960, I.14.20). Hobbes, in his discussion of the Nicene Creed states

A. What ought to be believed when we use the word ‘creator’? That this world was made from nothing? B. Certainly from nothing... For it is expressly said in Sacred Scripture that all things were made from nothing...God is the make from all things from nothing; and (what follows from this) that he has his existence rom his own power, not from any other thing; and therefore, that he also exists for eternity (Appendix I.7-8).

It is necessary to add the quality of being eternal to Hobbes previous definition of God as an infinite, thin, fluid, transparent, or invisible substance which occupies space within the universe (EW 4.302 and 309).47 It is with this addition that we run into a problem, for if God is eternal and is infinite substance, then it would seem that all substance was eternal and if all substance was eternal at best the assertion of God’s creative work can only be as a shaper of this pre-existing material. Not only is Hobbes understanding of God as creator in opposed to the creedal statements, it is in Hobbes’s own words “is to deny there is a God” (XXXI.16). In this way, the first section of both creeds are implicitly denied by Hobbes, thereby showing his lack of orthodoxy, and even providing a solid basis to assert his atheism.48

Why then would Hobbes so vehemently defend a position that opens himself up to accusations of violation standard orthodox belief? It must be recognized that Hobbes’s goal is to establish reason, not revelation as the foundation of knowledge and science as the primary

---

47 This is taking Hobbes’s definition of God and replacing the words corporeal and spirit with the definitions provided by Hobbes (EW 4.309)

48 It may be said the previous argument proves pantheism, rather than atheism, which is technically true. However, as Hobbes states “those philosophers who said the world (or the soul of the world) was God spake unworthily of him, and denied his existence. For...to say the world is God is to say there is no cause of it, that is, no God.” (XXXI.15). Thus, Hobbes admits that holding a pantheistic view is akin to atheism, and worthy of being called such.
purpose of reason (V.17). Of course, for Hobbes the definition of God as a corporeal being is absolutely necessary for his broader purposes, and as scholars have begun to analyze Hobbes’s science and theology, it is becoming increasingly clear that he argument for a corporeal God was not a mere desire to be outside the standard orthodox interpretation, but was done to establish his foundation of modern science, particularly to “rescue physics and metaphysics from radical skepticism by exploring corporealism” (Springborg 2012, 903 see also Gorham 2013). Hobbes’s *Leviathan* was an attempt to create a unified account of philosophy and politics centered upon the foundation of Materialism (Dungey 2008) and a “corporeal God [is] the metaphysical foundations of Hobbes’s natural philosophy” (Gorham 2013). Hobbes recognized that two major theological assertions that stood in the way of the acceptance of his metaphysics: the existence of incorporeal souls and the existence of miracles, as defined as physical manifestations in opposition to the laws of nature. The concept of a nonmaterial entity, particularly God who can work outside the realm of nature through miracles, would undermine such foundation. It is also these two positions which have been used to indicate Hobbes’s atheism (Curley 1990). While more recent scholarship has attempted to argue that Hobbes position on a corporeal deity indicate that he is a skeptic, not an atheist (Springborg 2012)

2.7 Miracles

Beyond the existence of incorporeal beings, the other major threat to Hobbes’s materialism and metaphysical philosophy is the existence of miracles. While the Westminster Confession does not discuss miracles by that term, it asserts that God, as sovereign creator, directs and governs all creatures on earth and “in his ordinary providence makes use of means”
yet, he is “free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure” (WCF V.1 and 3). This then is the defense of the common understanding of miracles, that God’s omnipotent power allows him to direct all earthly creatures towards his goal, typically using the ordinary means of the natural laws which he established, but is able from time to time to work against them through supra-natural events. In biblical defense of this proposition, and showing that it is a clear reference to acts opposed to natural laws, the Westminster Assembly cites 2 King 6:6 in which a logger lost the axe head he had borrowed “Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float.” For Hobbes, a God who can work outside the laws of nature would undermine the whole scientific process, for science requires fixed and stable laws. Rather than seeing a dichotomy between the existence of miracles,49 as defined as violations of natural laws (WCF 5.1; Hume 1902, 114), Hobbes redefines the concept of miracles based upon their purpose, not their content.

Hobbes’s discussion of miracles begins with a broad definition that they are the works of God, His wonders or signs (XXXVII.1). While earlier he had indicated that miracles are “signs supernatural” (XII.28), he clarifies that these wonder and signs are viewed as supernatural because the individual seeing them “if it be strange, that is to say, such as the like of it hath never, or very rarely, been produced; the other is if, when it is produced, we cannot imagine it to have been done by natural means” (XXXVII.2). As Curley notes, Hobbes continues to modify

---

49 Despite this dichotomy, influential scientists at the foundation of the mechanical sciences such as Newton, Boyle, Sprat, and Wilkens held to the existence of God’s general providence of immutable natural law and His special providence, or the miracles which are in violations of those laws (Force 1984). Newton and such thinkers, however, seem to have “abandoned himself to ambiguities and inconsistencies, which gave the appearance of divine participation in nature, but not the substance” (Westfall 1970, 204). Some even argue that Newton, like Hobbes, redefines miracles to remove the apparent contradiction (Force 1984; Harrison 1995).
the definition until what had been an occasional feature becomes the essential feature of the
definition (Curley 1992) that “it belongeth to the nature of a miracle that it be wrought for the
procuring of credit to God’s messengers, ministers, and prophets, and thereby be the better
inclined to obey them” (XXXVII.6 see also XXXI.3). Further, Hobbes notes that the admiration of
any action is not per se that it was done, but rather that it was done on the command of a man
(XXXVI.6). The act of a miracle is not a specific type of action, rather it is any action that would
incline men to obey messengers and ministers, if their natural inclination would be to
disbelieve. Thus “the works of God in Egypt, by the hand of Moses, were properly miracles,
because they were done with the intention to make the people of Israel believe that Moses
came unto them... from God” (XXXVII.6).

Hobbes changed the definition of miracle from a particular type of action to a particular
type of proclamation which opens up two very specific effects. The first is the subjective nature
of a miracle, for the effect of a proclamation on someone’s inclination to believe varies upon
individuals. This is why Hobbes’s earlier claimed “Miracles are marvelous works, but that which
is marvelous to one may not be so to another” (XXVI.40). For “the end of miracles was to beget
belief, not universally in all men... [but] in such as God had determined should become his
subjects” (XXXVII.6). Hobbes has allowed people to claim subjective miracles for “the miracles
themselves are not miracles to all’ (XXVI.40. note 15) because “a private man has always the
liberty...to believe or not believe...whether they be miracles or lies” (XXXVII.13). Such claims are
more easily dismissed because it no longer becomes a factual argument, but rather an
expression of personal opinion, which cannot be rationally debated, but can only be submitted
to the public word of the sovereign (XXXVII.13).
Secondly, miracles are now judged not by the type of action they are, but by the effect they wrought. This is important because it allows Hobbes to overtly deny that anyone not associated with God can produce miracles; for such enchanter use either natural actions or words (XXVII.9). This change of emphasis allows Hobbes to subtle bring in doubt whether there are actually any actions that are outside the ordinary means of creation, i.e. against the natural law. Hobbes notes that those who believe in miracles do so because “the ignorance and aptitude to error generally of all men (but especially of them that have not much knowledge of natural causes” (XXXVII.12). While many people see an action and attest that it is a miracle, they are shown to be incorrect once “we see some possible natural cause of it” (XXXVII.2). Most claims of a miracle are merely a natural act that was not yet scientifically known, either by the individual or by science as a whole. This insinuates there are numerous false miracles that occur and must not be believed, and the citizen is left with little ability to judge the veracity of a miracle on their own. Rather, just as one cannot know a true prophet one cannot know a true miracle without consulting the head of the Church, i.e. the civil sovereign (XXXVII.13).

Of course modern individuals will never have to question the legitimacy of miracles, for Hobbes argues that it is necessary to “both see it done, and use all means possible to consider whether it be really done” (XXXVII.13), but because “miracles now cease” (XXXII.9) moderns can neither witness nor adequately consider their validity. This leads Curley to note “Without denying that some miracles may have occurred in Biblical times, Hobbes makes it clear that he does not think any occur now” (Curley 1992, 542). While Hobbes does extend concerted effort to place doubt upon the false miracles of the Egyptians against Moses (XXXVII.10), he also placed doubt upon famed biblical miracles through the veil of criticizing gentile religions.
Hobbes notes “If Livy say the Gods made once a cow speak... we distrust... Livy” (VII.7). This reference has been recognized as, not referring to Livy, as he never made that claim, but rather to Numbers 22:28-30 where a donkey spoke to Balaam. Hobbes clearly is casting doubt upon the viability of this biblical miracle, and consequently on the whole spectrum of biblical miracles, leaving modern citizens only with the ability to trust Scripture, which must be guided by reason and cast doubt upon such claims.

2.8 Kingdom of God

Having already undermined the teachings of Scripture that do not align with reason, Hobbes notes that the most dangerous presupposition of Christianity has less to do with the nature of God, his revelation, or Hell; rather it arises with a false belief of the role of Christian citizens. For the “Greatest and main abuse of Scripture (and to which almost all the rest are either consequent or subservient) is the wresting of it to prove that the kingdom of God, mentioned so often in Scripture, is the present Church” (XLIV.4). This danger arises because the kingdom of God is a “kingdom properly so named” (XXXV.2). If this is a literal kingdom, then geographically bound nations do not exist and the church worldwide has authority as the true sovereign power over the laws. For Hobbes, this would lead to precisely the danger that he seeks to address: a conflation of power and authority between the civil and religious authority which leads religious leaders to “set up supremacy against the sovereignty, cannons against laws, and ghostly authority against the civil” (XXIX.15). As Hobbes argues this conflict arises by fundamentally inverting a Biblical teaching, “if the apostle had meant we should be subject both to our own princes and also to the Pope, he had taught us a doctrine which Christ himself
hath told us is impossible, namely ‘to serve two masters’” (XLII.102). Hobbes revises the idea of the kingdom of God to make it specific historical manifestations: the Jewish kingdom of the Old Testament and the future Christian kingdom (Schwartz 1985). Neither of these, however extend to the present nor insinuate create a religious kingdom of God.

In order to show that the present church is not the kingdom of God, Hobbes notes that the word ‘church’ has two meanings: either an architectural structure or an assembly of citizens (XXXIX.2). This designation of the church as an assembly however, is a conflation of two distinct ideas in the Westminster Confession, that of “invisible church [which] consists of the whole number of the elect” (WCF XXV.1) and the “visible church which...consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, and of their children” (WCF XXV.2). The distinction between visible and invisible church plays an important role in orthodox Christianity, as Robert Shaw’s comments on the WCF state “this is not to be understood as if there were two Churches, or as if one part of the Church were visible and another invisible. The former includes the latter, but they are not co-extensive; the same individuals who constitute the Church considered as invisible, belong also to the Church considered as visible; but many who belong to the visible, are not comprehended in the invisible Church” (Shaw n.d.). Hobbes then seeks to limit the church to merely visible church, failing to admit or agree with the broader, universal, invisible church.

50 The statement no man can obey two masters, from Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13, refers to the choice between obeying God and Money, or self-serving interest on this earth. Hobbes utilizes this phrase for any case in which sovereignty may be divided, and thus undermined. While in this case and later(XLII.123) he uses it to discuss the division between temporal and spiritual sovereignty, he also uses it to discusses divisions solely within temporal sovereignty, between parental sovereignty.
For Hobbes the doctrine of a universal church would cause inherent problems as it would argue for membership in a body which transcends the political state, “for in Christian commonwealths, the kingdom and the church are the same people” (App II.22). If the members of these two bodies were the same then “if it were conceded to anyone on earth that he was the head of the whole Christian church, it would be conceded at the same time that he was king of all kingdoms and republics” (App II.22).\(^5\) Hobbes’s definition of a church attempts to limit that danger by focusing his definition on the visible church, i.e. “a company of men professing Christian religion, united in the person of one sovereign, at whose command they ought to assemble, and without whose authority they ought not to assemble.” (XXXIX.4). Rather than making all citizens members of the universal church, Hobbes has made all members of the visible church citizens, or as Brandon notes this view “transforms a Church into a species of commonwealth” (Brandon 2007, 78). The necessity of this transformation exists so that Hobbes can apply his reasoning about the commonwealth, to the religious body in the last two parts. Therefore, Hobbes concludes “this distinction of temporal and spiritual power is but words” (XLII.123) and these” two words brought into the world to make men see double and mistake their lawful sovereign” (XXXIX.5).

\(^5\) There is some argument that this is focused on a rejection of the authority of the Papacy. In this sense Hobbes and the Westminster Assembly agree, for the Westminster Confession notes that Pope has no power over civil magistrates (XXIII.4) nor is the Pope the head of the church for he “is that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalts himself, in the Church, against Christ and all that is called God.” (XXV.6). Hobbes recognizes that the papacy had power, but no longer for the “papacy seem[s] but the vast ghost of that vast Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave of the dead empire” (XLVII.14 OL) and the remaining power at best is the power to teach, not coerce (XLII.5). Yet, Hobbes’s teaching extends beyond just the papacy, and thus in one application Hobbes and the Westminster Assembly agree, their positions are still fundamentally opposed. Just as in modern policy Feminists and Religious Conservatives both agree on the evils of pornography, their overall positions are still opposed.
Having seen Hobbes’s understanding of the church, it becomes evident why Hobbes was so adamant against its being confluenced with the Kingdom of God. In order to ensure that these concepts remained separate, Hobbes presents an interpretation of the Kingdom of God which is based upon God’s sole political sovereignty over a people. The kingdom of God is “a kingdom properly so named” (XXXV.2) and “is properly meant a commonwealth, instituted (by the consent of those which were to be subject thereto) for their civil government and the regulation of their behavior...towards one another in point of justice, and towards other nations both in peace and war” (XXXV.7). This kingdom which ostensible arose from the contract between God and Abraham, was not officially called a kingdom until the legal provisions were renewed under Moses and the Jewish state (XXXV.4). Thus, Israel is both the peculiar people and a holy nation of God (XXV.5-7). Since God himself did physically rule, Moses, and upon his death the high priest became the lieutenant of God to rule the people (XXV.7).

Hobbes recognizes the difficulty of being a lieutenant of God, for unlike with a typical king, it is difficult for the lieutenant to establish legitimate proof of being a true representative of God. Thus, “it appeareth not as yet that people were obliged to take him for God’s lieutenant longer than they believe that God spake unto him. And therefore, his authority...depended yet merely upon the opinion they had of his sanctity, and of the reality of his conferences with God, and in the verity of his miracles” (XL.6). As this chapter has already asserted, the veracity of meeting with God and of miracles is to be doubted, insinuating that the authority of Moses and the Priests are to be doubted. This means, as Hobbes fully recognized if, the “opinion [of the people of Israel] coming to change, they were no more obliged to take anything for the law of God which he propounded to them in God’s name” (XL.6). In explaining the Kingdom of God...
Hobbes not only wants us to doubt the conflation of the modern church with the Kingdom of God, but to actually doubt that there is ever truly a Kingdom of God by contract. Hobbes seems to admit this himself when he states that the people of Israel were not to receive the testimony of Moses that he was God’s representative (XL.6). Therefore the authority of Moses “like all other princes, must be grounded on the consent of the people” (XL.6). It is very important to note that Hobbes deems Moses “like all other princes”, insinuating that Moses, not God, is in fact the sovereign of Israel. This interpretation would be necessary for Hobbes for “where there is already erected a sovereign power, there can be no other representative of the same people...For that were to erect two sovereigns, and every man to have his person represented by two actors that by opposing one another must needs divide that power which (if men will live in peace) is indivisible” (XIX.3). Because the nature of sovereignty is indivisible, it is impossible for a society hoping to achieve civil peace, to have two divergent claims of authority. Therefore, Hobbes tracing of the Kingdom of God leads to two conclusions; first it is the Lieutenants, not God, has the actual civil power, either based upon the deception of the people to believe they speak for God, or by actually having the consent of the people. Second, those lieutenants have no power or sovereignty over the church because this kingdom lasted until the people of Israel chose Saul as their King. Thus the Kingdom of God ended for “after this time there was no other kingdom of God in the world by any pact, or otherwise....” (XLI.4) and ever since “there was no promise made of obedience, neither to Esdras, nor to any other” (XL.14), the kingdom of God upon the earth is ended and in “the writings of divines, and specially in sermons and treatises of devotion” the term Kingdom of God “is taken most commonly for eternal felicity after this life, in the highest heaven” (XXXV.1).
The existence of a universal invisible church cannot exist on this world; this is why the view that Kingdom of God is the present church is the most dangerous view of Scripture for Hobbes; it would set the head of the church as the head of civil sphere, fundamentally inverting Hobbes own position. Thus he interprets the phrase catholic, or universal church in direct opposition to its etymological meaning, “There are as many catholic churches are there are heads of churches. And there are as many heads as there are Christian kingdoms and republics...Therefore, there are as many heads of churches as there are visible churches. But since the numbers of those elected by God, scattered over the whole of the earth and having as head in heaven Jesus Christ himself, is called, and is, the true church, unique and most catholic, it is also that in which we profess to believe in the creed of faith.” (Appendix II.22).

For Hobbes, danger within civil society has arisen because of a separation between church and state, by giving people two masters to serve. Therefore, Hobbes puts forth a unified power so there is no error in whom the sovereign is. However, for Hobbes this is not the complete solution, for this explanation allows for the church to be the governor of both church and state. This, however is not the solution Hobbes is seeking, rather, he has seen that out of the Roman religion, which was dominated by the civil state and not priests, a phoenix has for “the papacy seem but the vast ghost of that vast Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave of the dead empire”(XLVII.14 ol), thus for Hobbes, the solution is not to provide the priests with power over the civil government, but rather to provide the civil government power

\[52\] It is interesting that such a view does not inherently mean that there would be a global sovereign. For Hobbes argument is only in the places where there is a Christian kingdom, where the citizenry itself is a member of the congregation. This means that if there were places that was not under the rule of Christendom, where let’s say Islam was the dominate religion, then the head of the church would not have authority over the citizenry. While that religion may also have a similar belief of the Kingdom of the prophet being the same as the citizenry of a civil society, they would not be under the Christian sovereign.
over the priests. It might be argued that Hobbes is attempting to carefully provide an interpretation that does not assert that the leader of the church, specifically the Pope, has a claim to rule over the individual churches under the political sovereign. This would make sense, and is an argument Hobbes makes (XLII.5 and 86). Yet, Hobbes makes a very careful argument that, no only denies the existence of the universal church, but in so doing presents a denial of the church’s authority over the body of believers (absent the command of the king). Hobbes states “There are as many catholic churches are there are heads of churches. And there are as many heads as there are Christian kingdoms and republics” (App II.22). This is important for Hobbes, because a universal church would make it a person which would provide it authority to act, thus it is important for Hobbes to show that “the church be not one person, then it hath no authority at all; it can neither command nor do any action…” (XXXIII.24). Hobbes notes, the existence of a universal church is not possible because “if the whole number of Christians be not contained in one commonwealth, they are not on person; nor is there any universal church that hath any authority over them” (XXXIII.24). Thus, Hobbes presents a teaching which

---

53 Hobbes is not necessarily the first political philosopher to see this danger and to argue for this solution, Machiavelli has been recognized to make similar arguments (Mansfield 2001; Sullivan 1996), and offer the same solution which can be succinctly seen in his explanation of the chicken men. In describing Papirius’s fight with the Samnites, Machiavelli notes that the soldiers would consult the religious chicken-men who would predict the battle based upon whether the chicken ate or abstained from eating. When the chicken-men told the soldiers that the chickens had not eaten, Papirius put the chicken men on the front line where it “happened that... a javelin thrown by a Roman soldier by chance killed the prince of the chicken-men. When the consul heard this, he said everything was going well with the favor of the gods, for by the death of that liar the army had been purged of every fault...” (Machiavelli 1996, I.14). Then Machiavelli makes an approving observational statement “And so by knowing well how to accommodate his plans to the auspices, he took the policy of fighting without the army perceiving that he had neglected in any part the orders of their religion” (Machiavelli 1996, I.14). Machiavelli clearly recognizes it is necessary for the civil leader to be in charge of religious interpretation in order to appropriately utilize religion to support the action of the city. Hobbes solution is in the similar vein, for religious interpretation which separates religion from the state, or which offers the priests as controller of the state will inevitably reduce the civil state to a means in the service of the religious doctrine. However, for Hobbes it is religion which must be recognized as the means to serve the civil state.
requires either the denial of a universal church, or recognition that a universal church can only exist if all Christians are under one political sovereign. Clearly the latter has not been the case since the early days of Christianity, therefore the only conclusion possible is the former; a denial of the existence of a universal church, which is clearly a rejection of both the Nicene and Apostles creed.

Given the assertion that this chapter makes, one must also address why Hobbes attempts to re-interpret Christianity. While to properly address this subject would be worthy of detailed study in itself, it is important to at least briefly address this issue. Hobbes’s goal is not one that he wished to keep to himself, but rather, knowing that his philosophic and political premises needed men to alter their understanding of religion, Hobbes hoped that his teachings would filter down into the minds of the people, and there bear the fruit of modern political life. “Filter” is the correct word, as Hobbes hoped that the educated would read, and see the implications of his teachings, whereas the people would be, like a ship whose rudder is moved a few degrees, be greatly moved in their destination, that they would accept this new teaching under the guise that it faithfully conforms to the accepted religious beliefs that they have long held. Such assertions requires, at least briefly, evidence from Hobbes’s own writings of a) his low view of the commoners b) his method of educating them and c) the outcome he anticipated would arise.

It is fairly clear from a reading of Hobbes’s Leviathan that his view of the masses deemed them largely ignorant, particularly in regards to religion and that Hobbes thought he would teach, particularly the universities proper knowledge (Review and Conclusion.16; see also XXX.14, XLVI.24 ol;). Hobbes clearly asserts that the “more ignorant sort (that is to say, the
most part or generality of the people) would believe that images and sculptures created merely to represent the heathen gods actually housed the god. While Hobbes is talking largely of gentiles in this section, he asserts the same ignorance to Christians when he states “For at this day the ignorant people, where images are worshipped, do really believe there is a divine power in the images” (XLV.30) Thus, much of Christendom, particularly those portions under the, as Hobbes would argue, false authority of the Roman Catholic Church, would be deemed part of the ignorant masses. Yet, it is becomes of this ignorance that Hobbes has distinct hope in his cultivation of new religious teachings.

Hobbes argues that it is a violation of the duty of the sovereign to “let the people be ignorant” particularly regarding the grounds of his, the sovereigns, right to rule. To this end, Hobbes establishes an education system which not only contravenes the religious and moral teachings of the Bible, but also which establishes his own work as the basis for education, thus ensuring that the first principles which eh builds upon become more widely accepted, and thus as people drink his new win in old wineskins, they will become convinced that there is no real innovation here but tacitly accept his positions as the historical positions of the church.

Hobbes recognized that “if this superstitious fear of spirits were taken away, and with it prognostics from dreams, false prophecies, and many other things depending thereon...men would be much more fitted than they are for civil obedience” (II.8). This presents for Hobbes the major problem of, specifically, religious education of his time. The teachings often promoted disunity within society, leading even unto religious civil wars. Hobbes asserted that making men fit for civil society “ought to be the work of the schools” (II.8-9), but rather they are focused on religious doctrine that divides. Thus, for Hobbes it is necessary for him to
educate the teachers and preachers of society to ensure that the religious lessons they give re not such that will create divisions over religious doctrines, but rather would promote the overall goal of civil peace.
3.1 Introduction

As the previous chapter demonstrates, Hobbes often utilizes religious rhetoric to alter his contemporary discourse in support of his political views. Such use of rhetoric is noticeably prevalent in Parts Three and Four of *Leviathan*, which are specifically dedicated to the discussion of religion. The rhetorical reformation of religious concepts is not confined merely to these sections. Religious references, both explicit and subtle, permeate part one “On Man” and “indicate[] that the religious dimension of men is one of the fundamental elements of mankind which the philosopher, and the sovereign... cannot reject or abandon [even if] they may perhaps somewhat refashion [it]” (Dumouchel, 1995, 40). Since religion is a deep and abiding part of man, one should expect Hobbes at least to preview some of his later thoughts in the earlier chapters of *Leviathan*. Yet, much more than mere preview, these religious discussions in part one have been recognized as a vital link and transition into Hobbes’s theory of the state of nature (Stauffer, 2010). What is a remarkably odd occurrence, and one that has not been thoroughly examined, is that many of Hobbes’s critiques of religion in part one appear within chapters whose titles have little to do with a religious topic. Such occurrences may seem trivial, but, clear interpretive implications arise when one realizes that these chapters are specifically numbered in order to reveal significance.

As the last chapter argues, Hobbes contravenes the standard orthodox interpretations of Biblical words and replaces them with ones that serve as a foundation for his political and material science. Of course, Hobbes contravention of religious ideas does not end with mere
words; it extends to religious symbols. It is my contention that Hobbes particularly places religious critiques within chapters whose numerological symbolism has clear and significant meaning in Christianity in order to alter the Christian view and present one more consistent with his materialism.

3.2 Literary Use of Numeric Symbolism

The use of symbolism is recognized as a critical component of authorial rhetorical style. Symbolism reaches into the very nature of man as a social being. The use of symbolism, i.e. the use of images and analogues as conceptual representatives for broader themes and ideas, both allows an individual or author to transcend his own epoch and make connections across time (Walzer 1967, 195); it also allows individuals to be linked with the greatness of others (Tindall 1951, 15). It is precisely in the act of connecting two or more ideas which is the epitome of symbolism. Yet, it is essential to understand the act of connecting does not inherently imply approbation as one can connect to criticize an idea.54

A specific use of symbolic representation is found within numerological representation: the use of individual or groupings of numbers to emphasize, present, or connect one idea to another. That authors purposefully designed their works to follow specific numerical structural is not a readily accepted hypothesis in modern academia. Often such discussions are derided as ‘numerology’ or divination and mysticism. And while it is true that scholars argue for the use of numeric symbolism through multiple links, each one a bit more extravagant than the last, in order to prove everything from the divine inspiration of scripture, to the precise date of the end

54 For example, burning an American flag is recognized as symbolic of critique and disagreement with the actions taken by the government of the United States, which is represented by the flag.
of the world (Books 2010, Camping 1992; Panin 1950 Augustine, Eighty Three questions, 57).

These particular views are on the outskirts of traditional Christian belief and more closely linked to the influence of Jewish mystical cabalistic (Verner, 1997), leading scholars to decry the use of numeric symbolism as mystical and a foolish interpretive method (Dudley 1997). However, a careful discussion will yield the realization that numbers can be symbolic and that they represent other ideas beyond mere quantity.

Scholars recognize a legitimate use of numeric symbolism by certain genres and authors including the Bible (Davis 1963; Allis 1963; Bromily 1995; Abrahams; 2007), Chaucer (Peck 1967; Eckhardt 1980), Dante (Vanderwielen 1993; Secor 1993; Fowler 2009), medieval German literature (Batts 1965), Machiavelli (Fowler 2009), Shakespeare (Fowler 2009), and Maimonides (Strauss 1988a) present critical teachings on human nature and political life through the use of numeric symbolism. Great authors have utilized numeric symbolism within their work in order to demonstrate connections, emphasize points, or even present esoteric teachings; all without falling into the mystical side of numerology.

Particularly, modern scholars note the importance of numerology in the work of the Bible (Bullinger 1967; Davis 1963; Allis 1963; Bromiley 1995; Abrahams 2007), commentators on the Bible and church fathers, such as Philo and Augustine, openly engage in symbolic numerical interpretation (Philo De 30; Augustine 1991, 4.6.10; Bonner 1970; Bright 2006; Kannengiesser, 2004 ). As Kannengiesser (2004) notes in his comprehensive survey of patristic exegesis, “(t)he significance of patristic numerology should not be underestimated... they were intent on accounting for all that is written in Scripture, and this imposed on these interpreters the necessity of explaining the meaning of many and sometimes mysterious numbers they had to
comment on in the sacred books” (242-243). Beyond its wide use in religious authors, the use of numerology as a literary device is “widely used by ancient Latin authors, common to the best medieval and renaissance poets and almost universal in the period 1580-1680, when it reached its greatest height of sophistication” (Fowler 2009, xi). Additionally, there is direct evidence that Hobbes’s own colleagues utilized numeric symbolism in their writing. John Donne, with whom Hobbes is known to have associated (Malcom 1981) and whose thoughts may have influenced Hobbes’s views (Springborg 2013), is known to employ numerological symbolism in his writings (Frost 1990, 1993). Given the wide religious use of numeric symbolism, its increasing sophistication and use during Hobbes’s lifetime, and that colleagues of Hobbes utilized such method in their writing, it is reasonable to assert that Hobbes was not only familiar with but, as will be discussed in the next section, also utilized such form of rhetorical presentation.

Recent scholarship has begun to examine Hobbes’s use of symbolism, particularly in connection to his religious teachings (Craig 2011; Bredenkamp 2007; Ostman 2012; Schmitt 2008; Strong 1993). One need only to look at the title of his works to see that Hobbes knew and used Biblical symbols in order to provide deeper symbolic meaning for his political writings. Perhaps the most obvious example of Hobbes’s use of religious symbolism is the name of two of his works, Behemoth and Leviathan, and the frontispiece of Leviathan. Even before opening Hobbes’s work, the reader is immediately struck with the use of religious symbolism, and upon reading they soon realize that Hobbes contravenes these symbols for political purposes. Leviathan and Behemoth are references to Biblical “monsters” whose existence is veiled in

55 For a detailed interpretation of the symbolism of Hobbes’s frontispiece, see Strong (1993) and Ostman (2012).
mythical, theological, and cabalistic meanings (Schmitt 2008, 6). Hobbes contravenes the scriptural symbol, implementing in it a concept that is wholly his own. The Leviathan is the symbolic representation of the civil state, which though artificial, is the greatest temporal power that, through its overarching strength, establishes the *salus populi* and keeps all weaker powers in check, and like the Biblical creature, is ‘King of the Proud’ (Introduction). While this particular use of Biblical symbolism may appear easily recognizable and understandable, readers of the *Leviathan* should examine the text for less conspicuous examples of Hobbes contravening Biblical symbols in order to introduce a different teaching. Given this frequent use of symbolism generally and the reasonable assertion of Hobbes’s knowledge of numeric symbolism specifically, it is reasonable that Hobbes would use numeric symbolism in his rhetorical presentation of his religious doctrine.

Recently, Leon Craig has presented the argument that Hobbes himself uses numbers symbolically, arguing that “the prominence of Four in the organization of Hobbes’s book is almost too obvious to overlook” (2010, 341). Craig goes on to argue that the presence of “numerological features of Hobbes’s text” as a rhetorical device “is apt to be regarded with skepticism by many scholars today—as it most certainly would not have been by educated readers of Hobbes’s own day” (340, see also ft 26 pg 630). As Carl Schmitt notes, “like all the great thinkers of his times, Hobbes had a taste for esoteric coverups” (Schmitt 2008, 26). Given this known ability, readers should be on the alert for other examples of rhetorical devices which may provide esoteric teachings. This means it is reasonable to consider and assess whether Hobbes utilizes “the secrecy and esotericism of allegory by numbers” (Butler 1970, 132). While it may be difficult to fully prove Hobbes’s use of symbolic numerical critique of the Bible, it is
clear that such a practice was a common device used by writers before and during Hobbes’s own lifetime. It is my hope to present evidence for such an interpretation in the following discussion.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide a method of recognizing the symbolic use of numbers within writing. Literary theorists have posited five ways to determine whether an author is utilizing numeric symbolism within their work: an author’s explicit statement; internal consistency, i.e., the organization of the work and its link to the overall point; the presence of early commentaries drawing attention to the patterns; contemporary theory about the use of the device; and imitation in later literature (Fowler 2009, 1). It would seem to be beneficial for all uses of numeric symbolism to be preceded by a specific admission, making interpretation overt and clear, but that would only be so if the author wished to draw overt attention to the usage. Such forthrightness is not the way of esoteric writing, nor is it the way of symbolic numerical use within the Bible. Explicit statements could undermine the particular goal of symbolic usage, therefore it is necessary to write in such a way as to have only select audiences understand (Strauss 1988b).

Fowler, who presents the evidential standards, notes that relying on contemporary theory is “patchy evidence” (2009, 1). Such proof is likely the formal fallacy of affirming the consequent, or the informal historian’s fallacy. To say that an author used a writing style merely because modern scholars assert the use of such a standard insinuates that modern scholars create a meaning unknown to the original author rather than discover a meaning within the text. Moreover, while the commentary by contemporary critics might provide additional probability for the conclusion, the strongest standards to determine the author’s use would be the internal
consistency of the examined text as well as evidence of imitation of a prior text. When there is internal consistency combined with imitation of a previous author’s recognized use of numeric symbolism, it becomes reasonable to endorse the use of numeric symbolism. With this knowledge, I seek to examine the four most commonly used symbolic numbers within the Biblical canon: Three, Seven, Twelve, and Forty.

3.3 Three and the Trinity.

The number three has significance throughout all of scripture, and besides the number seven is the most commonly recognized symbolic number throughout the ancient near east (Bromiley, 1995, 558). Its Biblical usage is found specifically in key groupings of three: as seen in the parallels of the creation account (Strauss 1997, Sachs 1991, Waltke, 2001, 57); the number of birds that Noah sent out before the end of the Flood (Genesis 8:7-10); and the threefold benediction of Israel (Numbers 6:25-26); the Patriarchs of Israel (Exodus 3:6; Deuteronomy 34:4; II Kings 13:23, Jeremiah 33:26); the days between Jesus death and resurrection (Mark 10:4); the number of Jesus’s closest Disciples (Mark 5:37); and the number of prayers Paul says in order to be rid of the harassment from a messenger of Satan (II Corinthians 12:7-8). In light of these frequent appearances of groupings of three, the symbolic meaning is recognized almost as frequently as the literal (Bromiley 1995, 558). Because of these symbolic usages, which often exemplify union or unity, Christians have tied the number three explicitly to the Trinity (Davis 1968, 122-123).56 When one turns to the Leviathan chapter three, one notices

---

56 For a more detailed account of the link between the early Christian fathers, numeric symbolism, and the Trinity see Hopper (2000, 72-74)
that Hobbes is offering a critique of the concept of the Trinity and presenting a new way to unify man’s diverse knowledge through modern science.

3.3.1 Tripartite Division of the “Train of Thoughts”

It is significant within chapter three, entitled “Of the Consequence or Train of Imagination” that Hobbes presents three types or “train[s] of imagination”: that which in unguided (III.3), that which is guided to seek causes and that which is guided to know effects (III.5). The presentation of a tripartite division is both logical and purposeful. A purposeful division of a topic into three categories, within the third chapter, should alert the reader to the possibility of numeric symbolism. That this numeric symbolism should be linked to a critique of religion is evident through the use of inclusio, a method of bookending for literary emphasis, the religious topics of the chapter (III.3 and 12), the inclusio’s central paragraph’s subtly undermining prophecy (III.7), and the first reference to each separate person of the Trinity (III.3 and 12). While Hobbes does not directly mention the Holy Spirit, the implicit presence is understood through two discussions. First, Hobbes argues that prophecy, which Christianity believes as an in-working of the Holy Spirit (XXXVI.15), is not based in divine inspiration, but rather is rooted in prudential experience (III.7 see also XV.25). Secondly, In Hobbes’s discussion of the deception by schoolmen (III.12), Curley notes this is referring to a debate concerning the Eucharist regarding the connection between the bread and body of Christ, known as transubstantiation, which requires the invocation of the Holy Spirit in order to change the bread.

---

57 As the inclusio starts in paragraph three and concludes in the final, i.e., twelfth, paragraph, it is significant that the middle paragraph fundamentally denies the divine nature of prophetic statements.
into the body of Christ. In light of these connections, one can recognize, as Curley notes, that Hobbes is speaking about the Holy Spirit. Given these topics, within a chapter number whose symbolism is linked to the Trinity, it becomes likely that Hobbes’s argument within the chapter is designed to address, and undermine, the accepted Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

Hobbes main discussion in chapter three centers around his tripartite division of the “train[s] of imagination”: unguided (III.3), guided to seek causes (III.5), and guided to know effects (III.5). This presentation is a progression of steps which lead men from the chaos of religious thought, through the errors of theological ideas, specifically the Trinity and providence, to the power of modern sciences.

Hobbes begins his critique through presenting the unguided progression of thought in order to associate it with religion so that the reader will subconsciously doubt the veracity of religious thought. Hobbes notes that undirected thought has no basis in desire or passion, and most commonly arises in “men that are not only without company, but also without care of anything” (III.3). A reader knowledgeable of religious traditions would clearly understand this to

---

58 As Pope Benedict XVI notes, citing early church fathers “Against this backdrop we can understand the decisive role played by the Holy Spirit in the Eucharistic celebration, particularly with regard to transubstantiation”. An awareness of this is clearly evident in the Fathers of the Church. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catecheses, states that we "call upon God in his mercy to send his Holy Spirit upon the offerings before us, to transform the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ. Whatever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and completely transformed" (25). Saint John Chrysostom also notes that the priest invokes the Holy Spirit when he celebrates the sacrifice: (26) like Elijah, the minister calls down the Holy Spirit so that "as grace comes down upon the victim, the souls of all are thereby inflamed" (27). The spiritual life of the faithful can benefit greatly from a better appreciation of the richness of the anaphora: along with the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper, it contains the epiclesis, the petition to the Father to send down the gift of the Spirit so that the bread and the wine will become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and that "the community as a whole will become ever more the body of Christ" (28). The Spirit invoked by the celebrant upon the gifts of bread and wine placed on the altar is the same Spirit who gathers the faithful "into one body" and makes of them a spiritual offering pleasing to the Father (29).”(Post-Synodal Exhortation On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission Sacramentum Caritatis 1.13)

59 It is true that later Hobbes notes that many false religions have arisen because of the fear of ghosts (XII), however, for Hobbes, this is not a basis for passion, for passions must arise from sense perception, as all thoughts do (II) and thus, ghosts and all things unseen do not provide a true desire or fear.
refer to monks, i.e., those who have, for the sake of God, chosen to live a solitary life of prayer and meditation combined with the renouncement of all physical things. These religious “leaders” have no concern for anything earthly and are constantly focusing their thoughts on their prayers and worship of God. Hobbes carefully indicates that the thoughts of such people are in fact unguided or “without design, and inconstant, wherein there is no passionate thought to govern and direct those that follow tow to itself...in which case the thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent one to another” (III.3). This is made clearer with the example of unguided train of imaginations that Hobbes provides: for a question during the English Civil War was asked “what is the value of a roman penny” (III.3). It is important to realize that unguided thoughts do not mean, inherently, unconnected thoughts. Hobbes notes that the “coherence to me was immediately manifested” (III.3). Rather, such thoughts have no direction and appear inconsistent and are “commonly the thoughts of men that are not only without company, but also without care of anything (III.3). Yet, even though this question was derived from an unguided train of thoughts, Hobbes saw the “coherence” for “the thought of the delivering up the king to his enemies; the thought of that brought in the thought of delivering up Christ; and that again the thought of the 30 pence which was the price of the treason; and thence easily followed that malicious question” (III.3). For Hobbes, the association of religion with untrained thoughts is not to argue that religious thoughts are unconnected, but rather to argue that they are aimless in their subsequent progression. This aimlessness allows mankind to present erroneous and contradictory ideas, such as divine inspiration through infusion of the Holy Spirit and incorporeal beings, as foundational to their religious belief (XLV.15; IV. 21)
Hobbes’s presentation of untrained thoughts begins and ends with religious connections. Hobbes noted at the outset of the chapter, the train of thoughts of man can be primed for “when a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual as it seems to be” (III.2). Recognizing the ability to prime and direct the reader’s thoughts, Hobbes provides an example of a “discourse of our present civil war” (III.3). By mentioning the English Civil War, a war rooted upon religious upheaval (Braddock 2008, Prior 2013), Hobbes wants to remind people that a frequent cause of civil wars generally, and the English Civil War specifically, is the result of the tension between “obeying at once both God and man...when their commandments are one contrary to the other.” (XLIII.1). Therefore, a question which may appear impertinent regarding the value of a roman penny, which Hobbes links to Christ’s betrayal (III.3), is a way to direct the reader’s mind to the persons of the Godhead. By providing this example under the title of “untrained” thought, Hobbes is subtly linking the connection between untrained thoughts and religion.

After having placed doubt regarding the claims of religion generally, Hobbes begins to elucidate his larger critique, that of the Trinity. In order to trace this argument, it is first essential to understand Hobbes’s view of the Trinity as expressed throughout his work. Hobbes’s reformulation of the Trinity was one of the primary critiques leveled against Hobbes by his contemporaries to support their allegation of atheism (Bramhill 1995). It is because of, or perhaps in light of, such charges by theologians of his time, that modern scholars have continued to debate Hobbes’s distinctive and non-standard iteration of the Trinity (Pocock 1973; Martinich 1992; Springborg 1996; Wright 1999; Pagannini 2003; Martel 2007; Edwards 2009). Hobbes’s argument revolves around a central component of his religious interpretation,
the removal of the false conflation of Greek philosophy and religion (Curley 1994, xliv; App I.90). Hobbes seeks to redefine the Trinity absent any influence of Greek Philosophy (Wright 1999, 428) and consistent with his broader political conceptions of sovereignty (Edwards 2009).60

While Hobbes discusses each person of the Trinity in chapter three, his first explicit mention of the Trinity arises in a subsequent discussion of abusive words and discourses of madness in chapter eight. There Hobbes states “their words are without anything correspondent to them in the mind... [such] as the Trinity...When men write whole volumes of such stuff, are they not mad, or intend to make others so?” (VIII.27). For Hobbes, the term ‘Trinity’ and subsequent discussions arise from or cause madness. The term ‘Trinity’ is an abuse of speech like metaphors (V.14) and words which signify nothing (V.17) particularly because it does not correspond to anything in the mind for the components of the word have no meaning or contradict each other (VIII.27), because such discussions are not grounded upon ideas and definitions rooted in sensory perception. Thus, the goal of the third chapter is to reinterpret the Trinity to provide an explanation that is built upon, as the title of chapter three indicates, an appropriate “consequence or train of imagination” built upon sense.

Seeing that the Trinity is a post-revelatory theory, not mentioned until Tertullian (Against Praxis), to explain the belief of a single deity with three persons or manifestations, its discussion by Hobbes in a chapter dealing with the train of imagination is appropriate since the term is a later consequence of human ideas. In order to examine Hobbes’s critique in chapter

---

60 While Edwards says this is the attempt, he also argues that it is a failed attempt, for the interpretation of the Trinity as presented by Hobbes actually ends up undermining his political ideas.
three, it is necessary to question which of the three “train of thoughts” the ‘Trinity’ belongs to: whether unregulated, the seeking of causes, or the seeking of production (III.3-5). While the unguided train of imaginations, as we saw above, does critique religion generally, the specific concept of the Trinity is not “unguided, without design” (III.3). The creation of the word “Trinity” is based upon the desire to explain an apparent competing proposition of something being one, but also many. Therefore, its creation represents a train of imagination that “is nothing but seeking” (III.5), i.e., an example of the second category, guided trains of thought to seek the casual explanation of the competing, and apparently paradoxical, propositions.

Of course, the concept of the Trinity, like all man’s thoughts, must be “perceived first by sense... [for] a man can have no thought representing anything not subject to sense” (III.12). The term “Trinity” is not based on sense perception, which means its very existence is a train of thought built upon the “the faculty of invention” (III.5). More specifically, it is a linguistic construct built upon “the invention of words and speech” (III.11). Trinity is a word which expresses a regulated, or guided, train of thought seeking causes (see IV.3). The logical conclusion is that the Trinity as an expression of a train of thoughts is an abuse of speech, for its sheer concept is internally inconsistent with the definitional components (IV.4 and 21). Thus, the argument in chapter three lays the foundation for the later express conclusion that the term Trinity is “the abuse of words...by the name of absurdity. ...[This] word[] [is] without anything correspondent to [it] in the mind” and thus no religious leader is able to explain the term “into any modern tongues so as to make the same intelligible” (VIII.27). This position insinuates that the very word Trinity, as understood by religious leaders of his time, cannot be a
logical verbal expression of a train of thoughts. To this end, Hobbes offers his own view and
definition of ‘Trinity’ which is designed to avoid the errors of reasoning and language.

Hobbes’s most succinct description of the Trinity arises in chapter forty-two: (t)he doctrine of the Trinity, as far as can be gathered directly from Scripture, is in substance this: That God, who is always one and the same, was the person represented by Moses; the person represented by his Son incarnate; and the person represented by the apostles. As represented by the apostles, the Holy Spirit by which they spake is God; as represented by his Son (that is God and man) the Son is that God; as represented by Moses and the high priests, the Father...is that God. (XLII.3).

The idea that Moses “represented” God ought to make the reader recall Hobbes’s discussion of “Persons, Authors, and Things Personated” in chapter XVI, where he specifically speaks of the relationship between Moses and God (XVI.12). There, Hobbes argues that Moses, as well as Jesus and the Apostles, all represented God by governing in His name (XVI.12). In this sense, each representative was a different manifestation of God, at a different time, to a different group. However, if each representative is representative in the same way, then either Hobbes would have to argue that Moses is God, in the same way that Jesus is God, or that Jesus is mere man and merely speaks for God in the same way that Moses is mere man and speaks for God. This is consistent with Hobbes’s argument that “the Divine substance is indivisible” (EW.4.300), and as such Hobbes can only argue for three representatives or expression of God, not three distinct persons of the Godhead (Springborg, 2012, 10). These distinct expressions must exist in temporal succession, for like all physical substances, an infinite corporeal God (XXXI.24; EW 4:306), cannot exist as two distinct things simultaneously for “two or more things cannot be in one and the same place at once” (III.12). What is clear is that such presentation is a Sabellianism, or Modalism, a view which argues that God has three faces in which he represents himself to people at different times, but denies that there are three co-equal, co-eternal people.
in the Godhead, and was renounced as heresy by the first Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. (Layman 1988; Paganini 2003, 197; Shaff, 1867).

Given the contemporary criticism of his position and its linkage with a declared heresy, Hobbes edits this section when the 1668 Latin translation is released (XLII.3 note 2; XLVI.11 OL). This editing, and the appendix to the Latin edition recognizes that Hobbes’s teaching on the Trinity was widely criticized (Mintz 2010; Bramhill 1995), as one who “slipped into unusual doctrines, which most theologians accused of Heresy” (Appendix III.1). Hobbes addresses fourteen counts of unusual doctrines arising from *Leviathan*. In thirteen of those fourteen cases, Hobbes merely continued to defend his teaching in *Leviathan*. It was only the fourth point, on the Trinity, that Hobbes appears to admit some error, not in the doctrine itself, but merely in the presentation:

The author [Hobbes] seems here to have wanted to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, though he does not name the Trinity. The intention is devout, but the explanation is wrong... [for] he seems to make Moses one person of the Trinity. This is quite careless... But in each passage it can easily be corrected. For instance, if he had said that God, in his own person, established a church for himself, by the ministry of Moses, that he redeemed it in the person of his Son, and that in the person of the Holy Spirit he sanctified it, he would not have erred (Appendix III.12).

Hobbes’s defense of this position changes, for Hobbes argues that the Athanasian Creed incorrectly declared this view to be heresy, and there is no basis in the Bible or in the Nicene Creed that “there are three *hypostases*, i.e., three *substances*” (XLVI.11OL). While this change is most likely based upon Hobbes’s desire for self-preservation, given that Parliament had passed a law prescribing capital punishment for anyone who denied the Trinity (Curley 1994, xiii-xiv; Edwards 2009, 129). Nonetheless, Hobbes’s clear attempt to defend his position by reiteration and appeal to the Nicene Creed is troublesome (XLVI.11OL; App. I.83), for even staunch
defenders of Hobbes have admitted that his view of the Trinity varies from that of the Nicene Creed. As D.H. Warner argues, “Hobbes’s interpretation [of the Trinity] whilst not being wholly in accordance with the Athanasian and other creeds, is yet not wholly at variance with them...” (1969, 299). The conclusion that Hobbes’s Trinitarian doctrine moves us closer towards, rather than away from, the church is weakened when Warner admits that Hobbesian Trinitarian theory is aligned with the Arian heresy, promulgated by Arius a priest in Alexandria who espoused that Jesus was subordinate to and created by God. Arians argued that Jesus was not truly divine in the same way as God. This view was widely regarded as highly unorthodox and was the main topic which the ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) sought to address in its exposition of the Nicene Creed (Schaff 1919; 3.9.119-120). Warner summarizes Hobbes’s Trinitarian teaching: “What Hobbes has mainly done, I think, is to have removed the simple mysteriousness of the co-equality doctrine contained in the Trinity by openly subordinating Christ, in the earlier heretical manner of Arius, to the Father, thereby calling into question what is, for orthodox Christians, the uniqueness of God’s act in history in Christ” (Warner, 1969 305). Warner is correctly notes that the presentation of Jesus, Moses, and the Apostles as representatives of God implies a clear hierarchical relationship between God proper and those

---

61 Warner attempts to reconcile the inconsistency of this statement with his earlier thesis, by stating “But, as I have stressed, he does not only do this. He at the same time tries to adhere to a doctrine of the co-equality of Christ with God the Father, as is plain from his reference of the second coming, when Christ will sit at the right hand of God the Father” (1969, 305). While Warner recognizes that the rejection of co-equality denies a necessary component of the Trinity, he attempts to defend co-equality by arguing proximity is the same as equality. This argument would be analogous to a geometrician arguing that the property of similitude is the same as congruence. The former is a necessary but insufficient quality of the latter. Not only is this a leap in logic, it also fails to address a component of Hobbes’s understanding of the second coming. Of course it is vital to remember that for Hobbes the second coming is a future event and until that point, Christ is not seated at God’s right hand. According to Warner’s interpretation, Christ’s equality with God is a temporary temporal situation that has not yet occurred, and thus for any creed to speak, as the Nicene does in the past or present tense of Christ’s equality, is to be in error. Therefore, Warner’s supposed defense of Hobbes nonetheless undermines the co-equality of Christ with God the father.
that represent him. Yet, Warner and other scholars attempting to defend Hobbes’s supposed orthodoxy are left with a baffling defense that adherence to such a view is not in contradistinction to the creedal statement that was created to deal with precisely this issue (XLVI.11OL). Warner and others are falling for Hobbes’s subversive rhetorical style in which, as I showed in the previous chapter, he utilizes the religious terms but redefines them in a subversive way that many readers may miss.

Hobbes’s expressions of the Trinity should be more accurately recognized as modalism, where the one God manifests himself in various persons or characters at different times. This view, also known as Sabellianism, is seen clearly when Hobbes presents the Trinity as consisting of Moses, Christ, and the Apostles (XVI.12, see also Paganini 2003, 197; Martinich 1992, 1996). While Hobbes notes in his Latin edition that it was “quite careless” when he “seems to make Moses one person of the Trinity. This is quite careless” (Ap III.12). His solution is firmly within another recognized heresy of Sabellian modalism (XVI.12 ft 6). Through this presentation of modalism, Hobbes presents a definition of the Trinity that does not lead to the supposed

---

62 Martinich and Paganini, though agreeing that Hobbes’s expression of the Trinity is an example of Sabellianism, disagree as to whether Hobbes was still orthodox. Martinich’s argument is that the defense of the word Trinity, even a view recognized as heretical, shows Hobbes is not anti-religious for even “if Hobbes were a Sabellian he believed the Trinity; and if he believed in the Trinity, he was a sincere Christian” (1992, 205). Paganini on the other hand, recognizing that the view is heretical argues that Hobbes’s defense of this position does undermine his orthodoxy. Of course, the difference is whether the debate is about Hobbes’s Orthodoxy or Religiosity. Martinich’s defense does not actually support the concept that Hobbes was orthodox, rather it merely shows he presented a well-known heresy as his religious position. This raises the question, why would Hobbes wish to present a known heretical view as his Trinitarian doctrine and continue to defend this position in light of further accusations? One plausible explanation is explored by this dissertation that Hobbes’s goal was to present his teachings garbed in rhetoric that would be acceptable to Christians, particularly those who are not as widely versed in theology. Thus, the mere use of the word Trinity does not, as Martinich seems to argue, show Hobbes sincere religious belief, rather it can be viewed as a novel, non-standard, and unorthodox view in order to eventually brings about the undermining of Christianity in support of his scientific and political views.
‘errors’ of the orthodox definition offered by Calvin and religious schoolmen. And yet, this new definition is a return to a previously rejected and heretical position.

Hobbes does not leave his analysis there. He ensures that the concluding paragraph of the chapter focuses on the possibility of knowledge of the Godhead. As Hobbes presents his argument, it is necessary to realize that imagination itself is the author of invention, and all thoughts are themselves limited by man’s own limitations. As Hobbes says, “whatsoever we imagine is finite” (III.12). Because the train of man’s thoughts is a composite of sensory impressions, there is no ability to think or create an idea of something that is infinite. Therefore, in one of the earliest statements of Hobbesian unorthodox theology, Hobbes establishes that the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, or simply God) is a physical and finite being. This notion directly contradicts the English Church’s position in the Westminster Shorter Catechism that defines God as “Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable”. Given the topic of this chapter three, one cannot diminish the importance of the final paragraph, for as Hobbes notes “when a man thinketh on anything whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual” (III.2). Therefore, the ordering of ideas within the chapter leads to a specific and, for Christianity, devastating conclusion: man cannot know God because man cannot conceive of Him. This is based upon Hobbes’s careful explication of previous premises. Hobbes notes that no man can imagine something that is infinite (III.12), therefore the word ‘God’ is not a description of Him, but rather a sign of man’s limitation and inability to conceive of Him (III.12). This line of argumentation indicates that man’s inability to
conceive of God prevents man from ascribing attributes to Him;⁶³ therefore that there is one
God in three persons of the same substance, co-equal in power is not an attribute ascribed to
God to signify man’s ignorance, rather it is an attempt to explain that which, according to
Hobbes, cannot be known. Further evidence, as discussed in the previous chapter of this work
that Hobbes is inconsistent in presenting God’s incomprehensibility and yet requiring
Trinitarian doctrine to conform to human reason.

One of the staunchest defenders of Hobbes’s orthodoxy, A.P. Martinich, recognizes the
historic incompatibility between orthodox Christianity and Hobbes’s teaching on the Trinity.
Though defending Hobbes’s sacred intention, Martinich admits that Hobbes’s “doctrine of the
Trinity... in fact did have the consequence of undermining Christian belief” (1992, 204).⁶⁴ Thus,
Martinich concludes Hobbes’s teaching was a “glorious failure” for rather than salvaging
Christian thought, it led to its demise. Given the admitted effect of undercutting Christianity it is
increasingly difficult to argue that there are ‘unforeseen consequences’ for Hobbes (Martinich,
8). Martinich’s unwavering commitment to Hobbes’s orthodoxy in light of both the rejection of
critical doctrinal standards as well as the visible effects of such teachings, appears to be a less

---

⁶³ Hobbes argues that worshipers must attribute to God the attributes of both existence (XXXI.14) and infinity
(XXXI.18). Yet, the basis for these attributes is not rooted in actual knowledge, rather God exists because “no man
can have the will to honour that which he thinks not to have any being” (XXXI.14). The existence of God is rooted
not in the objective existence of God, but that a man’s act of honoring presupposes the existence of the being that
he/she honors. To say that God exists objectively, one would have to argue that man’s belief is never fallible. Yet,
Hobbes rejects this, noting that individual men as well as the majority err: “no one man’s reason, nor the reason of
anyone number of men, makes the certainty,” (V.3) Hobbes’s discussion of whether God is or is not infinite is
reminiscent of Anselm’s Ontological argument (1903, Proslogian III). Oddly, this argument seems to be the favorite
of modern philosophers, such as Descartes (Meditations of First Philosophy 5.9). However, that particular
argument had been viewed as discredited by Thomas Aquinas (ST I.2.1.2ff) and was rarely used in apologetic
discussions until its rebirth by Descartes (Oppy 2007, 122-123). Therefore, Hobbes’s use of a widely known
discredited argument for the nature and attributes of God, should be taken as an ironic critique.
⁶⁴ Emphasis added
reasonable interpretation than the position that Hobbes’s purposes were consistent with the effects of his variant doctrinal standard.

Hobbes progress through the guided reason which seeks causes, ends with a critique of the application of Christian doctrine, that of God’s providence. . Seeking causes is absolutely necessary for living. It does not provide any improvement in life, and is a condition which “is common to man and beast” (III.5). This is often rooted in remembrance, and as frequency and familiarity interact establishing “foresight, and prudence, or providence” (III.7). It is significant to notice that Hobbes presents providence and prudence as the same thing, de-emphasizing the religious connotation of the term. For religious adherents, God’s providence is the source of His control and power over the world (WCF 5.2 and XXXI.4), however Hobbes here argues that this providence is not in fact actual control or power to direct things, rather it is “applying the sequels of actions past to the actions that are present” recognizing that “it be called prudence [and hence providence] when the event answereth our expectation” (III.7). That Hobbes is linking Divine providence with prudence is made clear when he states that “forsight of things to come, which is providence...proceeds prophecy. The best prophet naturally is the best guesser...for he hath most signs to guess by” (III.7). The providence which gives insights to future events is the same providence which men who claim to hear the voice of God use to make prophecies. This insinuates that God is not divinely in control such that His will must be followed, but rather God is experienced in the relation of causes of natural phenomena and human action, and at best, His providence is because He “has more experience of things past than another...and his expectations the seldomer fail him” (III.7) Hobbes indicates that
regulated thoughts focused upon knowledge of causes is useful, it is not the highest part of mankind’s train of thoughts.

One cannot turn away from the discussion without an analysis of the third and final train of thought presented by Hobbes, that which is guided and seeks effects (III.5). Having dispatched unguided thoughts, explicitly connecting it to religion as discussed earlier, it becomes clear that for Hobbes the highest progression of thoughts is not merely seeking causes, which is common to man and beast (III.5) but is the specific use of those thoughts to seek effects. This is the thought progression of modern science. (III.5) for “Science is the knowledge of consequences…we see how to make it produce the like effects” (V.17). It is critical to note that, in the third chapter Hobbes’s use of three as a symbolic way within this chapter to demonstrate a progression from the ‘inferior’ religious train of thoughts to that which is ‘highest’ of science.

The highest train of thought is that which is prospective whose effect is the improvement of one’s condition, the ability to “produce” things which improve life. This is

---

65 Perhaps the most widely recognized statement of modern science is Descartes’s method, which has laid the foundation for all modern scientific investigation. For Hobbes, like Descartes, attempts to start from the simplest part and from that “conduct [his] thoughts in order... to ascend little by little... to the knowledge of the most composite” (Descartes, Methods 25). For Hobbes, this third train of mental discourse, that which makes mankind unique of all creatures, is the scientific method of inquiry, finding all the effects of a particular thing.

66 The distinction between the prospective use of the train of imagination verses the retrospective use is central to the argument between science and religion. As Robert Alter notes in his Commentary in Genesis, much of the Biblical commands center on remembering, for example “Remember the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Deut 20) and Jacob’s altar built to remember God. Yet, remembrance definitionally presupposes a previous knowing and then forgetting. Religious precepts often rely on this, arguing that man knows God, but has wandered away and forgotten Him placing an emphasis on the idea of repentance and return (Strauss 1981). The religious call then is to bring man back to the original state, the edenic purity. Even the future promises of heavenly rewards are presented as a return to the lost ideal. However, science is a prospective form, it is a creative construction, and therefore is opposite to remembering. With science, things are not known and then forgotten, they are divided into their smallest parts, and reconstructed. This understanding of man’s thoughts indicates that for Hobbes, the religious side and the scientific side are opposed.
the third category of mental discourse, the regulated towards reproduction where “imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects that can by it be produced” (III.5). This is the rarest form because it is unique to man (III.5) and alleviates man from their natural condition (XIII). It is a necessary part of Hobbes’s political philosophy and establishes the use and goal of reason and modern science (VI). For Hobbes, the highest form of guided mental discourse is that which creates, for “the discourse of the mind, when it is governed by design, is nothing but seeking, or the faculty of invention...” (III.5).

3.4 Seven and Perfection

Hobbes continues his use of numeric symbolism in an attempt to demote Christianity’s claim to truth and knowledge. Hobbes argues that Christianity is merely human opinion and re-locates the foundation of Christian belief away from the veracity of the doctrinal claims to a trust of the words of individual men.

The numeral seven has been recognized as a widely used numeric symbol in the Biblical canon (Davis, 115-122). Its use spans the whole canon appearing in the story of creation, where God spoke the world into existence in seven days (Genesis 1-2), Joseph’s visions of Famine and Plenty (Gen 41), the Gospels’ arrangement of Jesus’ genealogy into symmetrical arrangement rooted in the number seven (Matthew 1), Jesus’ command to forgive someone seven times seventy (Matthew 18:21-22), and occurs repeatedly in the final book, Revelation (Revelation 67).

---

67This democratizing of religious opinion to the level of all other opinions, while it destroys the authority of Christianity, is in fact critical for Hobbes, for by putting it on this level Christianity’s claim to be the only truth is destroyed, and religious opinions can be treated like any other opinion, which means they can be supported, squashed, or tolerated by the political authority. It is as a consequence of this activity that lays the foundation for toleration, as I explore in chapter 5.
Its presence may serve as both a literal quantity and a symbolic representation of the concept of fullness or completeness. When an act was done seven times, such as the seven-fold curse upon the murder of Cain (Genesis 4:15) or Jesus’s command to forgive (Matthew 18:21-22), it was meant to signify that it was complete fullness. Given this signification, it is fitting that Hobbes’s chapter deals with “(t)he ends, or resolutions of discourse” (VII.Title), i.e., the completion and fullness of discourse.

Hobbes’s topical progression of the first ten chapters of the *Leviathan* is often not “a continuation of the material of previous chapters” (Cantalop, 65). This continuity issue is particularly evident in Hobbes’s discussion within chapter seven, for as Cantalop notes, that the topic discussed seems to ill relate to the chapter title. Rather than entering into a full discussion of discourse, Hobbes instead turns most of his rhetorical prowess to a discussion of belief and faith, in which he is ultimately “brief, pithy, and dismissive” (68-69; see also Stauffer 2010, 870). Given the numeric significance of the number seven, the change of topic within the chapter ought to be seen as a planned diversion designed to fallow the soil of the reader’s mind for Hobbes’s full teaching on religion. This is found through Hobbes contrasting the two types or “ends” of discourse: those that rationally reach their conclusion or those that prematurely end, whether it be through lack of diligence, deceit, or confusion. These two ‘ends’ of discourse ought to be viewed as corresponding science and religion respectively. This is perhaps most evident by Hobbes’s pithy chapter nine, in which he posits two types of knowledge, that of fact or history, and that of consequence or science (IX.1-2). The discussion of religion is overtly

---

absent from this chapter, and insinuates that religious belief ought not be confused with actual branches of knowledge.

3.4.1 Make Christianity an Opinion

Hobbes first turns to discuss the type of discourse which ends prematurely. All broken discourse leaves men “in presumption” of the future and the past, but such presumption “is mere opinion” (VII.2). Since each discourse may end at any number of points, the likely presumptive outcome can vary and as such a variety of different opinions may arise. The presentation of different opinions, for Hobbes, extends not merely to disagreements over history or the logical consequence of particular actions, but extends to the deepest component of man’s actions, and even to the assignment of moral weight to an action. While Hobbes’s famed statement that there is no *Summum Bonum* comes later (XI.1), the foundation of that proposition is actually established within chapter seven. These different opinions are not merely different conclusions, but also are different foundations for judgments of actions or “that which is alternate appetite in deliberating concerning good and evil.” (VII.2). This insinuates a moral theory where disputes over good and evil arise, not because of a failure to achieve a transcendent truth, revealed law, or canonical decree, but merely from the individuals’ divergent appetites; just as someone prefers salty foods to sweet foods. This conclusion begins to diminish the importance of normative accounts of what men ought to do, arguing that, at their foundation, these accounts are merely descriptive of an individual’s personal opinion and appetite. Admittedly, opinion can have power, if it is enforced by someone with authority (see the discussion of why Scripture is made law, Ch 2.4, XLII.43, XIII.13); however, there is nothing to say that one opinion is better than another, only that such
opinion is preferred or made law. Christianity’s claim of perfection or the highest and exclusive form of religious truth, combined with the moral teachings is not based upon a transcendent truth, rather at its base it is actually opinion.

To further this argument, Hobbes enters a lengthy discussion of belief and faith which encompasses the last paragraphs of the chapter (VII.5-7). It is worth noting that Hobbes’s discussion of belief begins with a backhanded slap, noting “when a man’s discourse beginneth not at definitions…”, it is ground either in his own contemplation or at the saying of another, and that the latter one “is called Belief and Faith” (VII.5). Hobbes has already relegated all forms of belief and faith into the category of opinion, but in so doing, he eliminates any argument that religious doctrine can be known as truth or fact. Hobbes sets up what at first appears to be a dichotomous definition of belief, not that there are two opinions that underscore one’s belief: belief is “both of the man and of the truth of what he says” (VII.5). Hobbes immediately alters the presentation, for belief is grounded upon two distinct opinions “one of the saying of the man, the other of his virtue” (VII.5). Hobbes subtly alters the focus of the object of belief away from the veracity of the particular claims and argues that belief is grounded in the originator or author. For example “to believe that the Scriptures are the word of God…our belief, faith, and trust is in the church” (VII.7), not based upon the content. Ultimately religious belief is “from the authority and good opinion we have of him that hath said it” (VII.7). The primary purpose of this presentation is to transfer the object of man’s faith away from God and place it upon fallible man.

Hobbes attempts to maintain an appearance of orthodoxy through an apparent appeal to the Nicene Creed, stating “believing in, as it is in the creed, is meant not to trust in the
person, but confession and acknowledgement of the doctrine” (VII.6). However, this just draws
attention to Hobbes’s full discussion of the creedal phrase “believe in,” or “pisteuo eis”. Hobbes
states that the phrase is never found within actual Biblical text and is an extra-biblical
statement of the Church fathers (VII.5). The rejection of this particular linguistic phrase as extra-
Biblical is false, and rhetorically necessary.69 The necessity of denying a Biblical lineage of this
phrase allows Hobbes to interpret all creedal statements as defining the outer limit of Christian
doctrine as opposed to the lowest common denominator or shared basis thereof.70

In his appendix to the Latin version of *Leviathan*, Hobbes offers a detailed analysis of the
Nicene Creed and extrapolates from an apparent linguistic oddity in the construction of the
phrase “I believe.” Hobbes states, “the preposition eis signifies, among other things, *to this
extent*, so that when someone says *pisteuo eis theon patera* [I believe in God the father], etc... it
would be the same as if he said, “I believe *up to this point or to this extent*.”.. so the preposition
eis signifies a limitation of the articles to be believed, viz. how far those who subscribe [to the
creed] agree with the council.” (Latin Appendix 498). It is essential to see how Hobbes’s

69 The use of the phrase whose exclusive use in the Bible is used to reference God or Jesus is less odd and more
idiosyncratic within Christianity. The use of this phrase is found largely in the writings of the Apostle John, but are
prevalent and would be well known to the authors of the Creed. The emulation of the phrase within the creed
would show a desire for both honoring God and consistency with Biblical language. A list of the usages of this
phrase by John follows: *John 1:12 - believe eis his name; John 3:15 - believe eis him, John 3:16 - believe eis him; *
*John 3:18 - believing eis him /believed eis the name; John 3:36 - believe eis the son; John 6:29 - believe eis him; *
*John 6:35 - believing eis me; John 6:40 - believing eis him; John 6:47 - believing eis me; John 7:38 - believing eis me; *
John 17:20 - believing eis me through their word. Each of these indicate that *eis*, particularly when preceded by the
verb *pisteuo* and followed by Christ or God, does not indicate extent. Many of these references indicate the belief
in a doctrine, specifically that Jesus is the Son of God.

70 Hobbes expression of the lowest common denominator of Christianity can be found in his discussion “Of what is
Necessary for Reception into Heaven” (XLIII) and is interpreted in chapter 4.
interpretation presents the creed as a limit or farthest point of belief, as opposed to the creed being a common denominator of belief. Additionally, since Hobbes has already indicated that belief in such doctrines is mere opinion, they become personal subjective opinions, and as such can be regulated to the side and ignored. Unlike most opinions which begin with one’s own contemplation, faith and belief founded in the Bible posses an additional step of possible error, for faith and belief begins with the sayings of others (VII.5). Because belief in the truth of the saying of the man presupposes a belief in his “honesty in not deceiving...[and] of his virtue” (VII.5). Hobbes transposes the object of belief from the words of the man to whether virtue can be trusted.

Hobbes summarizes the consequence of his view, stating:

(W)e may infer that when we believe any saying, whatsoever it be, to be true, from arguments taken not from the thing itself, or from the principles of natural reason, but from the authority and good opinion we have of him that hath said it, then is the speaker or person we believe in, or trust in, and whose word we take, the object of our faith... and consequently, 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... (VII.7).

Having presented the argument that faith and belief is rooted, not in the doctrines or ideas of the scripture, but in the truthfulness and virtue of the author, Hobbes hopes his reader will take the logical step and ask “Are the authors to be trusted?” And while Hobbes does not inherently wish to contradict this, he presents a subtle answer in the negative through a careful re-telling of history.

---

71 Additionally in this chapter Hobbes addresses the question of “I believe in” as the foundation of the creeds of Christendom. Having already addressed this in the previous chapter, I will not here restate the argument as given. Rather, I will refer the reader to the discussion of the creeds, particularly the statement “I believe in”.
Hobbes states, “If Livy says the Gods made once a cow speak, and we believe it not, we distrust not God therein, but Livy” (VII.7). Curley notes that this is a mis-telling of the history, for Livy does not actually say a cow spoke (Curley, pg 37 note 4), rather it is said “On that year the sky seemed to be on fire; a violent earthquake also occurred; it was now believed that an ox spoke, which circumstance had not obtained credit on the year before” (Livy III.10). Besides the fact that Livy did not in fact assert that a cow spoke, but merely reported it was believed, it is also worth remembering the famed Biblical account of a donkey speaking to Balaam:

When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?’ And Balaam said to the donkey, ‘Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.’ And the donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?’ And he said, ‘No.’ (Numbers 22:27-30).

Clearly, the Biblical story is closer to the related facts that Hobbes provides, therefore we must apply the conclusion Hobbes gives to Livy to that of the Bible. This means either we should acknowledge that such belief is only in the author of the Biblical account, an unknown man whose virtue we cannot know (XXXIII.4), or the more likely conclusion that we should doubt a story that flies so blatantly in the face of reason. Second, questioning such statements is not a question of God himself, but rather only the author. Since we have already discussed in the previous section the consequence of the denial of prophecy, it becomes even more evident that the questioning of scripture leads to the questioning of the veracity of all its claims. Hobbes is quick to state that, “if we believe it [the story of speaking animals] not, we distrust not God therein, but Livy [or the author]” (VII.7). While those who wish to defend Hobbes’s theistic belief may argue that this proves he is seeking to defend God from illogical claims, it must be
recognized that such reading is forced. It is necessary to realize that, for Hobbes, what it means to be an author is something deeper than merely the writer. For Hobbes, an author is “He that owns his words and actions” (XVI.4), yet for Christians defending orthodox Biblical interpretation, it must be recognized that the writers of the particular books are not in fact the author, for they are, in some way, inspired to write from God. Since miracles, as discussed in chapter 1, are asserted to be unexplained natural phenomenon, there is no reason to suspect divine inspiration. In which case, we should actually doubt God. Or the writer is the author, and the information written is not the actual word of God, but is merely the creation of the writer. No matter which interpretation is followed, the authority of God is not only doubted, it is completely undermined. For Hobbes, “no discourse whatsoever can end in absolute knowledge of fact, past or to come” (VII.3). One can doubt the Biblical account, but in so doing one is merely doubting the author of the story; but if the author is God, then one is in fact doubting God. If the author is merely man, we must know who the author is in order to trust them.72

Ultimately, since all religious accounts are grounded upon doctrine either established in the Bible or by Church council, there is no religious doctrine that is not “drawn from [the] authority of men only and their writings”, irrespective whether they claim or do not claim divine inspiration. All “faith [is] in men only” (VII.7). Interestingly, it is precisely conclusion that faith is in men only which are the last words of chapter seven, that leaves the reader to reflect that faith is not in God, but actually upon the authority of the men. This consequence leads the

---

72 Interestingly Hobbes denies that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch (XXXIII.4), and therefore denies he is the person to whom our trust ought to be directed. Curley believes that since Moses is denied as the author, “it is unclear whom we would be trusting if we accept this story” (Curly, 37). But this is precisely the point, if Hobbes is moving faith to be in the author, the fact that we do not know the author is merely greater indication that we should not trust the story, which is precisely the point Hobbes is attempting to establish.
reflective reader to some radical conclusions: all religious belief generally, and Christian belief specifically, is only as reliable as the men who are the authors. This conclusion, established so early in Hobbes’s work, explains the later detailed analysis of authorship of the Books of the Bible in which Hobbes, using Biblical text, questions the received wisdom of the author of these books, indicating that the Dodecateuch,\textsuperscript{73} the foundation of both Christian and Jewish religious belief, are not written by the ascribed authors. Hobbes denies that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch (XXXIII.4-5), that Joshua and Samuel were the authors of the books bearing their name (XXXIII.6, 8), that Ruth and Judges were written contemporaneously (XXXIII.7).\textsuperscript{74} Hobbes’s argument as established in chapter 7, leads to the complete undermining of the trustworthiness of much of Scripture, not only by moving faith from God to man, but by later arguing that we cannot even know which men ought to be the recipients of our faith; at best, the faith of a man in scripture is grounded in the authority of the Church. This conclusion is acceptable to Hobbes because, as he argues throughout his work, the authority of the church is ultimately only grounded upon the permission from the sovereign. While this conclusion may seem consistent, and as such less radical, when compared to the rest of Hobbes’s claims, when compared to the orthodox Christian position it is a fundamental undermining of the whole basis of man’s belief, commitment, and obedience to God.

3.4.2 Knowledge Through Science

\textsuperscript{73} Dodecateuch refers to the first twelve books of the Bible which are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel (as one), 1 and 2 Kings (as one), 1 and 2 Chronicles (as one), Ezra, Nehemiah.

\textsuperscript{74} Jewish and Christian Tradition assert the authorship of Samuel to these books.
Hobbes does not end chapter seven merely with a critique of Christianity, rather, he offers a replacement form of knowledge - that of science. If Christianity has problems because it is an opinion, and opinion arises when people make conclusions which are not grounded upon proper definitions (VII.4), then it is necessary to find knowledge which “begins with the definitions of words, and proceeds by connexion of the same into general affirmations, and of these again into syllogisms, the end or last sum is called the conclusion” it is this train of steps “which is commonly called SCIENCE” (VII.4).

Chapter seven lays certain foundational understandings of science, which, discussed throughout the rest of the *Leviathan* in more detail, present a new and radical understanding - a truly modern understanding. Science, for Hobbes, is the basis of reasoning that is based upon the sense and necessitates universal categories, which exist only in the world of names (IV.6). Hobbes’s presentation of the path of reasoning is critically distinctive from the ancient ideas found in Aristotle. The Aristotelian account of science, involves the ordering of universal notions of propositions into syllogisms and finally into conclusions, establishing demonstrable knowledge (Whiteside, 1988). Although Hobbes argued that demonstrable knowledge of fact is found exclusively in the original sensory perception, it is not possible for someone to create a syllogism based upon that sense. Rather, the syllogism is at best based upon memory of the sense (VII.3). In light of this, science is conditional, for “no man can know by discourse that this or that is, has been, or will be, which is to know absolutely, but only that if this be, that is, if this has been, that has been, if this shall be, that shall be, which is to know conditionally” (VII.3). Science for Hobbes is found in the connection between propositional if/then statements.
There is an additional critical consequence of Hobbes’s reasoning: definitional knowledge. Since mankind cannot know facts except in the original sense perception, discussion or explanation of something inherently falls outside that knowledge. Science is “not the consequence of one thing to another, but of one name of a thing to another name of the same thing” (VII.3). Or to put it another way, the conclusion which is built upon syllogisms starts, not from a “fact” but rather from a definition. It is in light of this that scholars have argued that Hobbes is a nominalist (Krook 1956, Mintz, Bell 1969, Whiteside, 1988; Hull 2006) and/or conventionalist (Hanson 1991). As Pettit puts it, “Hobbes’s view of language is an invented, transformative technology” (2008, 26). This raises the importance of words and discourses, for these are the conditional propositions upon which science is based.75 Ted Miller notes, Hobbes’s philosophy of science “emerges as a complex trade-off. It teaches the proper means of producing truth with language, the means of avoiding falsity (and absurdity). Nevertheless, it leaves these truth permanently bound within the realm of words” (2011, 46). While these words are linked to individual empirical instance, the ability to generalize and categorize is rooted solely in the universality of names. This means that science is not mere discovery of individual empirical fact, but is in fact creation generalizable ideas. But it is not an act of creating like modern abstract artists who eschew (conventional) boundaries of figure, structure, and even beauty, rather it is a creation that is grounded upon the first word and the right connectivity of subsequent words. It is a structured, but unlimited, creativity. Science, for Hobbes, is focused on the creation of new things and follows closely along the scientific method

75 I don’t have the room in this dissertation to delve into this deep pool of thought in Hobbes. The most recent work on this that provides a useful understanding is Philip Pettit’s “Made with Words”.
as laid out by Descartes. For Hobbes, science, knowledge, and thereby “truth” is laid upon an ontological foundation of conditional propositions, meaning there is and can never be an absolute truth, as is claimed by Christianity (K. Shaw 2004 ISR). Certainty can only exist within the realm of words and created definitions, while empirical science is probabilistic and should be held as conditional and defeasible. It is a probabilistic assertion based upon conditional relationships.

3.5 The Meaning of Twelve and Political Order

While Hobbes’s corpus provides an extensive discussion of religious concepts, most commentators have relegated that to the discussion of the latter half of his work. As this dissertation has shown, religious concerns permeate Hobbes’s work, from many of the earliest chapters. Hobbes’s discussion of religion is a necessary precursor to the establishment of his political philosophy, because in Hobbes’s presentation religion and politics are diametrically opposed foundations upon which to build civil society and each is in competition for the loyalty of men (Augustine City of God, BK 11). For Hobbes, this competition is rooted in one of the most fundamental passions of man: fear.

76 Descartes, in his *Discourse on the Method*, lays out four principles which become the foundation for modern science. His third principle corresponds to Hobbes’s conception of science. For Descartes it is necessary to reduce the whole into its smallest parts as much as possible, which becomes the necessary precursor for his third precept of “conduct[ing] his thoughts in order... to ascend little by little... to the knowledge of the most composite” (25). For Descartes is not seeking knowledge of the order of nature, rather he seeks to reduce each thing to its smallest pieces, from which he can reformulate the parts “supposing an order among those that have no natural order of precedence” (25). Reconstructing these parts in a new order becomes the primary tool for men to be “like masters and possessor of nature” (49). Rather than following an established order, one can create an order using the parts to make a new composite. Hobbes makes a similar distinction between Analytical and Synthesis in the realm of science. Hobbes states “ANALYSIS is ratiocination from the supposed construction or generation of a thing to its efficient causes or coefficient causes of that which is constructed or generated [i.e., corresponding to Descartes reduction of a thing to its smallest parts]. And SYNTHESIS is ratiocination from the first causes of the construction, continued through all the middle causes until we come to the thing itself which is constructed or generated [corresponding to Descartes reformulation of the parts] (*De Corpore* 20.6).
Fear itself is a nuanced term in Hobbes’s work (Blits 1989 Strauss 1989). In his discussion
two types of fear “the abject fear that grips men by nature...[and] Hobbesian fear, the ‘true
mood’ generated by the ‘true view’, [which] arises not from man’s initial blindness but from his
realization of his true situation” (Stauffer 2012, 7). This original or natural fear is not rooted in
the fear of other men or of spirits, but is a primal fear of all that is unknown (Blits 1989). For
man, particularly one that does not understand sense and the train of imagination, this fear is
all encompassing. The way that man deals with this fundamental natural fear is what leads to
the two more prevalent types of fear, that the fear of one another and of spirits. Man’s initial
interaction with the physical world is problematic, for the single thoughts of man are a
“representation or appearance of some quality or other accident of a body without us, which is
commonly called an object.” (I.1). The difficulty is that such an appearance does not tell us
anything about the external world per se, for the representation is only in the mind (Blits 1989,
417). Consequently, the appearance of something in the mind is the same waking as dreaming
(I.4). It is the way that man deals with this natural fear rooted in the senses that leads to the
two more common presentations of fear, that of spirits and of other men. For Hobbes, this
natural fear leads men to inquire into causes, both of his own fortune, but also of the things he
sees (XII.12). When that inquiry remains uneducated, it “leads men to hope and pray for the
providential care of ‘spirits invisible’” (Stauffer 2012, 7)77 and this is enhanced by “those that

77 Stauffer adds an additional statement that “Natural fear...goes together with a certain kind of presumption of
pride” (2012, 7). This connection is critical, for natural fear leads towards religion, rather than civil society, and, as
my previous chapter argued, religion is based upon the belief that God has spoken to man at some point, through
direct revelation. As I argued (above), the man who claims direct revelation may be motivated by vain-glory.
Hobbes’s concern over natural fear is that, rather than solving itself, it leads to a greater danger of unreasonable
are over-provident” (XII.5). Yet, contrasting this uneducated fear, Hobbes recognizes a rational fear which is based upon the “true mood” recognizing that man’s interaction with the world is inherently one of opposition and resistance (Strauss, 181; Blits 1989). This fear, unlike religious fear, requires “considerable effort” (Strauss 181) and directs man to control and conquer and direct the fear, ultimately leading to Leviathan. Hobbes notes the difference in these fears when he makes his famous statement “the passion to be reckoned upon is fear” (XIV.31). As soon as making this statement, Hobbes recognizes the division of fear into “two very general objects: one, the power of spirits invisible; the other, the power of those men they shall therein offend” and fear of spirits “hath place in the nature of man before civil society” (XIV.31). For Hobbes, religion is a dangerous effect of natural fear, not only because it competes with his political science, but also because it arises from natural ignorance and has temporal priority, rather than requiring detailed thought and effort in determining one’s true state.

It is in light of this that Hobbes realizes the necessity of dealing with religion and unsurprisingly located this detailed discussion in Chapter Twelve, aptly entitled “Of Religion”. The location of this chapter is critical because of both its temporal and symbolic placement. Given the competition between religion and Hobbes’s political teaching, the discussion of religion “occupies a special place in Leviathan, coming as it does immediately before the crucial series of chapters in which Hobbes presents the core of his political philosophy” (Stauffer, 2010). The location is not only important for its temporal place, preceding the larger political

---

78 Jan Blits explanation of the origin of knowledge, its sensual basis, and the preeminence Hobbes gives to touch, explains the foundational nature of man’s opposition with the world. See Blits 1989 418-421, particularly 420ff.
discussion, but also for the symbolic placement as the twelfth chapter. This use of the number 12 is important, as it is a demonstration of the continued use by Hobbes of Christian numeric symbolism.

It is clear that Hobbes recognized the numeric symbolism found within the number twelve, particularly in relation to authority or government (Craig 2010, 632-633). Hobbes notes the oft-repeated structure of twelve when he states, “(f)or as Moses chose twelve princes of the tribes to govern under him, so did our Saviour choose twelve apostles, who shall sit on twelve thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel” (XLI.7). Hobbes here recognizes that the religious connection of twelve is found in relation to political power and authority, as twelve ultimately sit on the twelve thrones. This recognition by Hobbes is an accurate representation of the Christian view, which sees twelve as uniquely tied to the tribes of Israel and the apostles (Bromley 1982). The existence of the twelve tribes and twelve apostles are themselves a symbolic fiction, for while Jacob had twelve sons, Joseph’s blessing and granting of land in Israel was always under the name of his children Ephraim and Manasseh (compare Genesis 49 and Numbers 1:5-15). Typically iterations which included Ephraim and Manasseh instead of Joseph omitted Levi, possibly because the tribe of Levi did not inherit land. No matter what the reasoning, the Biblical account always refers to the Twelve Tribes of Israel, but does so by including and precluding different tribes to fit twelve.79 This is similar to the reality of the twelve apostles, for there were technically thirteen individual men who were counted amongst the apostles. Jesus chose twelve men (Matthew 10:1-4), but upon the death of Judas, another,

---

79 For a helpful chart of the different iterations of the twelve tribes, including those who were included or omitted in each iteration, please see Felix Just, the Twelve Tribes of Israel (http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/History-12Tribes.htm)
Matthias, was chosen (Acts 1:26), yet they were still called the twelve apostles (Acts 6:2). Christian scholars echo Hobbes’s interpretation and present the numeric symbolism of the number twelve to be tied to “governmental perfection or rule” (Hartill, 1960, 119).

3.5.1 Ignorant and Rational Fear

Chapter 12, “Of Religion,” serves as the transitional crux which allows Hobbes to present his core account of political philosophy, particularly of the state of nature, in the subsequent chapter. It is because of this that Hobbes seeks to reform religious dogma, transforming it into a tool of the sovereign rather than a source of competition. To do this, Hobbes explicates his earlier controversial definition of religion: “Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed, Religion not allowed, Superstition. And when the power imagined is truly such as we imagine, True Religion.” (V.36) showing how religious thought is inferior and subservient to Hobbes’s political view. Hobbes examines the root of religion and seeks to muddle the distinction between ‘True Religion’ and ‘Religion’ by examining the causes and seeds of religion.

Hobbes begins by noting that “there are no signs nor fruit of religion but in man only” (XII.1), and since the only evidence of religion is found in man, it means that the “seed of religion is also only in man” (XII.1). The danger of this is that these seeds produce or at least possibly produce an understanding of God based upon fancy. Religion is a uniquely human consequence of the concern for security, and thus rooted in anxiety (XII.2,3,5). This anxiety is

80 Clearly the seeds produce religion, the question is whether that religion is factual. At this point, it is possible to hold that Hobbes asserts the existence of a legitimate eternal creator God. While it is not the point of this discussion to delve into the character of Hobbes’s God, a sufficiently detailed discussion about why the reader should question Hobbes’s discussion of religious seeds can be found in Stauffer (2011 pg 874 ff).
based in self-concern, seeking to find explanations for one’s own good and evil fortune (XI.2).

Stauffer explains further, “anxiety, according to Hobbes, is an inescapable feature of the human condition, because our awareness of the future coupled with our concern for ourselves makes it impossible not to be in ‘a perpetual solicitude of the time to come’” (872). It is that same self-concern which arises out of fear of death and wounds (i.e., one’s evil fortunes) that dispose a man to obey a common authority (XI.4) and therefore religion arises as a possible answer to man’s inclinations. Here one begins to see the problem for Hobbes: while fear and anxiety can be properly channeled for the creation of a peaceful society (i.e., the creation of the Leviathan, which removes the fear by imposing order), fear also may also lead men to religion. Hobbes makes this explicit when he recounts the purpose of cultivating the seeds of religion, which is “to make those men that relied on them more apt to obedience, laws, peace, charity, and civil society.” (XII.12). The danger arises when the person cultivating religion fails to see it as a means to assist human politics and sets itself up as an end of its own.

Hobbes notes that religion is unique to man (XII.1) and proposes two primary causes: Inquisitiveness into their good or bad fortune (XII.2) and the search for the original cause (XII.3). The first cause of religion, for Hobbes, is grounded upon anxiety; the fear of the future, i.e., the causes of fortune and pain, and this cause creates a perpetual worry on the way to secure himself from evil or procure the good (XII.5). “This perpetual fear, always accompanying mankind in the ignorance of causes (as it were in the dark), must needs have for

---

81 Hobbes’s presentation seems to present three causes: the search of causes of one’s own good and evil (XII.2), search for original cause (XII.3) and ignorance of causal relations (XII.4). This last cause appears to really be a subsection of the first: searching for causes when combined with ignorance. This also insinuates that there may be a search for causes of man’s good or evil fortune, which if combined with knowledge, would seem to be Science.
object something” (XII.6), which “the gods were first created by human fear” (XII.6). Since Hobbes is being careful to cover his religious reformation in language that would be acceptable to the Christians of his day, Hobbes quickly notes that this is “the many gods of the Gentiles” (XII.6). This type of rhetorical device, entitled suggestion by disavowal, is frequently used by Hobbes. It involves making a radical statement about religion, but then he immediately limits its application to Gentile or ancient heathen religions (Curley, 1992). This anxiety-ridden path to the belief in the divine is then contrasted a different train of thought that leads to belief in God, that of seeking the first cause (XII.6, see also XI.25).

Since man sees effects, he can reason back to causes, and “to the cause of that cause, and plunge himself profoundly into the pursuit of causes, [and] shall at last come to this: there must be...one first mover, that is, a first and eternal cause of all things, which is that which men mean by the name of God” (XII.6). Given this explanation it would appear that Hobbes is arguing there are two causes of religion: fear rooted in ignorance, and curiosity. Uneducated fear, the most direct competitor of Hobbes’s political philosophy, leads to the gods of the Gentiles, while curiosity leads to first mover. It would then seem, as if Hobbes provides a legitimate seed for the belief in a god, defined as the first mover (for a detailed analysis of the relation of this conception of God to the Christian view of God, please see Stauffer, 2010 873ff and the discussion below). Such a conclusion is false. While the passage appears to disaggregate the cause of religious belief into two different sources, Hobbes actually conflates them into one; both the search for “the causes of their own good and evil fortune” (XII.2) and “upon the sight of anything that hath a beginning, to think it had a cause” (XII.3) arise from the same and unique characteristic of man, that of curiosity (VI.35), which causes men “anxiety”
Curiosity in matters of great personal concern to us, particularly when tied with lack of knowledge, lead to anxiety. It is critical to remember that, for Hobbes, “passions are reduced to motions either toward or away from the objects that arouse our appetite or aversion, and it culminates in the reduction of appetite and aversion to desire and fear...all movement toward an object is desire; all movement away is fear” (Blits 1989). It is important to realize that fear has two objects: spirits and the power of men (XIV.31;Blits 1989, Stauffer 2012, Strauss 2011, 181). One is uneducated fear that seeks solace in the comforting fancies of dreams and imaginations (Strauss 2011, 181) and the other is itself a fear of ignorance, recognizing man’s true state and the desire to conquer and solve the unknown, which occurs “only after man has made a considerable effort” (Strauss 2011, 181). For Hobbes, these two causes are what lead to the divergent conceptions of God that is found within the world.

3.5.2 Seeds of Religion

In examining these causes of religion, Hobbes presents four “natural seed[s] of religion”: “opinions of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion towards what men fear, and taking things causal for prognostics” (XII.11) In the explication of these seeds (XII.11-20), a reader will notice that Hobbes carefully shows how three of them can be solved by a proper knowledge of causes, i.e., science. This is made clear when Hobbes argues that regarding an opinion of Ghosts, “there is almost nothing that has a name that has not been esteemed amongst the Gentiles... they have also ascribed divinity and built temples to mere accidents and qualities, such as are time, night, day, peace, concord, love, contention virtue, honour, health, rust, fever, and the like...” (XII.13-16). Hobbes’s dismissive tone regarding this seed reflects the wide
opinion of both his contemporary and modern readers. They would clearly admit that none of these things are actually gods. Why the change? While the rise of monotheism, particularly the Biblical version, had clear support in the rhetorical presentation (Smith 2001) as well as certain political factions (Smith 1976) of the ancient world, it also had a root in the rise of science. Because mankind has become wise in science and able to know more about the nature of these things, learning that they are not divine or ghosts, but are physical and even able to be manipulated, the power of ‘lesser’ gods over irrigation, fertility, and strength were diminished by the invention and progress of man. The logical consequence of this critique then, is that future knowledge from science has always shown that these opinions of ghosts are nothing more than man’s ignorance of the nature of things. Generally, this is exacerbated by poets because “there was nothing which a poet could introduce as a person in his poem, which they did not make either a god or a devil” and most of these ‘gods’ were invocations of their own passions and qualities such as “their own wit, by the name of Muses; their own ignorance, by the name of Fortune; their own lust, by the name of Cupid; their own rage, by the name Furies…” (XII.16). The most significant component of this presentation is the argument of Fortune. Fortune, for Hobbes, following Machiavelli, is no longer a mystery that affects man, but rather is a consequence of his ignorance. Or, to put it a different way, knowledge allows the controlling, or at least guiding, of fortune.

This critique is also applied to the second seed of religion, ignorance of second causes, which arise from clever men, who “have nourished and ordered [these theories] according to their own invention” (XII.12), combined with the ignorance of the majority of men in knowing what causal relations are (XII.8). The ignorance of causes leads men to “attribute their fortune
to causes on which there was no dependence” (XII.17). Just as opinion of ghosts led men to
deify physical things or qualities not understood, so ignorance of causes led ignorant men to
deify causal relations “the cause of fecundity to Venus; the cause of arts to Apollo; of subtlety and craft to Mercury; of tempests and storms to Aelus” (XII.17). Hobbes argues that these two seeds of religion arise from man’s ignorance, particularly of causes, which leads to deify the unexplained causal relationship. Hobbes’s explanations here show that these seeds of religion can be uprooted when the ignorant people realize that ‘god’ has natural and causal explanations. Hobbes recognizes that these seeds of religion will not find fertile soil given the scientific progress of modernity, for the goal of science is to explain causes and connections and, as such, will be the precipitation necessary for these seeds to grow.

Hobbes addresses the fourth seed of religion, that of taking what is causal for prognostic. Hobbes notes that such prognostics arise either from experience or from divine revelation (XII.19). Hobbes quickly notes that not all prognostications that claim to be divine revelation are so, for “the same authors of the religion of the Gentiles, partly upon pretend experience, partly upon pretend revelation” (XII.19) have led men to senseless answers of priests and oracles. While the dichotomy of prognostications could first appear to be those that are false, i.e., those that are only natural and arise from experience, and those that are true, i.e., those that are from divine revelation. Hobbes believes that not all prognostications from divine revelation are true. This clear emphasis on the rise of false prophecy, of course, is consistent with Hobbes’s overall view about revelation; that it ultimately rests not upon the word of the divine, but the word of man. This divine revelation may appear to be words from God, but in reality is little more than the “insignificant speeches of madmen,” or “Intoxicating
vapors,” or the pure deceit of “pretended conferences with the dead” (XII.19). From this, it is clear that prognostics claimed to be based upon divine revelation are, at best, mad or drunken statements or, at worst, pure deceit of “such men as have gotten credit with [the people] and can with gentleness and dexterity take hold of their fear and ignorance” (XII.19). One ought to read this section as a continuation of Hobbes’s irony of suggestion by disavowal (Curley 1992).

While Hobbes contextualizes each point about the Gentile religion, Hobbes wishes them to be applied to Christianity. This is made clear when, in his discussion of prophecy (XXXVI), Hobbes once again speaks of imposters of prediction of the future, who “pretend, by the help of familiar spirits or by superstitious divination” (XXXVI.8) upon which discussion Hobbes immediately reminds the reader “Of which (as I have declared already in the 12th chapter of this discourse)....” (XXXVI.8). Yet, this time, while the discussion begins with Gentiles, it quickly proceeds to instances of Biblical prophecy, which, upon the reminder of pretending and intoxication as discussed in Chapter 12, becomes linked by examples; similarity is seen particularly with the Witch of Endor (1 Sam 28:7-19) as pretending to conjure up the spirit of Samuel upon Saul’s request; and Saul having a spirit of God upon him, leading to speak in fits of ‘prophecy’ (1 Sam 18:10) (XXXVI.8). Prognostics, which are argued to be of divine revelation, are not so, are chance accuracies. Once a person has a reputation for predictions “by one causal event that may be but wrested to their purpose, then can be lost again by never so many failings” (XXXVI.8). The reputation and power gained from the initial correct prediction is not removed in subsequent failures, for men either fear or rely upon him, and are not likely to change that opinion quickly (X.8)
The other part of causal prognostication is entirely based upon the natural order, but because the majority of men are ignorant about causes or rare events, a single individual is able to utilize his special knowledge to appear prophetic. Just as someone learning the movements of the earth and moon could predict an eclipse, a fully natural occurrence, it would appear to the uneducated that this was an act of divination or magic. This act, while it would have coercive power by “taking hold of their fear and ignorance” (XII.19), would be nothing more than mere prudence for “prudence is a presumption of the future, contracted from the experience of time past” (III.10). The man who uses knowledge of natural events and prudence in order to convince mankind of the divine origin of their statements, is nothing more than a wise man deceiving the foolish. This is easily solved if the community of men is no longer ignorant, for they will no longer fear those things that they did not understand. First, they will realize that events, such as eclipses or the flight of birds are explained naturally, “for prudence is but experience, which equal time equally bestows on all men in those things they equally apply themselves” (XIII.2). As the belief in the explanatory power of reason and science takes hold, men will no longer fear those things which they still cannot explain, rather it will only be viewed as not yet explained, but inevitably explainable by known or soon to be discovered scientific knowledge. In this sense, Hobbes realizes that these three seeds of religion are able to be solved by his scientific project.

The seed of religion which is most troublesome, then, is the devotion to what men fear. While each of the previous causes are discussed in some detail—Opinion of Ghosts (XII.13-16),

---

82 Mark Twain’s Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court provides a humorous rendition of this thought, when Hank was to be burned at the stake, but uses the historic eclipse to convince the people and King Arthur of his divine powers, he immediately becomes viewed as a wise man and given authority.
Ignorance of Second Causes (XII.17), and Casual for Prognostic (XII.19)—it is the seed of devotion towards what men fear, which appears not to carry the same discussion. Arguably, this is because the whole chapter addresses this point. Hobbes is well aware that the fundamental or first principle upon which all religions are founded is that there is “an opinion of a deity, and powers invisible and supernatural” which “can never be ...abolished out of human nature” (XII.23). This fundamental principle, then, is not those ignorant seeds, but is grounded upon the seeking of knowledge, for “he that from any effect he seeth come to pass should reason to the next and immediate cause thereof, and from thence to the cause of that cause, and plunge himself profoundly into the pursuit of causes, shall at last come to this: that there must be (as even the heathen philosopher confessed) one first mover” (XII.6). Hobbes’s discussion of this leads to two problems. The first is the problem of the accuracy of searching the causes; the second relates to the qualities of the first mover.

In Hobbes’s discussion, he presents the process of discovering the first mover as a rational, but apparently easy, process of thought. However, just a short passage later, in discussing the faulty conception of incorporeal beings, Hobbes makes what appears in the context an almost throwaway line; “men that know not what it is that we call causing (that is almost all men) have no other rule to guess by but by observing and remembering what they have seen to precede the like effect at some other time or times before, without seeing between the antecedent and subsequent event any dependence or connexion at all” (XII.8). Hobbes is arguing that men frequently fall into the logical (post hoc ergo propter hoc) fallacy; man frequently presents things that merely correlate as causation. This raises the fundamental problem: mankind will frequently assert false causes as the origin of events. And worse, this
rarely happens in isolation, for in the tracing of causes to its first point, men will build false cause upon false cause and their final assertion becomes completely wrong. It is as if parallel lines were just a few degrees off; the more distant the lines are from their origin the further apart they get. In light of this, the reader must question the ability of man to actually follow causes accurately, and in following them each subsequent step may be farther from the true cause. Most men who reason backward will reach a conclusion about something that, though temporally prior to the object under examination, is not necessarily or precisely the cause of such occurrence.

But, arguing that a few, perhaps highly enlightened souls, could reason back by tracing true causes, Hobbes argues that the final conclusion is “one first mover, that is a first and eternal cause of all things, which is that which men mean by the name of God” (XII.6). Of course, this first cause is the object called God, and, as such, deserves man’s honor and fear (see XXXI.8-36, especially 33). Since this discovery was made by rational inquiry, it presents a seed of religion that presents fear based upon ratiocination. As Stauffer points out, this rational inquiry “would seem to lead...to belief in and even Knowledge of God. But the question remains: “Who or what is the God he has in mind here” (2010, 873). It is important that Hobbes prefaces his statement with “what men mean by the name God,” for rather than arguing that this is the God of Christianity, he merely is saying whatever people say about God cannot mean any more than this, that he is the first mover. This God is not spirit incorporeal for “men may put together words of contradictory signification... yet they can never have the imagination of anything answering to them, and therefore, men....choose rather to confess he [God] is incomprehensible, and above their understanding, that to define his nature by spirit
incorporeal" (XII.7). Further, “to come to such knowledge ...is not possible by natural means only” (E.W. 4.61). The primary qualities Christians attribute to God are not in fact part of this first mover. Additionally, this first cause is itself incomprehensible,83 but “the name God is used not to make us conceive him (for he is incomprehensible...), but that we may honour him” (III.12). Despite the passing agreement between Hobbes’s statement and the Christian statements, it becomes evident that Christianity does not fully maintain this as they attribute to God qualities of justice, mercy, grace, and love. It appears that Hobbes contradicts this position of the unknowability of God, for in contrasting the path to the Gentile religions, Hobbes states that “the acknowledging of one God, eternal, infinite, and omnipotent, may more easily be derived from the desire men have to know the causes of natural bodies” (XII.6). Here Hobbes provides three qualities of God, which are typically associated with the Christian religion; however, he is cagey in noting these qualities “may more easily be derived”84 from the search of causes. It is upon his conclusion of causes that the reader finds out the first mover is the “first and an eternal cause of all things” (XII.6). This insinuates that the conditional ‘may’ is not true, for the final conclusion is only an eternal first mover. All other attributes given to God speak not about him, but of man’s own incapacity to understand or desire to honor this being (E.W. 4:68 and XXXI.17). The qualities of God that are derived from rational inquiry into causes are less associated with the Christian God, for Hobbes admits that this first mover “even the heathen philosophers confessed” (XII.6).85 The type of God that is derivable from rational fear,

---

83 As discussed earlier and in Chapter 2, Hobbes appears inconsistent in his presentation of God as incomprehensible, for if God is merely the first cause, it seems, as recent arguments present, that the science can explain and comprehend the first cause of the world.

84 Emphasis added.

85 For a detailed examination of the qualities of Hobbes’s first mover as well as a comparison with Aristotle’s version, see Gorham 2013 13-16.
if it can even be accomplished by most people, does not resemble the God of Christianity (Stauffer, 2010).

Beyond just being different from the God of Christianity, this view of God most closely resembles a belief which Hobbes himself deems as atheism. Hobbes notes that inquiry into causes will lead men to conclude there is one “first mover, that is a first and an eternal cause of all things” (XII.6). Further, it is necessary to remember that this first mover must be corporeal, for all a man knows is sensual (I.2) and God and Spirits are corporeal (EW.4.309; XLV.8). Yet, the idea that there is an eternal body would mean that at least part of the world is not created, a position which is eerily similar to Hobbes’s definition of atheism. Hobbes notes that to declare “the world was not created, but eternal is to deny there is a God” (XXXI.15). Thus, Hobbes is careful not to say that the prime mover is God, for his declaration in XII.6 is rightly understood to be denial of the existence of God, however Hobbes notes that such a prime mover is “what men mean by the name God” (XII.6). Thus, Hobbes alters the definition of God to be, what is now called, the Big Bang. Ultimately, Hobbes’s argument of inquiry into causes may lead to a first mover, and to offend religious adherents less, that first mover can be “named God”, but this is such a minimal standard, it is ultimately a denial of the God of Christianity and revealed religions.

There is an additional critique of Christianity: for clearly rational inquiry cannot provide knowledge of the attributes of God that are distinctive to Christian belief. Hobbes’s inquiry into causes does not save religious belief; rather it indicates that Christianity’s belief is not derived from such inquiry, relegating it to the same seeds as the Gentile religions- ignorant fear. This is made clear, when Hobbes later argues, that “all formed religion is founded at first upon the
faith which a multitude hath in some one person” (XII.24). Thus, Christianity is not actually founded upon the inquiry into causes, but rather is equally founded upon the ignorant fear that is the seed of Gentile religion. This is what Cantalupo indicates, when he states “For Hobbes the ‘Foure...seeds of Religion,’ whatever their differences in culture, are not all that the Gentiles and Jews have in common. The fruit of these seeds is also the same” (1991, 88). Though divergent in some areas of the previous analysis, Cantalupo fully acknowledges that the seeds of religion offered by Hobbes are in fact the seeds for both the Gentile and Jewish (and subsequently the Christian) religion.

Cantalupo makes an important point that not only does all religion, whether Gentile or Christian, share the same seeds, it also shares the same fruit for “all religions spring from the same seed of fear and are meant to bear the same fruit of ‘civill [sic] Society’” (1991, 90). This fruit is made clear in Hobbes’s discussion of the founders of ‘Gentile’ commonwealths, such as Numa, Mahomet, and the founder of Peru who, seeking to facilitate the acceptance of their laws deceived people into believing that their laws were “the dictates of some god or other spirit” (XII.20). It is important to realize that Hobbes sees a critical use of religion, i.e., it can bolster the civil society. This means that religion itself is not an end, but is a means to civil peace, for “these and such other institutions, they obtained in order to their end (which was the peace of the commonwealth)” (XII.21). It is with this understanding of religion, as a means to an end, that Hobbes can offer a supportive guidance for any authors of religion.

86 Given both the idea of suggestion by disavowal combined with the recognition that the Gentile religion and the Judaic Christian religion is rooted in the same foundation, this criticism of Numa and other Gentile leaders could also be directed towards Moses who, alone went to the top of a mountain for forty days, before descending with the two tablets of law. Thus, indirectly, Hobbes is criticizing the giving of the Mosaic Law and Ten Commandments. This criticism is leveled both at the denial of their divine origin and in the admission that their purpose is solely for the peace of civil society.
3.5.3 The Use (and Abuse) of Religion

Hobbes turns away from critiquing the seeds of religion to a lesson in the cultivation of those seeds, so any ruler can properly utilize religion for the goal of Hobbesian society: peace (XII.25-31). Hobbes begins to offer advice to religious founders or reformers, i.e., those who “addeth to it when it is already formed” (XII.25). Religious reformers, Hobbes argues, lose their reputation through “enjoining of a belief of contradictories” (XII.25) or things which “appear to be signs that what they require other men to believe is not believed by themselves” (XII.26). These expositions partially explain why Hobbes was so careful in his attempt to solve contradictions between his philosophy and religion, as well as why Hobbes gives an appearance of orthodoxy. Yet, Hobbes also warns that religious founders must not be “detected of private ends”, for this indicates a self-interest in the formation and reformation of religion (XII.27). This does not mean that the founders ought to only be altruistic, rather it is to ensure that the self-interested motives are not found out for they are detrimental to a religion designated to help others. Finally, Hobbes notes that such religious founders and reformers must root their doctrine in the use of the “operation of miracles”; for “in supernatural things, they require signs supernatural” (XII.28). With the latter, of course, it is not Hobbes admitting to the existence of supernatural miracles; rather it is his encouragement of founders of civil society to use their prudence and greater knowledge to convince the citizens of their ‘supernatural’ powers. That Hobbes is providing a warning for the cultivation of religion within society is clear in his three case examples. “First, we have the example of the children of Israel” who rejected the worship of God and followed Baal because the “miracles failing, faith also failed” (XII.29). Second, “when the sons of Samuel, being constituted by their father judges in Bersabee, received bribes and
judged unjustly...so that justice failing, faith also failed (XII.30). Third, the growth of Christianity “may reasonably be attributed to the contempt into which the priests of the Gentiles of that time had brought themselves, by their uncleanness, avarice...” (XII.31). Chapter 12, after having examined the foundations and seeds of religion, recognizing it as a competitor for the sovereign, Hobbes concludes with advice for how the sovereign can use religion as a tool, how to not make himself subject to revolution, and how to reform religious beliefs to support his power. It is apparent that Hobbes himself followed this advice, while using the wider freedom in religious publication during the English Revolution, Hobbes was able to appear orthodox, hiding his own private and self-interested ends, but show that miracles are natural and any prudential man can use them to guide the over-provident. This explains why it is necessary for such a detailed discussion of religion to precede his presentation of the origins of civil society.

Hobbes believes not only that the primary seed of existing religion in his day is based upon ignorant fear, but also that the seed that is based upon rational fear does not lead to any modern religion, rather it is closer to scientific determinism, which, though atheistic, is the only possible ‘natural religion’. Hobbes must still deal with the fact that there is a seed of the natural fear of man, which creates “an opinion of a deity” and such fear “can never be so abolished out of human nature” (XII.23). The only way to solve it is to provide an “artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended” (Intro). The artificial man solves the rational fear and offers a way to use the irrational fear to support the goal of peace. This interpretation insinuates that Hobbes’s description of religion in Chapter 12 is to divest man of ignorant religious causes, present an argument of rational fear which culminates the discussion of the problem of mankind in the
state of war, and show how the religious systems are nothing more than “the different fancies, judgments, and passion of several men [,which] hath grown up into ceremonies so different than those which are used by one man are for the most part ridiculous to another” (XII.11). Since religions are founded by men, they should serve the larger purpose of mankind and be used or abused to support the power of the sovereign in the appropriation of peace. As Stauffer notes, interpretation of religion found within Chapter 12 is designed to “reshape ‘divine politics’ on the model of a civic religion under the sovereign’s control, so as to make Biblical religion as compatible as possible with ‘human politics’” (Stauffer, 2010, 876).

His critique is both a demotion of religion and also a replacement of it with modern science. As Craig notes, these are inherently opposed, for “Hobbes’s most concentrated references to knowledge of causes (hence, Science) and ignorance of causes (i.e., Want of Science) is in respect to religion” (Craig 2012, 20). This is why Chapter 12 plays the transitional role into the detailed discussion of the state of nature. Rather than a solution to man’s fear that divides mankind into various sects, Hobbes seeks to lay the foundation for man’s achievement of knowledge and science, while directing the existence and guidance of a civil religion for the maintenance of a peaceful society.

3.6 Forty and New Birth after Trial

The final example of Hobbes’s numeric symbolic critique comes in reference to the number forty, which is the most frequently used round number in the Bible (Bromley 1982, 558). The importance of the number forty is derived specifically from its relation to the natural, for the period of gestation is forty weeks (Sacks 1990, 59; Pinker 1994, 164) and, during the time of ancient Israel, the rise to adulthood came at forty years of age, and thus the
generational division was forty years (Bromley 1982, 558). The understanding exhibits that forty is tied to the periods of waiting, maturation, and renewal. As exemplified in the book of Judges, periods of rest or oppression lasted forty years (Judges 3:11, 5:31, 8:28, 13:1). This symbolism of forty is often tied to the particularly instances where the period of waiting is accompanied by trial (Johnston 1990 85-86, Davis 1968, 122-123), as witnessed in the forty days and forty nights of rain during the Flood (Genesis 7); four hundred (40 x 10) years of captivity in Egypt (Genesis 15:13), the Israelites’ forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 14:33), Nineveh given forty days to repent (Jonah 3:4), and Jesus’ forty days of fasting leading to the temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). The number forty signals the transition from a period of waiting and/or trial to a new direction or new birth. It is then, as Sacks put it, a period in which it seems as if “nothing happens, but without which nothing could happen” (Sacks 1990, 59). As evidenced by the other numeric critiques, it ought to come as no surprise that Hobbes’s chapter 40 is a discussion of Ecclesiastical power. For Hobbes’s theological political goal to take root, it is necessary to give birth to a new understanding of the powers of the church, such that they do not, as they frequently had previously, come in conflict with the sovereign’s power and societal peace. Chapter 40 is “Of the Rights of the Kingdom of God, in Abraham, Moses, the High-Priests, and the Kings of Judah” (XL.title). As the previous chapter discussed, the term ‘Kingdom of God’, for Hobbes, has been transformed to mean exclusively the political nation of

87 It is not the author’s contention that these numbers are historically accurate, however it is contended that “The abundant occurrences of the number forty indicate that it was used as a rounded number rather than an exact figure” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 558). Additionally, the intertextual analysis leads to this conclusion, as Gen 15:13 indicates that Israel’s captivity would be 400 years, while other texts indicate it more precisely at 430 (Exodus 12:40-41 and Galatians 3:16). This lack of historic accuracy in no way diminishes the meaning of the number forty, rather it indicates that the author chose to symbolically represent things in order to point out a more specific point than the mere mathematical number. In this sense, the very nature of such usage supports its symbolic meaning.
Israel established by covenant, particularly under Moses prior to the kings (See the previous chapter and Hobbes XXXV.11). Given this specific understanding of the Kingdom of God, one may wonder whether the discussion of the rights in a kingdom that, even according to Hobbes, no longer exists (XXXV.11) has any generalizable principles, but, for Hobbes, there are clear lessons that apply both to sovereigns and religious groups.

It is in this discussion that Hobbes provides an important redefinition of the understanding of the authority of religion, particularly in relation to the civil sovereign. And it is in this chapter that Hobbes not only undermines the religious authority of *Lex Dei* and consequently the whole Mosiac Law and subsequent structures erected on its foundation, like Christianity; he replaces it with the *Lex Regis* and the Erastian position of the church in full subjection to the state.

Hobbes presents Chapter 40 as a truncated history of the political power of ancient Israel from Abraham to the Kings of Judah, the only true “Kingdom of God”. This recounting is not a mere historical lesson. Rather, Hobbes seeks to establish certain new interpretations that give rise to his teachings of the *Leviathan*. Perhaps the most radical re-interpretation arises in Hobbes’s presentation of the relationship between Moses and the people of Israel, particularly on the source of Moses’s authority. Hobbes admits that Moses’s authority is not directly derivable from the covenant God made with Abraham (XL.6) and, as such, Moses renewed the covenant with God, which provided the source of his authority (XL.5). But, Moses’ covenant is different than Abraham’s: while Abraham’s sovereignty was derived from his generative and

---

88 The discussion of the components, uniqueness and interpretation of political entities established by covenant is a topic for the subsequent chapter.
parental authority (XL.1, see also XX for discussion of parental authority), Moses’s authority is derived from conquest.

Earlier, Hobbes argued there are two sources of dominion, either paternal or despotic. Paternal dominion derives from the authority a parent has over his child (XX.4) and is the source of authority as founded upon the Abrahamic Covenant (XL.1-4). Despotic dominion, on the other hand, is derived from conquest (XX.10). While most often this is exemplified in conquest on the battlefield, there is no reason why it cannot support the rise of a usurper as a new source of authority. This is made clearer when Hobbes argues that the right of dominion arises not because of the conquest, but because of the consent given to the new leader (XX.11). It is precisely this type of authority that Moses developed over the people of Israel, for “Moses had no authority to govern the Israelites as successor to the right of Abraham...His authority, therefore, as the authority of all other princes, must be grounded on the consent of the people and their promise to obey him” (XL.6). It may seem radical to assert that Moses’s authority is an example of despotic dominion, for the people of Israel were not conquered by Moses, but followed him of their own volition. Yet, such conclusion is the logical outworking of Hobbes’s thought. According to Hobbes, Moses’s authority is derived neither from his link to Abraham, nor his conferences with God, rather “his authority...depended yet merely upon the opinion they [the people] had of his sanctity...” (XL.6). The key is that Moses’s authority rests in an opinion, an opinion that need not be true, but one that was religious. Such opinion is a legitimate form of power, because people believe, even falsely, that the object has the reputation they ascribe (X.5). Just as chapter twelve provided guidance on the utility of religion

89 Italics added.
for the establishing of political rule, so chapter forty shows a prime example of such guidance being accomplished and concludes that even authority granted from false religious signs still provide ground for obligation. “Whereas signs and miracles had for end to procure faith, not to keep men from violating it [faith], when they have once given it [faith]; for to that men are obliged by the law of nature” (XL.10). Hobbes indicates that once faith, which is always placed in a person (see VII.5 and discussion above) has been given to someone, it is not necessary to provide continuing miracles to obligate continued obedience, rather the obligation of obedience is derived from the consent given to the original signs.

There is a fundamental problem, for if Moses’s authority is based merely upon the opinion of the people, then his authority would be undermined as soon as that opinion changes. This conclusion is specifically mentioned by Hobbes, when he states “which opinion coming to change, they were no more obliged to take anything from the Law of God which he [Moses] propounded to them in God’s name” (XL.6). It must be recognized that Hobbes’s careful explanation of the rights of the Kingdom of God, though consistent with his previous teachings, clearly undermine the legitimacy of Moses’s rule and the subsequent “kingdom hereditary” (XL.7). Not only does this argument provide a subtle doubt of Moses’s divine authority - since his authority is based upon the disproven existence of miracles (XXXVII), but further it argues that religious authority, as well as political authority, are founded in the same source: sovereignty through consent.90 It is this reason that Hobbes attempts to show that the “kingdom hereditary” of Moses was a unification of religious and political authority. According

---

90 The consent is validated even if it is grounded upon a false opinion (X.5), for the opinion of someone having power draws men who need protection to that person who consent to his rule, which then grants actual power (X.5 with XX.15)
to Hobbes, the priests had the power to declare war, make peace, and serve as the final judicial authority (XL.9), such that “the civil and ecclesiastical power were both joined together in one and the same person, the high priest” (XL.9). They received the authority of Moses, such that the subsequent authority of the priests was not merely religious, but was also political. While at the time of the judges, there was “no sovereign power in Israel”, the right of authority remained with the priests, whether or not they exercised such authority (XL.10). While the rise of the kings in Israel signified the end of God’s unique covenant with the people where “God was their king, and governed the civil state of their commonwealth” (XXXV.10), through the priesthood. “And yet God consented” to the rule of the Kings.91 Hobbes is careful to indicate that such transition in rule did not mean a division of religious and civil authority, as one might expect. Rather, “there was no authority left to the priests but such as the king was pleased to allow them” (XL.11). The unity of religious and civil authority continued even as the form of rule changed. It is this unique characteristic that Hobbes is hoping to emphasize through this chapter. The division of civil and ecclesiastical authority arose through a mis-reading and desire for personal gain for “by the same holy history that the people understood it not...so that they always kept in store a pretext, either of justice or religion, to discharge themselves of their obedience whenever they had hope to prevail” (XL.12 and 13). In light of the fact that people kept an escape clause to their obedience to the sovereign, man was often embroiled in controversies over actions or over the proper time to invoke conscious and religious disobedience. From this reservation, “proceeded from time to time the civil troubles, divisions,

91 Hobbes seems to be ironically using the term consent in this case, for it does not appear as if God had the choice to not consent. As Hobbes states God “was cast off by the people, with the consent of God himself” (XL.11). God’s consent appears less to be willing transfer and more a statement of an acceptance of the inevitability.
and calamities of the nation” (XL.12). In this way, Hobbes seeks to correct the false division by acting as the midwife birthing a new understanding for all religious adherents and argue that in Israel “the government both in policy and religion were joined, first in the high priests and afterwards in the kings…” (XL.10). This new history applies to modern society because the sovereign is the continuation of the voice of God, for “whosoever in a Christian commonwealth holdeth the place of Moses is the sole messenger of God, and interpreter of his commandments” (XL.7). By the position of Moses, Hobbes seems to mean the person who has taken dominion and whose authority is derived from the consent of the people; i.e., the sovereign. Hobbes reads this history of the Kingdom of God to support the view that authority over religion and politics resides exclusively with the person to whom the people covenanted, the Sovereign.

3.6.1 Executive Lessons of Abraham

This conclusion had been established from the opening of the chapter, for in examining the content and context of the original covenant with Abraham, Hobbes establishes critical standards for the interaction of religious and political principles. The principles established with Abraham are universal principles of sovereignty which guide the interaction of religion and politics. It is important to realize that Hobbes’s goal was to reinterpret scripture in ways that were consistent with his political goal, and thus, like in the first chapter of particular words, here Hobbes uses an example which would allow those who hold to Christianity to accept the religious authority of the civil sovereign, because the unification of religious and civil authority, as interpreted by Hobbes, is grounded upon the foundation and example of the people of God.
in Abraham. Hobbes presents three critical lessons derived from the example of the Abrahamic Covenant.

First, such covenant was originally and specifically created for Abraham and his seed, was made solely with Abraham making him, to borrow a phrase from the Christian tradition, Covenant head. (XL.2, for Christian use of the term see Pink 2002, 377). For Hobbes, this role of Abraham was critical because his covenant “had a lawful power to make them [his seed] perform all that he covenanted for them” (XL.2). Given that Abraham was father, his paternal dominion gave him the authority of “civil sovereign” (XL.3, see also XX.4-8). To the mind of the Christian reader, Hobbes seeks to provide an interpretive reason why the religious authority and political authority reside in the hand of the sovereign. Given Abraham’s complete control over the obligations of his, even unborn, children, Hobbes concludes two things. Since the family/citizens did not hear directly from God, they must rely directly and exclusively upon their sovereign “to receive the positive commandments of God” (XL.2). And while Hobbes admits there is a certain private realm of belief, which is in the exclusive realm of the individual’s conscience (XL.2, see also XXI.18; XXXI.12; XLI.11; XLVII.21 and chapter 4). Of course, in order to prevent “the civil troubles, divisions, and calamities of the nation” (XL.12), which often proceed from this reservation of private belief, Hobbes establishes the corollary principle.

This second lesson is necessary to ensure that the nature of the individual, that of a distinct and private belief, does not undermine the unity and peace of society. Therefore, Hobbes argues that the sovereign’s exclusive authority to ban and forbid any religious doctrines he wishes, and maintain the power to “punish any man that shall oppose his private spirit against the laws” (XL.3). Hobbes recognizes that the existence of private opinions may find
fruition in the religious texts, and thus, in order to add weight to the ability to make certain opinions unlawful, Hobbes also argues that “none but Abraham in his family, so none but the sovereign in a Christian commonwealth, can take notice what is or what is not the word of God.” (XL.4). This power, which ultimately extends to the ability to declare what is or is not orthodox, derives from Abraham as the sole communicator with God.

Since communication was solely between God and Abraham, as Hobbes states, there arises “a third point: that as none but Abraham in his family, so none but the sovereign in a Christian commonwealth, can take notice what is or what is not the word of God” (XL.4). The sovereign, then, is the funnel through which all communication from God to man is directed. Of course, this position also opens the possibility, as Hobbes would clearly support, of the sovereign filtering or injecting other words into the stream. The unstated implication is that Abraham or any sovereign can claim anything, even that which is not the word of God, to be the word of God. This is consistent with Hobbes’s previously discussed changing of the meaning “scripture”. For Hobbes, since no one can know what is or is not the word of God, the question is what is legally the word of God, and that is solely in the power of the sovereign. It is therefore from Abraham’s covenant that Hobbes derives a religious explanation for the unity of religious and civil authority in the hands of the sovereign. This type of argument would make the unity of civil and spiritual power in the hand of the sovereign more readily accepted. Further, Hobbes’s argument in the fortieth chapter serves as a re-birth, providing the modern civil sovereign the same authority which was found in the Bible, where “both the supreme civil power and supremacy in divine matters were always conjoined in the one and the same person” (XL.14, and ft 12).
3.7 Conclusion

As this chapter indicates, Hobbes’s ordering of *Leviathan* is, at least in part, purposefully designed in order to support his overarching rhetorical purpose. Symbolism is not a new concept in the work of Hobbes (Strong 1993, Ostman 2012). In light of the above examples, it becomes evident that Hobbes utilized a form of numeric symbolism in order to further his critique of religion generally, and Christianity particularly. This is evidenced by the internal consistency and use of Biblical numeric symbolism (Craig 2010). Such interpretation helps explain why, as some commentators have noticed, certain chapters in *Leviathan* offer no clear reason why it ought to follow the previous chapter (Cantelopo, 61). This interpretation continues to show support that Hobbes’s religious project involved solving “the political threat posed by Christianity [by bringing] it under the firm control of a powerful sovereign and to justify this by an appeal both to natural reason and to innovative reinterpretation of Christian revelation” (Seaman, 1999).

As shown through a detailed analysis of chapters 3, 7, 12, and 40, one can see that not only is Hobbes offering a critique of religious belief, but he is offering a solution: Unified power in the sovereign, who has power over both religion and politics combined with the ever increasing knowledge that arises from Science through true understanding of causes.
CHAPTER 4

UNDERMINING OBLIGATIONS TO GOD

4.1 Introduction

As presented in the first two chapters, Hobbes alters religious words and uses numeric symbolism to weaken an individual’s attachment to Christianity. This is done as a calculated use and alteration of religious language and ideas in order to undermine Christianity. Despite his theological critiques, Hobbes does not merely do away with religion, rather his method is a reformulation of religious concepts in order to make them consistent with civil society placing him firmly in the civil religion tradition (Beiner, 1993). One of Hobbes’s primary concerns regarding religion was the practical effect Christian beliefs have upon the action of the citizens, noting “The most frequent pretext of sedition and civil war” which arises when citizens must choose to “obey[] at once both God and man...when their commandments are one contrary to the other” (XLIII.1). Hobbes reformation of religious language is designed to show there is no conflict between the command of the sovereign and the necessities of religious belief. One way Hobbes accomplishes this reformation is to address the basis of human obedience to God. Hobbes examines common arguments of why a Christian is required to obey God and through his analysis, shows that these arguments are false forms of obligation.

Obligation plays a central role in Hobbesian, and all, political theory as it provides an argument for the legitimacy of the authority structure and the subsequent obedience rendered to it. As Skinner notes, “the concept of obligation became a major issue at two moments in the constitutional upheaval of the seventeenth century” (2002, 270). Hobbes’s particular iteration of obligation is so central to his political doctrine that contemporaries and scholars often used it
has a heuristic to determine if someone was or was not a Hobbist (Skinner, 1972, 116). Hobbes’s intense interest stemmed from the recognition that competing objects of obligation were the most frequent causes of civil war. This often arises when man thinks he is obligated both to the civil sovereign and to God, yet they offer opposing commands (XLIII.1). This raises the question of whether there is an inherent tension between man’s obligation to the sovereign, as derived from man’s natural right and law of nature (XIV), and the obedience to God. This question has led to divergence of opinion in Hobbesian scholars. Some have argued that for Hobbes, obligation, particularly to the natural law, necessitated a belief in a God because such laws can only be obligatory if they are understood to be the commands of a higher power (Martinich 1992; Taylor 1938; Warrander 1957). Others, have argued that Hobbes’s emphasis on reason and the individual permits an understanding of obligation as merely enlightened self-interest (Darwall 1995, Nagel 1959, Newey 2008) or identical to prudence (Peacock 2010), and therefore do not necessitate a deity. This latter view is held by John Locke, who recognized that there is an inherent tension and direct opposition between a Christian theory of obligation and that promulgated by Hobbes (ECHU.1.3.4). While not directly entering into the discussion of obligation in relation to the natural law, though agreeing with the latter interpretations, this study wants to examine something that the vast majority of Hobbesian scholars seem to miss, or perhaps ignore: that the specific linguistic presentation of Hobbes’s forms of obligation in relation to the creation of civil society is rife with religious words and rhetoric.

An exception to this is Martinich’s brief page and a half (138-139) summary of Hobbes’s use of religious rhetoric in chapter XIV. While Martinich is correct in understanding Hobbes’s intentions of the use of the religious rhetoric, however Martinich notes that the presentation is “odd”. The oddity, for Martinich arises because of his presupposition of Hobbes’s Orthodoxy, for “I take Hobbes intention here to be religious” and while his discussion may subvert some religious concepts, Martinich argues “I do not see any feature of his account that should lead one to think that Hobbes is consciously trying to subvert the idea of grace” (emphasis added, Martinich 139).
This chapter argues that to properly understanding Hobbes’s theory of obligation in relation to civil society, one must recognize Hobbes’s own framing of his creation of the Leviathan as an example of mimicry of the Biblical creation account. Secondly, it shows that Hobbes’s view of obligation seeks to alter the Christian understanding of the terms of future promises, grace, and faith; showing that these are false forms of obligation and cannot be the source of man’s obligation to obey the commands of God. Third, it shows how Hobbes uses the religious connotation of the covenant tradition in order to strengthen man’s obligation to the commonwealth.

4.2 Mimicking the Imagery of Creation

Hobbes’s frames his philosophic and political tomes as mimicry of God’s act of Creation (Miller 1999, Brandon 2001). Hobbes addresses the reader in Elements of Philosophy, noting:

Philosophy, therefore, the child of the world and of your own mind, is within yourself; perhaps not fashioned yet, but like the world its father, as it was in the beginning, a thing confused...[I]mitate the creation: if you will be a philosopher in good earnest, let your reason move upon the deep of your own cogitations and experience; those things that lie in confusion must be set asunder, distinguished, and everyone stamped with its own name set in order; that is to say your method must resemble that of creation (EW.I.XIII)

Similarly, in the introduction to Leviathan Hobbes draws the reader’s attention to the similarities between his account of the construction of the Leviathan and God’s act of creation noting that Leviathan is a descriptive manual for the establishment of an artificial man, which is an imitation of nature, “whereby God hath made and governs the world” (Intro.1). Hobbes

Martinich’s continued attempt to present Hobbes as orthodox leads him to necessarily conclude that there was undermining of religious doctrine but “this was an unintended and (for Hobbes) unforeseen consequence of his work” (Martinich, 8). However, by removing the blinding presupposition, one can not only provide a clearer interpretation of Hobbes use of religious rhetoric, one can show why it was far from ‘odd’ but rather careful undermining of Christian belief.

93 Emphasis added.
insinuates that he will guide mankind to the pinnacle of human achievement; “this generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that Mortal God” (XVII.13). Through his deifying the creation, Hobbes is showing how his work is an imitation, and an improvement, on the natural creation by God. Yet, this imitation is not merely a reference to a general idea of creation, rather for Hobbes, his Leviathan is a direct mimicry of the creation account in the book of Genesis, for “The pact or covenants by which the parts of this body politic were at first made...resemble that fiat or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the creation” (Intro.1). In order to properly understand and recognize the relation of religious words and thoughts in his account of obligation, it is first necessary to recognize that Hobbes has primed his reader to view the foundation of the Leviathan as imitation of the Genesis account. The similarities between these accounts can be found most explicitly in the origin and means of the act of creation.

In both the Biblical account and Hobbes’s account, creation involves taking a chaotic formless void and establishing order and design (see XIII.9 and Gen 1:2-31). As the Biblical account notes, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep” (Gen 1:1-2). Scholars have recognized that the translation is not so simple, for the Hebrew word for “beginning” has no article (Kass, 27), and given that Hebrew is written without vowels, the word could be bereshith, which would mean in the beginning “of” and typically requires an object, or bereshith, which would mean “when creation began” (Sacks 33). Thus, it could refer to the beginning of time or to the first, or beginning of God’s acts of creation. Robert Alter interprets the phrase consistent with this latter view, noting that it is not a declarative statement, but as a
subordinate clause. He, therefore, translates it “When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth was welter and waste and darkness over the deep....” (Alter 3). The interpretive difference is whether the creation of God was ex nihilo or whether there was a lacuna between the beginning of the Earth and God’s ordering of pre-existing matter. However, perhaps the most interesting and difficult phrase is the description of the world as “unformed and void” or “welter and waste”. The Hebrew tohu vavohu is used only two others times, both which are references to this passage, making interpretation difficult (Alter, 3). Though a precise interpretation is difficult, it is clear that the earth was chaotic, lacking structure or direction. This phrase also plays a critical component in the subsequent narrative, as it provides the interpretive framework for the subsequent creation story in which God molds and fills the earth (Kass, 2003, 27; Strauss, 1997, 362).

Similarly, Hobbes’s creation account begins with the mankind in a formless and wasted state (XIII). It would not be incorrect to view Hobbes’s presentation of the chaos of Man in the state of nature as a direct critique of the incompleteness, or weakness of God’s creative act. Hobbes clearly argues his Leviathan is “an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended” (Intro.1) denigrating the sufficiency of God’s creation. By subtly pointing out weakness of God’s creation, particularly the

94 While the issue of Biblical creation is not widely discussed by Hobbes, it would seem that Hobbes follows the Jewish tradition, explicated by Rashi, in which creation is not ex nihilo. This is most clearly evidenced in his argument for God’s corporeality, combined with his eternality. This would indicate that some type of matter pre-existed the actual creation, or formation of the world. While such an opinion would have been in the minority during Hobbes’s time, contemporary 21st century Christian scholarship has begun to accept that there is linguistic evidence that God’s creative act was to put a form to the Chaos (Waltke 1981) and have shown that ex-nihilo creation was not a Christian doctrine until 200 A.D. in reaction to philosophical challenges (Bockmuehl 2012; Young 1991)
inability to defend oneself, Hobbes shows that God’s creative act\footnote{This argument should not be construed to say that Hobbes is defending man as a creation of God, rather, it is presenting the critique that Hobbes’s claims imply to those who would hold such a view.} not only failed to reach self-continuation, but that it relies upon another new creative act for survival. Thus, Hobbes presents man, as created by God in a similar state of Chaos as the earth was prior to God’s formative efforts. Hobbes argues that mankind, in their natural state, is a solitary individual and completely unconnected with others, having “no pleasure, but on the contrary a great deal of grief, in keeping company…” (XIII.5) This disconnectedness leaves man unwilling to collaborate because they are in constant competition for scarce resources, which whether there is fighting or not, places man in a state of war (XIII.8) Beyond being a mass of formless individuals, Hobbes presents life in the state of war as being a “wasteland”, as mankind does not improve nature, lacks arts, letters, and science (XIII.9). Mankind is not only lacking in all the comforts of life; such existence is truly “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (XIII.9). Just as in the Biblical account, the lack of form and waste creates an interpretive framework for the subsequent creative actions, so for Hobbes the bareness of the state of nature summarized in Hobbes’s famous statement, is the framework for the solution of civil society: providing man commodious living, wealth, peace, science, and long life. Mankind is removed from this chaotic primitive existence through the artful creation of an “artificial man” (Intro.1). This creation of the civil state provides form and shape to a desolate and wasteful solitary human life, providing mankind the means to a bountiful and peaceful life.

Yet, Hobbes’s imitation of the Biblical account is not merely related to the origin, but Hobbes also commends that “your method must resemble that of creation” (EW.I.XIII). It has
been noted that before each act, God “spoke” in order to create (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26). That foundation of the world should begin through speaking, which presupposes language, serves to note the subsequent centrality of speaking in the Biblical canon, for not only is the Bible presented as the word of God\textsuperscript{96} Jesus himself is called the word of God (John 1:1) and faith and salvation comes through words (Romans 10:17). Importantly, as Von Rad notes “The idea of creation by the word preserves first of all the most radical essential distinction between Creator and creature. Creation cannot be even remotely considered an emanation from God . . . but is rather a product of his personal will.” (1972, 51-52). The link between the creative act of speaking to will is central to understanding Hobbes imitation. Hobbes, like the Biblical account, argues that the act of creating the Leviathan is a product of man’s will (VI.53) and arises when each man renounces and transfers his right (XIV.7). Hobbes notes that this act of transfer is specifically done through the spoken word when “every man should say to every man ‘I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him and authorize all his actions in like manner’” (XVII.13). Just as the creative act of speech indicates the centrality of words for the rest of the Bible, so Hobbesian speech plays a central role for Hobbes’s political theory; speech is ultimately a non-natural transformative technology that not only distinguishes man from beasts, but allows the advent of science (Pettit, 2008, 2).\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{96} As held by orthodox Christianity. As discussed in Chapter 2.4, Hobbes’s understanding of the Bible as word of God is completely different than the traditional orthodox view.

\textsuperscript{97} It is beyond the capacity of this section, chapter, or even dissertation to address the full importance of speech and words to Hobbes’s thought. consult Philip Pettit’s Made With Words (2008) argues that for Hobbes, the invention of words distinguishes man from brutes, and leads to think reasonably, personate, and incorporate. It should be consulted for a more detailed discussion of this topic.
Hobbes himself notes that the use of words in establishing the covenant is a direct mimicry of God’s creative act, for “covenants by which the parts of this body politic were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the creation (Intro.1) Given this connection to the Biblical story of creation and the importance of the use of words in such a creation, it becomes even more critical to examine precisely what words Hobbes uses in the discussion of obligation, with a particular emphasis on the religious words. Just as Hobbes uses, but modifies for his own purposes, the religious account of creation, he also uses religious words and modifies their connection to obligation.

4.3 Removing Man’s Obligation to God Through the ‘Time to Come’, ‘Grace’, and ‘Faith’

A reader, particularly one primed by the awareness of Hobbes imitation of God’s act of creation, becomes distinctly aware that Hobbes’s analysis of obligation is rooted predominately in the use of religious words: faith, grace, covenant, and future hope. The discussion of these terms arises in Hobbes’s chapter “Of the First and Second Natural Laws and of Contracts.” Given this title, it may seem that political obligation is a topic semi-detached from the more prominently featured natural laws. However, such diminishing of the centrality of obligation within these chapters would be in error, because obligation and contract are necessary consequences of his second law of nature: “That a man be willing, when others are so too...to lay down his right to all things, and be contended with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself” (XIV.5). This law, rooted in a fundamental equality of mankind, requires that each person know whether others are also willing to divest themselves of certain rights. Given the equality, individuality, and formlessness of man in the state of nature, it becomes difficult to determine when and how individuals are willing to lay down their
rights. In order to address this, Hobbes creates a tree of different derivations of the ideas of contract and obligation. Obligation, for Hobbes, involves the transfer of right and/or object (XIV.6-7), or as Beackon and Reeves explain a conceptual transfer and a mechanical transfer (1976, 475). The conceptual transfer, or transfer of right, is based upon signs of express or inference, generally verbal (XIV.13-14). For Hobbes there are a variety of interactions available in these transfers based upon, the interaction of four critical components: number of parties, time of transfer, transfer of right, and transfer of object all create different forms of obligation. Critically, some of these forms do not actually create a true obligation, rather they are false forms and at best, create a mistaken impression of an actual obligation.

As noted, words play a central role in the construction of Hobbes’s political theory (Pettit 2009) and are the central creator of obligation. As Figure 4.1 indicates, according to Hobbes, the number of parties, time of transfer, and item transferred create different categories and terms, which are either true or false forms of obligation. Perhaps even more important than the distinct categories are the rhetorical terms, which are used to define the different forms of obligation; each category includes very specific religious terms, which are related to the Christian view of obedience and thereby obligation to God. It must be remembered that Hobbes rejects the argument that man is obligated to obey God either because man is created by God or because God’s omnipotence subjects all men to his authority.

---

98 Hobbes notes that “signs of contract are either express or by inference. Express are words spoken...Signs by inference are: sometimes the consequence of words, sometimes the consequence of silence...a sign by inference of any contract is whatsoever sufficiently argues the will of the contractor” (XIV.13-14). It is not inconsistent with this argument to argue absence of speech, particularly in a case where one would expect the opposite, is a use of speech.
As noted, words play a central role in the construction of Hobbes's political theory (Pettit 2009) and are the central creator of obligation. As Figure 4.1 indicates, according to Hobbes, the number of parties, time of transfer, and item transferred create different categories and terms, which are either true or false forms of obligation. Perhaps even more important than the distinct categories are the rhetorical terms, which are used to define the different forms of obligation; each category includes very specific religious terms, which are related to the Christian view of obedience and thereby obligation to God. It must be remembered that Hobbes rejects the argument that man is obligated to obey God either because man is created by God or because God's omnipotence subjects all men to his authority. The latter is rejected, not only because the creation story in Genesis cannot be known to be the
word of God (XXXIII.4-6, see also Ch 2.3.1) but also because the only creator that could be known is a “first mover” (XII.6) which has little to no relation to a personal God which requires obedience (Stauffer 2010, Ch 2.4.2). Neither being the creature, nor God’s power subject all men to obey because “in the kingdom of God are not bodies inanimate..., nor atheist, nor they that believe not that God has any care if the actions of mankind” (XXXI.2). Subjection to the authority of God is derived from His ability to “propound rewards and punishments” to mankind (XXXI.2) and the natural kingdom of God is ruled “by the natural dictates of right reason”, and hence obligation to the natural law is rooted in the reason, prudence, and self-interest of the individual (Darwall 1995; Nagal 1959, Newey 2008; Peacock 2010). It is no accident that Hobbes’s careful delineation of the different categories is expressed by the use of religiously-laden words, and show that Christian who believe in God’s rewards and punishments are also not obligated to obey God in anyway contrary to the civil sovereign. In order to understand the implications of this observation, it is first necessary to examine the two situations that are thought to be obligatory, but in reality are false forms of obligation.

The reason Hobbes turns to discuss these forms is because, unlike the state of nature where it is clear that there is no mutual obligation between men, these false forms give the appearance of creating an obligatory relationship, and thus at least one party of the relationship may believe he or she is obligated to the other. Given this, it becomes clear that Hobbes desires to attach numerous religious words to these concepts of obligation in order to show that common and orthodox understanding of these terms as religious descriptors are false forms of obligation.

4.3.1 Non-Obligation of Future Words and Grace
While obligation arises from words, Hobbes is clear to note that not all words create an obligation. There are instances when words may appear to play the role of creating an obligation, but, in reality, nothing is actually being promised. For Hobbes, this is seen most clearly when parties, either one or more, merely appear to verbally agree to a future transfer of right (XIV.15 see also DC II.6). Such a promise involves no actual transfer, either of the object or even the right to the object. This type of future promise takes the form of “tomorrow I will give,” where neither the object nor the right to the object is yet transferred (XIV.15). For Hobbes, these are empty words or a bare promise (XIV.14). Obligation requires a past or present transfer of something, whether it is the object itself or the right to the object; i.e. a conceptual transfer and a mechanical transfer (Beackon and Reeve 1976, 425). Any complete transfer involves both the transfer of the right and the mechanical transfer of object itself, though these need not happen simultaneously (XIV.10). Hobbes carefully distinguishes between those transfers which include a present transfer of right, but also include a future transfer of the object and those words which are merely express the desire transfer the right and object in the future, where no conceptual or mechanical transfer has occurred. This latter category is considered bare promise or mere words (XIV.14) often expressed through the phrase “tomorrow I will give” (XIV.14), and are indicative of a present lack of giving. This is distinct from, “I will that this be thine tomorrow’ for the word I will … signifies an act of the will present” (XIV.14). The central distinction between words which create obligation and ‘bare words” is found in the temporal aspect of the words. Words that are descriptive of the future giving of the object, but involve the present transfer of right do create obligation (XIV.10, DC II.6 and 8), but words that merely indicate a desire, hope, or intention to engage in a future
action are meaningless. A casual reader may view this discussion, at best, as tangentially related to religious rhetoric however, such a reading is inaccurate. The emphasis on meaningless future words is understood by Hobbes to be a direct critique of religious beliefs and is designed to undermine and create doubt regarding the obligatory relationship between God and man.

There are two clear indications that Hobbes wishes this thought to be applied to Christianity. The first indication of this arises from Hobbes’s description that, “Words alone, if they be of the time to come, and contain a bare promise are...not obligatory” (XIV.14).99 Notice Hobbes’s use of the definite article ‘the’ prior to ‘time.’ This indicates a specific future time that is on his mind, not an abstract possible future. The future, for Christians, is the promise of eternal life in heaven. It is this which is THE future promise, based upon the words of Christ. As Jesus states, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:3). Salvation, which contains the promise of eternal life, is a future promise since the object is not obtained until man’s resurrection, i.e. some future time far past each individual’s death (XXXVIII.3 and Ch 2). Secondly, Hobbes links bare words with the idea of grace, a central word in religious rhetoric. Hobbes notes that “Words alone...contain a bare promise, are an insufficient sign of a free-gift” (XIV.14) and that “Free-Gift, [and] Grace, which words signify one and the same thing” (XIV.12). Just as Chapter 2 indicated Hobbes’s re-interpretation of Hell was necessary to weaken man’s fear of death, so Hobbes teaching on obligation has undermined the promise of heaven. Through this connection, Hobbes attempts to show that neither promises of salvation in the future, or free-

99 Emphasis added
gifts of grace create an obligation for man to obey God, or for God to provide eternal life.\textsuperscript{100} Such promises of heaven are mere words, or to put it in the words of Shakespeare, they are “sound and fury, signifying nothing” (Macbeth 5.5) and are meaningless expressions.

Hobbes causes men to question whether scriptural promises are anything more than mere conjecture. Hobbes is careful to explain that eternal life is to be enjoyed upon earth (XXXVIII.3). This immortality, however, is not inherent in human nature, or their soul, rather it is an artificial provision by God (XXXVI.4; App III.20). The question becomes on what basis is man to know whether they will or will not receive such a gift. Hobbes is clear that there mere proclamation that such a state exists is insufficient basis for an individual to assume s/he will partake. Further, even Christ’s words to his disciple are bare words for “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:3). Jesus words are not a transfer of right, rather they are a conditional IF, indicating that they are a bare promise. Therefore, Hobbes has asserted that words which merely contain future promises, free man from the obligation to obey God because such promises do not actually contain the conceptual transfer of right.

However, Hobbes is aware that many Christians argue it is not there mere promise of eternal life which obligate obedience, it is that God “was please of his mere grace to bestow eternal life upon the faithful” (XXXVIII.4). As the Westminster Confession notes, man is obliged to obey the commandments of God, because “the graces they have already received” enables

\textsuperscript{100} While, to my knowledge, there is no theologian who argues that God is obligated to provide salvation to man, it is equally implausible that, following a Christian view, God would create a perfect world, allow it to be corrupted, and just allow that. Additionally, this view is spoken from the human point, and thus while it may appear to man that God’s promise of salvation in the future creates an obligation for salvation, this would be false.
them to (WCF XVI.3). Grace, according to scripture is a free-gift of God given through Jesus, which justifies man and gives the promise of eternal life (Rom 5:15). Thus, Christians would argue that God has already transferred the right to eternal life through grace. This is consistent with Hobbes’s understanding of Grace (Fig 1). What is important to realize is that Grace is purely a unilateral transfer of right. Hobbes, through his account of grace, not only brings doubt upon the motivation for God’s grace, but also argues that whatever the motivation, grace is a false form of obligation.

Hobbes clearly links the idea of grace with that of a gift, or free-gift, for “Gift, Free-Gift, Grace…signify one and the same thing” (XIV.12). For Hobbes, a free-gift is a unidirectional transfer of right or an object. As such transfers are unidirectional, it is necessary to understand the motivation for such an act. For Hobbes, there is one dominant reason why someone would offer grace or a free gift: for gain. (XIV.12). This insinuates that there are no altruistic acts, but all acts stem from the giver’s desire to obtain something. The specific motivation of the giver varies from individual to individual. Some may “hope to gain thereby friendship or service from another (or from his friends)...or in hope of reward in heaven.” (XIV.12). Not everyone is seeking pure physical gain, some givers act so others will perceive them as a respectable person; therefore, they are seeking the “joy arising from imagination of man’s own power and ability” (VI.39), i.e., glory. This perception of power can occur when the giver has “the reputation of charity or magnanimity,” or may even be a private attempt to ease the

101 It is interesting to note that prior iterations of Hobbes’s political thought does not include the word ‘Grace’ as synonymous with ‘free-gift’ (DC II.8). It is thus an important addition to Hobbes’s idea that he specifically uses the word Grace. Given that the Leviathan is a more complete expression of Hobbes’s ideas, particularly his religious critiques (Strauss 2012), the added word should be viewed as a direct critique of the Christian understanding of Grace and obligation to God.
conscience, such as when someone donates to charity in order “to deliver his mind from the pain of compassion” (XIV.12). Despite the clear expressions of motivation for free-gifts, there is the clear absence of any altruistic motivation. This glaring absence indicates that for Hobbes, while the recipient of the gift may not bear any direct cost; the giver is not acting out of pure goodwill, but seeks some benefit. This argument subtly insinuates that God’s free-gift of grace given to man is not without some desired gain for God. Further, of the motivations given, the only one that fits is an increased reputation for magnanimity, which means that God is seeking the passion of glory.

Whatever God’s motivation in His extension of grace to man, Hobbes argues that any such transfers of grace are non-obligatory. Hobbes is clear that Grace cannot create an obligation because it is a unidirectional transfer, and as such does not necessitate or require a reciprocal response. Grace cannot have conditions or necessary responses placed upon the recipient, or else it can no longer definitionally can be a free-gift. Hobbes sets up a logical quandary: either the gift of grace contains reciprocal obligations, in which case it cannot be considered a free-gift or fulfill the definition of grace, or it is truly a free gift in which there are no reciprocal responses laid out in the giving/receiving of the gift. For Christians, this leads to the choice of either denying that Grace is freely given by God, a detrimental theological admission, or that Grace is truly free and does not obligate man to obey God. Hobbes does indicate that those who give grace at best can “hope” for a response, i.e., have an “appetite with an opinion of attaining” (VI.14), but cannot expect it, and definitely does not obligate one. Therefore, God’s grace to man does not obligate a single individual to obedience, but may provide God the hope that such a response would occur. Ultimately, since Grace is a “transfer
or gift, [that] is not mutual” it by definition “not [a] Contract” (XIV.12) or any sub-form of obligation. This means that, according to Hobbes, the doctrine of the Christian church that “the grace of God is... to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God” (WLC Q32 see also Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 2:9) is wrong. For God does not “require[] obedience, as of gratitude for his benefits” (XXI.5) and any argument presenting man’s obligation to obey god as a consequence of God’s extension of grace to man is based upon a false form of obligation.

Since Hobbes shows that actions by God, either through promise of the future or even unilateral transfer of right through Grace does not create an obligation of obedience upon individuals, Hobbes also wants to address the concept of whether an individual can actually merit eternal life through obedience. As Hobbes mentions later, there are those, particularly Catholics and some Anglicans,¹⁰² who argue that man deserves salvation through obedience, if that obedience is “understood to be of the will”, which “God doth always accept for the work itself,” (XLIII.20). Thus, Hobbes turns to address the question whether an individual can earn such a promise through his own merit.

The question arises of whether man, by offering a free-gift or grace to God, can earn salvation either outright or by meeting pre-established conditions. Hobbes notes that the offering of grace is done for hope to gain thereby friendship or service from another (or his

¹⁰² The issue of merit and how it interacts with man’s justification is best explained by Thomas Aquinas (2006) in his Summa Theologica II.114.3. The Anglican view in the 39 articles, particularly XII and XIII resembles the Westminster Confession, however many Anglicans have proposed an interpretation more in line with the Catholic Doctrine. As Cardinal John Henry Newman argued in the 19th century, “The Article contemplates these two states,-one of justifying grace, and one of the utter destitution of grace.... However, there is an intermediate state, of which the Article says nothing, therefore, it is quite true that works done with divine aid, and in faith, before justification, do dispose men to receive the grace of justification” (Tract 90.3)
friends)...or in hope of reward in heaven.” (XIV.12). Mankind may think that his obedience
would make him a friend of God and receive a reward in heaven. However, the action does not
obtain the actual relationship or service, rather all it does is produce mere “hope” or as Hobbes
explicitly states; man may seek to obey God in “hope of reward in heaven” (XIV.12). The
premise of such thought is that men can, through the merit of their own action, obligate God to
make or provide the reward of heaven to those who obey

Hobbes is aware that the role of man’s merit in relation to salvation is a contentious
issue in Christianity because of the “distinction of the Schools between meritum congrui and
meritum condigni” (XIV.17). Hobbes, following the scholastic debates, divides the discussion of
merit into two forms: that which is out of justice, i.e. a reciprocal response based on what is
due, and therefore is derived from the “virtue of my own power and the contractors need”
(XIV.17) (meritum condigni); and merit out of “free gift, I am enabled to merit only by the
benignity of the giver” (XIV.17) or, perhaps simply liberality (meritum congrui).103 As Martinich
(1992) notes this debate is “rooted in the debates at the beginning of the Reformation between
Luther and John Eck” (141). This debate, and Hobbes subsequent discussion, seeks to address
whether man can earn salvation from God by first providing Him the obedience to his laws, and
thus create an obligation between God and man.

103 Few scholars have examined this Hobbesian discussion. While Martinich summarizes, and even contextualizes
the debate (138-142), he discounts its presence in Hobbes’s work noting that there is “no explanation for
[Hobbes’s] attempt to understand [meritum congrui versus meritum condigni] other than a deep intellectual
commitment to theology” (142). Unlike Martinich, Olsthoorn also examines the discussion of meritum congrui
versus meritum condigni, concluding that the discussion undermines the scholastic/Aristotelian theories of justice.
(2013, 25). I disagree with Martinich and argue that the discussion is central to Hobbes’s religious and political
ideas, and while not discounting the discussions relation to the topic of distributive justice as Olsthoorn argues, I
believe its primary importance is its relation to the surrounding discussion of obligation.
In a previous discussion of the transfer of benefits between people of different ranks (i.e. equals, superior, inferior) Hobbes notes that “benefits oblige” (XI.7). For Hobbes, that obligation is not an debt of action, rather it is a debt of in action. “[G]ratitude is such an honour done to the obliger as is taken generally for retribution.” (XI.7). The reciprocal debt of gratitude by the receiver of the obligation is an example of the fourth law of nature, “that a man which receiveth benefit from another of mere grace endeavor that he which giveth it have no reasonable cause to repent him of his goodwill” (XIV.16). This debt of gratitude does not require an action on the part of the recipient, rather it merely requires refraining from any actions which may insult, or cause the giver to repent of giving the gift. The meaning of “benefits oblige” (XI.7) cannot be interpreted as requiring either man to reciprocate an active obedience to God based upon grace, nor God to offer salvation in response to man’s obedience. However, the whole premise of this previous discussion insinuates that the second person received, or willingly accepts the gift, however it does not mean that a gift from A to unwilling person B creates, against person B’s will, an obligation from B to A. Hobbes makes this clear when he states “there being no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own” (XXI.10). This means the receiver of the gift is only obligated by the benefit received if he wishes to be obligated, generally signaled by the reception of the gift. However, the transfer of man’s obedience (conceptual and mechanical) in order to create a reciprocal obligation of salvation by God, cannot be merited by Grace, because it is definitionally no longer in the category of grace. The nature of God’s acceptance of man’s obedience in order to oblige salvation, means that God has transferred the conceptual right to salvation, and as such made a Covenant with man(fig 1) The difficulty with this situation is that according to Hobbes no man can make a
covenant with God (XIV.23; XVIII.3). Hobbes is clear mankind cannot, through obedience, make God obligated to provide eternal life. Hobbes is consistent with the Westminster confession (WCF XVI.V), argues that “No man can merit Paradise ex condigno” (XIV.17), i.e., as a right or payment from God for man’s obedience. No man ought to think that his obedience to God will create any obligation on behalf of God to fulfill future promises.

Yet, Hobbes is aware there is a second argument of how man may merit God’s promises. Rather than arguing a single actor unilaterally creating a reciprocal relationship of obligation, it argues that God offer of grace is not given to any person specifically, but offered generally to any or all who accept and follow the conditions. This is understood as *meritum congrui* salvation as a prize to be collected by those who successfully obey His commands. As Hobbes states; “God Almighty having promised Paradise to those men (hoodwinked with carnal desires) that can walk through this world according to the precepts and limits prescribed by him, they say: he that shall so walk shall merit Paradise ex congruo” (XIV.17). This type of merit does not insinuate that the merit obligates the giver to part with their right, rather it presumes that if/when the giver parts with the right, it goes to this specific person over that other person (XIV.17). This type of merit does not mean that man’s obedience creates an obligation on God, rather it argues that God’s promise is like “a prize propounded to many, which is to be given to him only that winneth” (XIV.17). According to this understanding, while man is not inherently obligated to obey God, any such obedience which meets the prescribed

---

104 This is exemplified in Hobbes statement “in this case of gift, I merit not that the giver should part with his right, but that when he has parted with it, it should be mine rather than another’s”
requirements does obligate God to provide salvation and enteral life, assuming he has offered such a gift.

There are, however three important things to notice in Hobbes’s explanation of this type of Grace. First, is that Hobbes himself does not believe it. After explaining the difference between these views Hobbes notes “but because disputers do not agree upon the signification of their own terms of art longer than it serves their turn, I will not affirm anything of their meaning” (XIV.17). For Hobbes, this attempted differentiation in the types of merit serves to obfuscate the meaning, rather than to clarify it. Further, Hobbes undermines the motives of those who engage in this type of debate, noting that they merely are aggrandizing and self-serving their preconceived positions. Secondly, Hobbes recognizes that the temporal progress of *meritum congrui* is problematic. For something to be grace, or a free-gift according to Hobbes, one side must engage in either or both the conceptual and mechanical transfer. Yet, in the position of *meritum congrui* such transfer is made generally, rather than specifically, leaving it wholly possible that no one actually merits salvation and thus it is a failed gift.105 Thirdly, Hobbes raises a skepticism over whether man can actually know whether God has offered a prize to those who obey. Hobbes notes that man can only obtain knowledge of God’s commands through mediators (XIV.23; XL.6). However, as shown in previous chapters, those mediators could not be Scripture, as it is unreliable and the authors are unknown (Ch 2.4; XXXIII.5-7); nor prophets for they are untrustworthy (Ch 2.4; III.7), leaving only the sovereign as

105 Given that the cost of offering the grace, according to Christian theology, is the physical torture and death of the Jesus, the Son of God, it would be imprudent to subject someone to this treatment if the goal were not, or even unlikely to be accomplished. This would insinuate that Christ’s death is in vain, which is a rejection of Christian Doctrine (Galatians 2:21), and while that passage is speaking specifically of *meritum condigno*, the principle of the impossibility of Christ dying in vain could be applied to *meritum congrui*. 
mediator (Ch 5, XL.7). This skepticism of whether God has offered the free-gift to be earned by
*meritum congrui* leads the possibility of man actually meriting salvation as nothing more than a
bet, or wager, that particular actions would obtain a particular outcome, but this bet is not
based upon probability, but only ignorance. Thus has Hobbes notes elsewhere “it could not be
the commandment of God that could oblige them, because God spake not to them
immediately, but by the mediation of Moses” (XL.6). Of course, the sovereign is holder of the
office of Moses (XL.7), and thus the only way to know whether there is an offer of salvation for
those who obey, is through the mouth of the sovereign. In this case, Hobbes’s concern is
alleviated, for if the civil sovereign mediates to man what the types of action are necessary to
obtain salvation, there is no longer a dichotomy between obedience to God and obedience to
the Sovereign (XXXI.1). Through carefully deconstructing the religious arguments which present
man as obligated to obey God because of future promises and grace, Hobbes has argued that
there is never an instance where commands of God conflict with the commands of the
sovereign since salvation is found in obedience to the sovereign. The discussion of the non-
obligatory factor of mere words and grace aligns perfectly with the surrounding theme of
alteration and undermining of religious rhetoric, as well as the broader goal of weakening the
individual’s attachment to the church. This latter aspect is the necessary consequence of this
teaching, for if God is not obligated to fulfill his promises, then man is not obligated to keep his
commands; if a man does not need to keep those commands, particularly as revealed in the
Bible and taught by the church, the scriptures and doctrine of the church do not contradict the obligation which is truly given to the state.\textsuperscript{106}

The rejection of the existence of a potential obligatory conflict between the city of God and the city of man is the critical point of Hobbes’s argument. Despite such a rigorous denial of man’s obligation to God some Christians may (falsely) continue to think they are obligated to obey God because their ignorance of reason and the precise meaning of words leave them susceptible to trust the teachings of others (XI.17-18). These deceivers, to augment their own power, claim an obligation to God through the use of repetitive (VIII.27) or metaphorical (V.4) words such as Hell. Thus, while some Christians may practically continue to assert an obligation to God, such claims are based upon incorrect reasoning and Biblical hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{107} Yet, Hobbes’s argument does not mean that Christians may not obey God; the critical component to realize is that Christians are not \textit{obligated} to such obedience. Particularly “in cases where the sovereign has prescribed no rule, there the subject hath the liberty to do or forbear, according to their own discretion” (XXI.18). This means that, if they choose to obey the commands of God, they may obey as long as that choice does not undermine a true obligation, particularly to the sovereign. This is a critical conclusion for Hobbes’s argument. No longer is it possible for a religious citizen to attempt to claim an exemption from obedience to particular laws of the

\textsuperscript{106}This reasoning is not immediately evident by a cursory reading of Hobbes, and as such may be missed by many men. This is partially what makes Hobbes’s work so subversive, for many people will read it and be willing to accept portions of his conclusions, even if they did not agree with his methodology. This is exemplified both in England (Parkin 1999, Parkin 2007) as well as throughout Europe (Skinner 1966). Hobbes recognizes that much of his teachings “are indeed great difficulties, but not impossibilities. For by education and discipline they may be, and are sometimes, reconciled” (R&C 4). This will happen, over time, for the \textit{Leviathan} “may be profitably printed, and more profitably taught in the Universities” (R&C.16), and from there the doctrines will disseminate to the gentry and religious preachers (R&C.16), who will see the consequences and then begin to simplify the ideas in their presentation to the laity.

\textsuperscript{107}See Ch 2.5 for a detailed discussion of Hobbes’s view of Hell and how his view of this doctrine prevents it being used as a more fundamental fear than fear of death.
sovereign based upon their ‘higher duty’ to God. Rather, their obedience to God, like all things on this earth, is subject to the authoritative decrees of the sovereign and any claims otherwise are not consistent with reason nor, according to Hobbes, consistent with the Biblical text. This interpretation eliminates the actual conflict between divine obedience and political obedience, through removing the religiously argued basis for divine obedience and arguing that only the political obligation truly exists (XLIII.22).

4.3.2 Undermining Obligation of Faith.

As the previous discussion shows Hobbes argues false forms of obligation exist when the transfers of right and the object are either wholly in the future or wholly engaged in by a single party. The true form of obligation must be both mutual and include a past or present component. The particular temporal relationship is critical to understand; future promises are non-obligatory, not because the item is attained in the future, but because there is no immediate transfer of right. Hobbes wishes to make it clear that there can be a future element of obligation, so long as it is not wholly in the future:

There is a difference between transferring of right to the thing and transferring (or tradition, that is, delivery) of the thing itself. For the thing may be delivered together with the translation of the right (as in buying and selling with ready money, or exchange of goods or lands); and it may be delivered some time after (XIV.10).

Beackon and Reeve (1976) have explained the difference between the transfer of right and the transfer of object as the conceptual link and the mechanical link in obligation (425). For obligation to exist, there must be a legitimate transfer in the past or present of the conceptual link, i.e., the right to the object. However, the differentiation between the time and parties of the mechanical transfer, or transfer of the object, is the basis for Hobbes’s different forms of
obligation. As Fig 1 indicates, if the mechanical transfer is mutually present or past, it is a contract (XIV.9). If one party transfers the object in the present and one party in the future, it is a Covenant (XIV.11), and if both are to transfer in the future, it is faith (XIV.11). The description of faith ought to cause the reader to re-consider Hobbes’s account, for having just shown that there is no obligation when based upon the bare words of a future promise, it would seem that faith, where neither side has yet attained the object, is only an apparent form of obligation.

Christians, particularly those emerging from the Protestant Reformation, who are seeking to establish the necessary obligation to God may point to their relationship with God as being based upon faith, the basis of salvation (Eph 2:8). While Hobbes did not fully agree with the concept of faith derived from the Protestant Reformation (Glover 1960, 284), he recognized the necessity of dealing with the idea in order to weaken the obligation to God. For Christians, faith is the present “assurance” of a future promise; as Hebrews states: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The centrality of the future is a key component for Hobbes’s definition, for while two or more parties have engaged in a conceptual transfer, neither has yet engaged in the actual mechanical transfer and thus both “are being trusted” (XIV.11) for their compliance to their obligation. This relationship then provides a new challenge for obligation: that of failure to fulfill. Rather than merely having an appearance of obligation with no real commitment, faith presents the possibility of making, but then breaking, that obligation. As Hobbes states, “Both parts may contract now, to perform

\footnote{This position is not as clear as it could be in the Leviathan, however, one can see Hobbes’s understanding and intention when turning to his previous writings, particularly in De Cive II.9 which “is a major, if not the major, direct source of Leviathan, and more specifically of its chapters XIII to XLIII” (Schuhmann, 2004, 28).}
hereafter, in which cases he that is to perform in time to come, being trusted, his performance is called *keeping of promise*, or *faith*, and the failing of performance (if it be voluntary) *violation of faith*” (XIV.11). The success of the future trust with others is, therefore, wholly dependent upon where one is located, i.e., in the state of nature or under a commonwealth. The commonwealth contains the power to keep men in awe and therefore “tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants...” (XVII.1); outside a commonwealth, which is the state of war “nothing can be unjust...force and fraud are the two cardinal virtues” (XIII.13). Seeing that Faith is “but trust”, it’s obligatory effect can only be found in the commonwealth. If faith is only obligatory in the commonwealth, this means faith cannot be the originator of obligation because it presupposes a prior obligation to enforce it.

Hobbes is careful to note that not all obligations based upon mutual trust are invalid, rather only those “where there is a fear of not performance on either part” (XV.15). This means that when such a relationship is established under the authority of a sovereign who compels obedience to covenants, there is no legitimate fear; for, “If a covenant be made wherein... [the parties] trust one another...if there be a common power set over them both, with right and force sufficient to compel performance, it is not void” (XIV.18). However, the corollary is also true: in a position where there is no common authority over both parties, the covenant

---

109 Emphasis added
110 Hobbes argues that God’s right over man is derived “not as Creator and gracious, [as traditional Christian Doctrine would argue, see Westminster Confession of Faith II.2; XIX.5; Calvin 1960, I.II.2] but as omnipotent” because “to those...whose power is irresistible, the dominion of all men adhereth naturally” (XXXI.5). This divine omnipotence, however, does not make all men subjects to God for “subjects...are not bodies inanimate, nor creatures irrational...nor atheists, nor they that believe not that God has any care of the actions of mankind” (XXXI.2). This indicates that the kingdom of God by nature is only a metaphor (XXXI.2) not a descriptive of the relation between God and man. Therefore, as Altini notes “the relationship between God and men corresponds to the concept characterizing the mutual relationship among men in the state of nature” (2013, 69, see 69-73 for most relevant discussion).
of faith is void because “force of words” between the parties of the covenant are “too weak to hold men to their performance” (XIV.31). It is clear that there is no power over both God and man, and as such the covenant of faith is mere words with no obligation, thus as in the state of nature, the relationship of faith between God and man is void (XIV.14).

Through faith, man is declared righteous, and therefore attains eternal life. Following Christian teaching, notes that eternal life is lost by Adam and regained by Christ. As a consequence of that faith, man transfers to God his duty to obey the commands of God. This indicates that if the relationship between God and Man were an actual covenant where God provides the promise of eternal life and man is obligated to obey the commands of God, it is a covenant of faith; i.e., neither side has yet fulfilled the promise. However, unlike covenants of faith created under the auspices of a civil state, where both sides are under the power of another to constrain obedience, there is no power above God himself. God’s fulfillment of the covenant is based solely upon His character and word. This would mean that, for Hobbes, such a covenant is likened unto that in the state of nature. Man’s fear, which may arise from any trail and tribulation, that God will not fulfill his side, would make the original covenant invalid, and thereby removes man’s obligation to obey God.

Hobbes goes one step further, to ensure that there are no doubts of man’s obligation to God: “To make covenant with God is impossible” (XIV.23). Hobbes is careful not to reject fully

---

111 Christians typically identify the moment of transfer of this right to eternal life as the moment of justification.
112 Hobbes also does say that the fear that makes a covenant void “must be always something arising after the covenant made” (XIV.20). It may be argued that the lack of an arbiter higher than God was known at the origination of the covenant, and thus does not void it. However, Hobbes has presented a careful argument which has, as shown in Chapter 2, changed the Christian understanding of the words of God, and as such changed their meaning. This new understanding provide a new cause of fear of God’s adherence, and thus Hobbes’s own teaching provide the new source of fear which invalidates the covenant of faith.
the existence of covenants with God, but seems to indicate they cannot be directly made
between man and God, for such covenants can be made “by mediation of such as God speaketh
to (either by revelation supernatural or by his lieutenants that govern under him and in his
name)” (XIV.23). Hobbes’s distinction of two types of mediators would, at first, appear to be
consistent with the broader Christian view, as it acknowledges the role of prophet, i.e., the
recipient of supernatural revelation, as a mediator between God and Man. As Hobbes discusses
elsewhere (XXXVI), and was explained in Chapter 2, Hobbes rejects that there is any way for an
individual to know if another\textsuperscript{113} is the recipient of supernatural revelation. This category of
mediator is excluded as no one can know if another truthfully fulfills it. The only mediator of
covenants between God and man is the individual who governs in the name of God, which is
the sovereign. Hobbes makes this explicitly clear, dropping the existence of a mediator by
revelation when he states “And whereas some men have pretended for their disobedience to
their sovereign a new covenant, made (not with men, but) with God, this also is unjust; for
there is no covenant with God but by mediation of somebody that representeth God’s person,
\emph{which none doth but God’s lieutenant}, who hath sovereignty under God.”\textsuperscript{114} In this later
iteration, Hobbes drops any type of mediator by supernatural revelation, because any claim to
such is unknowable.

This presentation has two consequences. First, it undermines Christians’ heavy reliance
upon their religious belief by reminding them that not only are much of their beliefs non-
obligatory, as previously discussed, but even the main obligatory force of Christian belief, faith

\textsuperscript{113} Or even oneself since there is great “ignorance of how to distinguish dreams and other strong fancies from
vision and sense...” (II.8)
\textsuperscript{114} Emphasis mine
may be violated and not create an ironclad obligation. Not only is it not possible to make a covenant with God (XIV.23), there is no authority over God, and thus there can be “no common power set, over them both” (XIV.18). The very nature of the Christian view of God precludes a higher authority, and therefore any covenant of faith is made “in the condition of mere nature” (XIV.18). Hobbes’s position indicates that man’s supposed obligation to obedience is not, in fact, obligatory, particularly when such promise is established outside the authority of a sovereign.

The second consequence is that there is a practical side of Hobbes’s use of such religious rhetoric. Hobbes is alert and knowledgeable of man’s psychological predilections, as well as the religious weight possessed by many of these terms. Hobbes seeks to use the term “faith” to correlate to the future mechanical transfer, in order to strengthen men’s fulfillment of those commitments. Hobbes does recognize the tension of covenants of mutual trust, and thus presents the third law of nature “that men perform their covenants made” (XV.1). This is an important principle because it does apply to the state of nature, and would seem to argue that even covenants of faith, must be kept. However, Hobbes quickly reminds the readers that such covenants are “invalid” (XV.3), or as said previously, “void” (XIV.18). They are, therefore, not a covenant which falls under the third law of nature. Hobbes, however, does recognize the tension between this third law of nature and the idea that it may be rational to violate the covenant. This is explained with Hobbes’s infamous discussion of the “Fool”. While such discussion is a twist upon a Biblical statement, it is not the place of the current discussion to delve into this difficult and widely discussed topic. For current discussion and debate of this aspect of Hobbes, see Hayes 1999; Hoekstra 1997 LeBuffe 2007; Lloyd 2004; Rhodes 1992; Springborg 2011. It is worth noting that the original fool, the one in Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 who denies there is a God, is not an idiot. Rather the person described is morally deficient, not mentally deficient (For a detailed analysis of this point, see Springborg 2010 and Springborg 2011). And just as Hobbes presents an unreasonable fool who seeks to undermine the laws of nature and obligations, so Christians, particularly Calvin, would interpret the Biblical fool to be reminiscent of Hobbes’s attempt to undermine Christianity. As Calvin says “To show how detestable this madness is, the Psalmist introduces them as distinctly denying that there is a God, because although they do not disown his essence, they rob him of his justice and providence, and represent him as sitting idly in heaven. Nothing being less accordant with the nature of God than to cast off the government of the world, leaving it to chance, and so to wink at the crimes of men that they may wanton with impunity in evil courses; it follows, that every man who indulges in security, after extinguishing all fear of divine Judgment, virtually denies that there is a God.” (1960 I.4.2). As this whole dissertation argues, Hobbes does not deny the essence of God, thus giving an appearance of faithfulness, however the implications of his religious rhetoric not only removes His justice (i.e., the promise of heaven and threat of hell Ch 2.5), but also denies His providence and divine control of the world (Ch 3.5). The effect of this is, as Calvin concludes, a virtual denial of God by neutering the attributes which make Him unique.

---

115 Emphasis mine.
116 Hobbes does recognize the tension of covenants of mutual trust, and thus presents the third law of nature “that men perform their covenants made” (XV.1). This is an important principle because it does apply to the state of nature, and would seem to argue that even covenants of faith, must be kept. However, Hobbes quickly reminds the readers that such covenants are “invalid” (XV.3), or as said previously, “void” (XIV.18). They are, therefore, not a covenant which falls under the third law of nature. Hobbes, however, does recognize the tension between this third law of nature and the idea that it may be rational to violate the covenant. This is explained with Hobbes’s infamous discussion of the “Fool”. While such discussion is a twist upon a Biblical statement, it is not the place of the current discussion to delve into this difficult and widely discussed topic. For current discussion and debate of this aspect of Hobbes, see Hayes 1999; Hoekstra 1997 LeBuffe 2007; Lloyd 2004; Rhodes 1992; Springborg 2011. It is worth noting that the original fool, the one in Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 who denies there is a God, is not an idiot. Rather the person described is morally deficient, not mentally deficient (For a detailed analysis of this point, see Springborg 2010 and Springborg 2011). And just as Hobbes presents an unreasonable fool who seeks to undermine the laws of nature and obligations, so Christians, particularly Calvin, would interpret the Biblical fool to be reminiscent of Hobbes’s attempt to undermine Christianity. As Calvin says “To show how detestable this madness is, the Psalmist introduces them as distinctly denying that there is a God, because although they do not disown his essence, they rob him of his justice and providence, and represent him as sitting idly in heaven. Nothing being less accordant with the nature of God than to cast off the government of the world, leaving it to chance, and so to wink at the crimes of men that they may wanton with impunity in evil courses; it follows, that every man who indulges in security, after extinguishing all fear of divine Judgment, virtually denies that there is a God.” (1960 I.4.2). As this whole dissertation argues, Hobbes does not deny the essence of God, thus giving an appearance of faithfulness, however the implications of his religious rhetoric not only removes His justice (i.e., the promise of heaven and threat of hell Ch 2.5), but also denies His providence and divine control of the world (Ch 3.5). The effect of this is, as Calvin concludes, a virtual denial of God by neutering the attributes which make Him unique.
promises. Knowing that a violation of faith is such a religious evil, men will be less likely to engage in such a violation, not merely because it may or may not be in their interests, but also because their moral psychology of religious guilt will check any action that would lead them to “violate faith”, Hobbes takes time to show that failure to fulfill an obligation is not merely a problem, but uses religious-laden rhetoric in order to provide a normative position: it is a “violation of faith” something no Christian ought to do.

4.4 The Use and Abuse of the Theo-Political Idea of Covenant

Having undermined man’s obedience to God through multiple avenues, Hobbes turns to his discussion of true forms of obligation. While Hobbes theory of obligation and the origin of political society is a well discussed topic in Hobbes studies (Warrander, 1957, Parry 1967, Mansfield 1971 Beackon and Reeve 1976, Baumgold 1987, Hampton 1988), some scholars have erroneously conflated the distinction between contract and covenant (Hampton 1988, 135-136). The overall focus on the term “social contract” has served to obfuscate certain distinctions and advantages of Hobbes use of covenant as form of obligation. While Hobbes was quite able to choose the legal term connected to Roman jurisprudence, or even use a neologism, he chooses a term that is religious, widely known, and possess its own connotations. This is done, not because of any weakness or inability in Hobbes’s reasoned

117 Hampton is correct in arguing that covenant is a particular subspecies of contract (1988, 136), but to subsequently dismiss this distinction as irrelevant is erroneous. Hobbes clearly makes the distinction and then builds his theory, not on contract but upon the particular sub-species of Covenant. This indicates there are qualities of Covenant that mere contract lacks, which are necessary or beneficial for Hobbes’s argument. I contend that one of those is the inherent religious connotation of Contract and its solution to certain “contractual” problems.

118 It is evident that the meaning of many of Hobbes’s key concepts is rooted in the contemporary religious debates and terminology, rather than a more ancient, particularly Roman, view. As Monicka Patterson-Tutschka has aptly shown that Hobbes’s conception of Natural Law, resembles, though is not a mere copying, of the “Pauline Framework” that was widely discussed from religious pulpits of the seventeenth century (Patterson-Tutschka, 2014 MPSA presentation).
arguments, but rather because of the rhetorical benefit and ease of acceptance that the choice of such a word would provide. Yet, Hobbes did not take the word *in toto*, rather Hobbes wished to use the political connotations, as well as alter some of its more religious meaning benefit of his political theory. The theological political idea of covenant is by no means unique to Hobbes; in the 16th century as it was undergoing a renaissance in usage. Arising in the post-reformation protestant thought, Calvinist scholars, sought to utilize the idea of covenant to understand both biblical and political relationships (Elazar 1996, 147; Kelley, 1992, Moots 2010). This emphasis was strongly found in the Scottish leaders who had entered into an “equally religious and political” covenant in 1581 and 1596 to defend the Reformed Church (Martinich, 143). It is clear that these religious ideas, at least in some way, influenced Hobbes own discussion of the Covenant (Lessay 2007; Reventlow, 1984; Martinich 1993; Elazar 1980). In light of this, it is necessary to trace briefly the idea of covenant.119

4.4.1 The Theological Root of Covenant

The idea of covenant has played a central role in the development of both Judaism and Christianity and is viewed as a central interpretive heuristic to understand the Bible. Jewish scholarship has recently revitalized the understanding and centrality of the covenant idea in both the origination and political structure (Elazar 1996; Freeman 1997). Christianity continued to view the covenant as a central doctrine, recognizing the division commonly known as the Old and New Testament ought to be understood as a change in the covenant relationship between God and man (Ward 2003). This division led many reformation scholars to focus upon and

119 It is impossible to fully trace the historic development or even the one contemporary to Hobbes. For more treatment with greater political emphasis please see Elazar 1996, 1998, Moots 2010. For a more theological treatment see Witsius 1803.
utilize the Biblical discussion of covenants as a framework through which they understood the
relationships, particularly of the redemption, between God and man (Witsius 1803). While most
reformation scholars were focused on the religious and theological meaning of covenant, they
aware of the underlying consequences which provided insight into political structures. This is
evidenced by one of the covenant idea’s most famous historic political usages in the Mayflower
Compact. It is necessary to recognize that “the covenant is as much a political as a
theological phenomenon. Perhaps it is best described as a theo-political phenomenon,
especially in its original biblical form.” (Elazar, 1997 10). Because the political usage of covenant
is inherently tied to its theological roots it is necessary to examine those biblical and historic
usages.

The Hebrew word for covenant, b’rit or beryth, is used 285 times in the Old Testament
and the Greek variant diatheke is used 30 times in the New Testament. B’rit has its etymological
root in the ritualistic of cutting of animals as a sign of a blood oath. This link between cutting
and covenant is not unique to the Biblical understanding. As Witsius, a contemporary of
Hobbes, notes in his seminal work on the Biblical covenant, the idea of cutting as
representative of an oath is a “rite we observe very ancient trace...This was either then first
commanded by God, or borrowed from extant custom. Emphatically is what Polybius...related
of the Cynaethenses ‘over the slaughtered victims they took a solemn oath’...” (Witsius 1803

---

120 As Mayflower compact states “We, whose names are underwritten...Do by these Presents, solemnly and
mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body
Politick” (Avalon Project). Despite its origin as a covenant, the document became known as the Mayflower
Compact in 1787 (Lutz 1980,106).

121 This is particularly evident in the Abrahamic covenant. The origination of the covenant arose through the
dividing and passing through the carcasses of sacrificed animals (Gen 15:9-10,27-18) and the continued sign of
membership in the covenant is in the cutting of the male’s foreskin (Gen 17:10).
I.1.v). Further, the historical significance as rooted in the ritual of cutting is not merely a useless bloody act, rather it was a visual representation of the dangers and punishment which violation of the covenant oath could bring, signifying the consequences of violation (Witsius 1803 I.1.vi). From this ancient lineage of ritualistic cutting, it becomes apparent that this covenantal form is an important component of ancient Near Eastern legal processes, as exemplified in the Hittites, Babylonians, and other Syro-Palistine peoples during the Neo-Assyrian period (725-612 BCE) (Weinfield, 1970). In order to understand the Biblical form, it is useful to examine the major iterations of the covenant form in the scriptures.

The Biblical presentation of covenants arose at the foundation of significant theological and political events. The word first appears at the conclusion of the flood story and is a covenant between God and Noah that the world would never again be destroyed through flood (Genesis 9). The idea of covenant re-appeared in God’s relationship to Abraham, clearly establishing covenant as a theological-political idea. The Abrahamic covenant was, at its base, an incorporation of an ethnic political entity with specific geographic boundaries and a singular religious identity (Genesis 15:18). From this founding, God’s covenantal relationship to his people continued both through expansion and renewal. This is seen in Moses’s reception of the Law of God on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19-20), the expansion prior to entering the promised land (Deuteronomy 29-30), a promise of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-37), and in the New Testament’s iteration Jesus expansion of the covenantal promise from ethnic Israel to all of

122 This is not to argue that there are no differences between the Biblical covenant and that of the Syro-Palistine people, for there are examples which do not include the sacrificial ritual, though they do typically contain a dramatized curse of some part, insinuating that sacrifice is a specific example of the punishment and sanction of failure to adhere to the terms of the covenant (see Ward 2003, note 4)

While the concept of covenant is central to much of the Biblical teachings, early fathers struggled with describing the relationship between the old and new covenant; for some, known as Judiazers, emphasized the Jewish heritage and the influence of the law. In opposition, Marcionites argued for absolute opposition between old and new covenant. Mainstream church fathers saw these as extremes and deemed them heresy (Elazar 1996, 30). Therefore, “perhaps because the idea of covenant presented a number of practical and theological problems, in the course of establishing its orthodoxy and endeavoring to unify the Christian system the church deemphasized covenant” (Elazar 1996, 32), at least until the protestant reformation which put “covenant at the heart of its biblical theology” (Lessay 2007, 245). The centrality of this doctrine quickly spread to Calvinistic protestants, including Dutch Calvinists (Witsius 1803), Scottish Presbyterians (Burrell 1958; Martinich, 147), English Puritans (Lessay 2007), and even had an influence in non-Calvinistic theology such as Dutch Arminians (Muller 1982) and strands of Anglicanism (Lettinga 1990; Lettinga 1993).

---

123 By no means are these an exhaustive list of the Biblical passages dealing with covenants, or even the specific covenant, either expressly or implicitly. Other passages include the Adamic Covenant (Genesis 2:16-17); The Davidic Covenant of Kingship (2 Samuel 7) as well as Christ’s redemptive work as continuation but expansion of the previous Jewish covenants (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 45-49; Galatians 3:7-9).

124 Ebonism and Gnosticism were the dominant doctrinal terms describing the groups. Both Ebonism and Gnosticism were held to be heresies, not only because of their view of the old and new covenant, but also for related doctrines. For a detailed account of the history, development, and beliefs of these groups please see Schaff History of the Christian Church Vol 2, Ch 11. (1997).

125 English Anglicanism was slower to fully adopt the idea of covenant theology, largely because of the prominence of that belief by the Puritans, who were opposed to the Anglican church, however there were significant movements and influences in the 16th and 17th centuries (Lettinga 1990, Lettinga 1993, Lewis 2005). Scholars have
It was specifically with the Scottish Covenanters that the idea of covenant became a true theological-political concept (Burrell 1958), for “Scotland is not only a bastion of covenantal religious thinking but it has consistently sought political expressions of covenant as well” (Elazar 1996, 270). The rise of covenantal ideas, both religious and political, rose under the leadership of John Knox and attempted to protect a specific Scottish identity from English intrusion (Elazar 1996). Not only was Hobbes familiar with the rise of covenant as a theological-political concept, he disapproved of its particular use by the Scottish Covenanters, calling it a “very great crime” (EW 4:418). There is, arguably, a veiled disapproving reference in the *Levithan* itself: “Whereas some men have pretended for their disobedience to their sovereign a new covenant...But this pretense of covenant with God is so evident a lie, even the pretender’s own consciences, that it is not only an act of an unjust, but also of a vile and unmanly disposition” (XVIII.3). This is interpreted a particular historic reference to the Scottish Covenanters (Martinich 1992, 146). Despite having major problems with the application of the Scottish covenant, Hobbes does not shy away from the use of the same religious word. It would be plausible that, in an attempt to build a political system that transforms the religious relation between church and state, Hobbes would use, or even create, a word that would not be laden with so many previous connotations by his readers, but he did not. He did not merely use ‘contract’ or any other term, but purposely chose to use a religiously laden term as the

---

noted that “Since the time of Richard Hooker, Anglicanism has been Covenantal” (Lewis, 2005). Additionally, during Hobbes’s own life, Henry Hammond, a royalist Anglican Minister strongly influenced by Richard Hooker, wrote a catechism to summarize Christian doctrine. Hammond’s work “transformed and revitalized Anglicanism, creating a consensus in the Church of England...” (Lettinga 1990). Like his puritan contemporaries, “Hammond’s whole theology as well as *A Practical Catechism* is based upon the doctrine of Covenant” (Lettinga, 1993 654-655) and the subsequent influence of his work “created a new sort of Anglicanism, which became dominant after the Restoration, and which can best be described as Covenant Anglicanism” (Lettinga 1990, 212).
originating relationship of his political philosophy. This insinuates that not only was Hobbes aware that the use of the word covenant would bring about connections to the broader theological understanding, but that he actually wanted to bring in some connotations of that word in order to support his theological-political goal.

4.4.2 Alterations to Covenant Idea

While Hobbes clearly saw benefit in the historic connotations of the idea of covenant, he also recognized that it could not be taken in toto to apply to his political theory. As Elazar (1998) notes, it is not that Hobbes followed the covenant idea; rather, he took the Covenant idea and secularized it (46). Hobbes altered the understanding of covenant by changing the relationship between the parties involved as well as de-emphasizing the religious nature of the third party witness who enforces the terms.

A dominant feature of the historic nature of covenants, both biblical and those within the ancient near east, is that they are made between parties that are inherently unequal; as Elazar notes, the word covenant established a relationship “between parties having independent but not necessarily equal status” (1981, 22). This can be seen in the Biblical covenants between man and God (Gen 9, Gen 15), or the historic covenants between ruler and vassal. In each covenant instance the parties where inherently unequal (Freedman 1964; Weinfeld 1970; Freidman and Miano 2003). Yet, scholars have recognized that because of this inequality, the historic iterations of covenantal forms often only obligate in one direction. While clearly the ruler can obligate his vassal, there is no ability for the vassal to obligate the ruler
This meant that if a ruler were ever obligated it is a self-imposed obligation, a “divine commitment” (Freedman and Miano 2003) or a “royal grant” (Weinfeld 1970). This means that for a covenant to be established a pre-existing, or even natural, inequality must exist. However, the presence of a natural hierarchy is problematic for Hobbes, as one of the fundamental premises of Hobbes political theory is the, at least assumed, equality of all mankind in the state of nature (XIII.1) a proposition that is necessary for his whole political theory (Mansfield 1971).

Given Hobbes’s argument of the natural equality of all mankind, he cannot accept a covenant which attempts to create unidirectional obligation upon another (see the previous discussion of Grace 3.2.2), nor can a person self-impose an obligation, because this means there is no “common power to keep both in awe” (XIII.8), which means any apparent obligation self-imposed by a superior is nothing more than bare words, or promise of the future. Thus, Hobbes has indicated, through the previous discussions of false forms of obligation that the traditional understanding of covenant must be changed, and must be changed because “all men equally are by nature free” to so that there “is no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own”(XXI.10). Therefore, the covenant must not only be voluntary, i.e. “proceed from the will” i.e., “the last appetite in deliberating” (VI.53) and it must also be mutual (XIV.10), for obligation cannot be imposed upon by another.

There is one additional change that Hobbes makes. While a covenant is mutual and voluntary, Hobbes also recognizes that it must create a third party beneficiary who has the

126 This is not to deny that the ruler has a natural law obligation to their vassals (though the precise nature of that obligation is difficult to interpret), it is clear that the vassals can never obligate the ruler to man made laws or polices.
power to keep the parties in awe, and thereby compel obedience. It is well recognized that the historic idea of covenant contained a third party, as “witness that will serve to remind the two parties of their commitment” (Haran 1997, 215); however, for these historic covenants, this witness “has to relate to God” and even in covenants that were ‘secular’ in nature, there was always the idea that “if there was no divine presence in the so-called ‘secular’ covenants, it is incomprehensible what would compel the parties to obey the terms of the agreement” (Haran 1997, 208). It is clear that the covenant formulation followed a ritualistic pattern (Witsius 1803, Haran 1997) which can properly be viewed as a cultic or religious ceremony. Hobbes recognized this historic connection, for he notes that, “before the time of civil society...there is anything can strengthen a covenant of peace agreed on...but the fear of that invisible power which they everyone worship as God...” (XIV.31). In this sense, all men swear an oath calling upon God, Jupiter, or any other deity (XIV.31)

Rather than arguing consistently with the historic covenantal idea that such an oath adds strength to the obligatory nature of the covenant, Hobbes argues “the oath adds nothing to the obligation. For a covenant, if lawful, binds...without the oath as much as with it...” (XIV.33). This raises the question, if the oath to God is not a ritual necessary for obligation, what is it that replaces the fear of God as “revenger of their perfidy” (XIV.31). For Hobbes, the power of the covenant is not found in its ceremonial nature, but rather in that all covenants establish a third party beneficiary, a specific human being, who has the power to force and compel mankind to the obedience of their sworn obligations (XIV.13). This power is established by the end, or teleology of the covenant, which for Hobbes is the preservation of life and keeping of peace (XIV.4). Hobbes is careful to note that this sovereign, which in his covenant is the
replacement of God, also has unlimited power. For each covenant provides a specific goal of that covenant, and since the covenant of mankind entering into a commonwealth gives each individual's power to the sovereign, that sovereign has the aggregate power of the parties with unlimited means to attain that goal (XIV.21).

Hobbes’s use of the covenant idea requires the alteration of the relationship between the parties, a removal of any idea that would support a natural hierarchy of humanity, and a replacement with the idea that all men must be equal, which necessitates a mutual voluntary covenant. Additionally, Hobbes removed the religious or cultic ceremonial nature of the covenant and replaced the appeal to divinity with a reliance upon a man in order to ensure both sides fulfill their obligation.

4.4.3 Hobbes’s Theo-Political use of Covenant

Because of the future component of covenants, Hobbes recognizes that mankind may not fulfill their obligation, therefore there must force behind the words, for mere words “too weak to hold men to their performance” (XIV.31). Thus, the originating covenant must find force, not from an external imposed obligation as that has not yet been created, but from some internal root in the nature of mankind; but since Hobbes rejects there is a common aim which is the summum bonnum (XI.1) and recognizes that most men are driven by sensual pleasures instead of pleasures of the mind (XIV.31) it is impossible for that force to be based upon man’s desires. However, since the nature of man does not share a common desire for something, the only shared passion is aversion from things; particularly the continual fear and danger of violent
Because of the variant perceived ends by man, it is unlikely that any individual would join together in a covenant, and if they did, many may violate the covenant as soon as their appetites changed. Therefore, the way to initiate and maintain a covenant is based upon not a shared goal, but out of a shared aversion, that which man is moving away from, and thus “the passion to be reckoned upon is fear.” (XIV.31). Fear will instill upon mankind the desire to fulfill their words, or it can compel mankind to such obedience. The originating covenant, however, is not a solution to mankind’s fundamental passion of fear; for if fear is solved then there would be no need of civil society. Rather, the covenant establishes the “fear to end all fears” (Strauss lecture), i.e. the all-powerful sovereign. Hobbes realizes that the religious connotation of the term covenant would enhance the likelihood of individuals, particularly religious individuals, acceptance of an absolute single sovereign.

Hobbes did not randomly choose a simple religious word, rather he thoughtfully chose one that had both religious and political connotations, and whose political connotations shared in one of the most primary aspects of his political philosophy, that of a single sovereign. As evidenced both by the Biblical covenants of Abraham and Moses, as well as the historic covenants of the ancient Near East (Witsius 1803; Hillers 1969), covenants established a hierarchical relationship with one man as head. This important nature of the covenant idea was not lost on Hobbes, as he recognized that “in all epochs of the Old Covenant, all power was concentrated in one man’s hands…” (Strauss 2012, 48). Hobbes is aware that religious people

---

127 Hobbes makes an interesting point that desire requires knowledge, for no man has an appetite for a specific thing because such appetite “proceed from experience and trial of their effects upon themselves and other men” (VI.4). Hobbes’s subtly argues that argument of a *summum bonum* which all men aim requires that all men have complete knowledge. However, the passion of aversion corresponds more directly to the inherent level of mankind’s ignorance. As Hobbes states, “But aversion we have for things, not only which we now have hurt us, but also that we do not know whether they will hurt us or not” (VI.4),
versed in the covenant tradition would be willing to accept the idea of a single sovereign, because the theological-political concept of covenant already includes that presupposition.

The reliance upon this historic connotation of the word covenant can be seen in the progression of Hobbes’s argument. After defining covenant (XIV), expositing it (XV) and applying covenant to the generation of a commonwealth (XVII), Hobbes discusses the rights of the sovereign through constant reference to the covenant definition and religious heritage (XVIII.1-3). However, when he turns to the discussion of the superiority of a single ruler (XIX), Hobbes refrains from any religious historic argument. Rather, he focuses exclusively on the rational arguments, particularly in light of Aristotle. Hobbes recognizes that he does not need to provide a religious argument in favor of a single ruler, because it is already rooted in the covenant tradition. Hobbes recognizes that the connotation of covenant does not necessarily indicate an absolute sovereign; and thus in justification for that position he returns to an appeal “both from reason and Scripture...[is] of so unlimited a power...” (XX.18). Given the surrounding conversation, the glaring absence of a discussion of covenant in relation to a single authority becomes apparent and indicates Hobbes use of the historic connotation for his argument.

4.5 Conclusion

As this chapter shows, Hobbes not only mimics the Biblical account of creation, taking formless void mass and makes it into a creative commonwealth, but he also uses and redefines religious words in his description of Obligation. In order to establish his commonwealth on an foundation which avoids “the most frequent pretext of sedition and civil war, in Christian

---

128 This does not mean Hobbes never reminds his readers of the connection between the Biblical Covenant tradition and a single sovereign (XXVI.41; XL.7), rather it indicates that in the specific area of discussion, Hobbes believes the historic evidence is sufficient connected to the specific term, covenant.
commonwealths” (XLIII.1) the inherent diseases of distraction and weakness that arises when there are split loyalties of two masters by the citizen, Hobbes seeks to undermine any argument for man’s obligation to God (XXIX.6;7). He does this by showing that the Christian arguments of man’s obligation to obey God based upon future promises, grace, and faith are false forms of obligation. Through the weakening of religious man’s obedience to God, Hobbes is able to articulate a position in which full obedience to the sovereign replaces or encompasses obedience to God. By removing the pretend means of man’s obligation to God, there is never a tension between obedience to God and Obedience to the Sovereign (XLIII.22).

Hobbes carefully chooses the theological-political term of covenant as the conceptual foundation for the origin of a commonwealth because of the historic and religious connotations associated with the term. Through use of covenant, Hobbes is able to rhetorically prime religious citizens to adhere to his particular argument of a single all powerful ruler.
5.1 Introduction

As argued through the previous chapters, Hobbes’s attempts to “pour new wine in old wineskins” through altering religious language in a way consistent with both his epistemology as well as political philosophy. This alteration allows Hobbes’s teaching to be accepted as a possible interpretation of the prevailing religious ideas, and thus like a “wholesome pill[] for the sick, which, swallowed whole, have the virtue to cure, but chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect” (XXXII.3). Hobbes presents his theory within the dominant cultural constraints so that it would be more likely to be accepted by academics, pastors, gentry and eventually the common citizen (R&C.16). As Strauss notes, the inculcation of Hobbesian principles has succeeded in affecting the very presuppositionional principles of modern society (Strauss 1964). Yet, one effect of Hobbes’s religious teaching is often overlooked, or not acknowledged within his own thinking: religious toleration.

Toleration has become not merely a part of liberal society, but, in fact, is the marquee test of whether a society is or is not liberal (Mill, 1978 p. 21). While Hobbes is often considered one of the primary founders of modern liberalism (Strauss 1964; MacPherson 1962)\textsuperscript{129}, there is a tension between the broader concept of liberalism and Hobbes’s support of an absolute sovereign. One area in which this debate rages in Hobbes’s studies is over the issue of religious toleration. The modern assessment of religious toleration argues for the absence of legal

\textsuperscript{129} This view is not universally held by scholars, as many follow Hume’s interpretation that “Hobbes’s politics are fitted only to promote tyranny” (VI.153). Readings consistent with this sentiment can be seen in Wolin, 1990 and Tarlton 2001.
sanctions on people’s religious belief (Murphy 1997), which is achieved through the “separation of church and state” premised upon a legal recognition that a spiritual life and a civil life have distinct spheres in which they operate, and that those two spheres should rarely, if ever meet (Kuyper 1998; Walzer 1984; U.S Constitution Amendment 1). For Hobbes, a major component of his political project is the uniting of both spiritual and civil power in the hand of a single sovereign, under whom civil and religious leaders derive their authority (Frontis Piece, XXXIII.24; XLII.63). Given this rejection of the fundamental premise of modern religious toleration, it may appear at first glance that the Hobbesian political state is incompatible with the modern understanding of religious toleration (Pabel 1993, Tralua 2011). While there are differences between the modern iteration of religious toleration and the position of Thomas Hobbes, one must realize that Hobbes teaching lays the foundation that the modern view evolved from. Abizadeh notes, the perceived tension between Hobbes and toleration presupposes that the “primary function of toleration, and the public/private distinction on which it draws, has been to serve the cause of religious freedom and pluralism” (2013; 263). It is necessary to realize that for Hobbes, toleration is not itself an end of political life, rather it is a means to support the broader goal of civil peace and as such toleration is limited in application by its (perceived) ability to achieve peace. Thus, in approaching Hobbes’s arguments, it is necessary to realize that he does not support toleration for the goal of religious freedom or pluralism per se, but neither does this mean that Hobbes’s arguments deny toleration.

Given the recognition of religious toleration as a means, rather than an end, has led many Hobbesian scholars to defend a utilitarian or pragmatic view of toleration within Hobbes. These scholars argue that the imposition of complete uniformity in beliefs may be impractical in
application. Particularly if religious toleration, and therefore suppression of religious beliefs, is a means to an end, the individuals may find toleration in the sovereign praetermitting religious belief (XXI.6) as unnecessary to regulate for civil peace (Remar 1992; Ryan 1983; Ryan 1988; Murphy 1997; Abizadeh 2013). Yet this pragmatic defense, on its own, appears unsatisfying to contemporary accounts of toleration because it implicitly accepts the legal authority of the state to regulate, and even forbid, religious belief in certain events, no matter how rare.

Other scholars have found a deeper, more philosophic, basis for toleration in Hobbes. Carl Schmitt argues that Hobbes’s fundamental distinction between faith and confession, limits the authority of the sovereign and grants citizens liberty of conscience (2008, 56). The distinction between thought, a private and wholly unregulated individual right, and action, a public and communal effect, serves as the philosophical basis of a Hobbesian minimal form of toleration (Curley 2005; Owen 2001; Remar 1992). This division indicates the power and authority of the sovereign is limited to only public actions, though the existence of a private conscience in Hobbes is not an opinion universally held (Tralua 2011).

For Hobbes, the privatization of conscience was not designed specifically to protect religious differences or promote religious liberalism within the society; rather, his acceptance of such a position is based upon the “fact” that thoughts, as long as they remain thoughts, are inaccessible to external regulation (XLII.11) and the natural right that not to accuse oneself (XXI.13; XIV. 30) and is based upon the inherent limitations of law. In light of this, toleration is not merely a utilitarian choice, but a necessary consequence of natural right and law. Despite this fact of toleration of conscience, the application of any such belief to external actions is extremely limited for the citizens. Additionally, Hobbes’s religious argument presupposes
religious epistemological skepticism,\textsuperscript{130} which indicates the equality of all religions and emphasizes their existences as a means, rather than an ends, of political peace. In light of this the sovereign’s imposition of any particular religion within society a prudential choice based upon the exogenous constraints of the particular citizens (Remar 1992). Given Hobbes commitment to the sovereign’s absolute power combined with the religious epistemological skepticism and the protection of an individual’s conscience, many readers find Hobbes teaching on toleration murky, leading some to scholars arguing that Hobbes presents a view of intolerant toleration (Newey 2006, 220). A student of Hobbes may argue that the use “intolerant toleration” is an abuse of speech by “mak[ing] a name of two names, whose significations are contradictory and inconsistent” (IV.21), however, the murkiness of previous interpretations and the paradox of the term “intolerant toleration” arises from confusing the unit of analysis. By disaggregating the unit of analysis and looking at freedom of religious thought and expression for the individual citizen as separate from that of the sovereign, one can realize that Hobbes teaches philosophic tolerance with practical intolerance, more accurately termed: inter regentes tolerantia, tolerans intolerantia inter plebem; i.e. amongst rulers tolerance, amongst citizens tolerant intoleration. In order to show this relationship, this chapter will address three major components of Hobbes’s argument. First, it will show how Hobbes establishes an internal privatization of an individual’s conscience. Second, Hobbes disassociates belief from action, so

\textsuperscript{130} This skepticism is focused on what you can know about God, and subsequently what he commands. Hobbes notes “the nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of what he is, but only that he is” (XXXIV.4). It is worth noting that even the attribute of existence of God is founded, not upon an inherent object or quality of “god” rather it is because of the psychological need of an object for worship. As Hobbes notes “we ought to attribute to him existence. For no man can have the will to honour that which he thinks not to have any being” (XXXI.14). For a further explanation of Hobbes’s view on the existence of God and why that can be viewed as a skeptical argument, see 2.4.2.
that individual belief cannot impede the right of the sovereign “to decide which opinions and
doctrines are inimical to peace and to forbid their being taught”’(XVIII.9; DC VI.11)\(^{131}\), making
single codified system of worship practices. It is important to notice that Hobbes does not argue
that the sovereign has power to regulate the formation or holding of particular opinions, even
those which are destructive to civil society, rather he can only stop their expression and
outworking. Finally, Hobbes provides the foundation for future intra-regime toleration by
showing that there is no such thing as a “true” religion and all religions are philosophically
equal, which leaves the choice of which religious teaching to establish within a regime to the
pragmatic choice of the sovereign (Remar 1992). In this sense, it is appropriate to view Hobbes
as a founder of religious toleration because his religious teaching presupposes the philosophical
basis which later authors develop into the contemporary view of religious toleration (Jaume

5.2 Internal Privatized Conscience

Given Hobbes’s desire to provide a religious interpretation of Christianity which is
consistent with his political goal, Hobbes recognized the necessity to address a popular
Christian doctrine that “whatsoever a man does against his conscience is sin” which is
fundamentally “repugnant to [Hobbesian] civil society” (XXIX.7). Hobbes was well aware that
Christianity’s view of conscience, particularly the view of the post-reformation protestant
branch, presented a significant problem to his view of the absolute sovereign. For Christianity,
particularly its Puritan form, the idea of conscience was central to the life of an individual
believer because it represented an individual’s hearing of the vox Dei. Conscience is argued to

\(^{131}\) Emphasis added.
be a remnant of man’s prelapsarian state, in which God imprinted upon man’s soul the moral
knowledge of right and wrong (Romans 2:14-16, Calvin 1960, III.XIX.15). From this
understanding of conscience, it followed that it was a great sin to violate one’s conscience as it
meant disobeying the moral dictates and voice of God (Romans 14:5;23; VII.4). This
presentation of conscience as a source of individual law, distinct, and perhaps opposed, to the
civil law (Calvin 1960, III.XIX.16) undermined Hobbes’s broader goals. Given the potential
danger that could arise from this Christian teaching, Hobbes either had to reject the idea of
individual conscience, or to present it in a way that it is solely an internal private opinion. Since
Hobbes’s is a founder of modern individualism, doing the former would be inconsistent with
the rest of his political philosophy, which emphasized an individualistic epistemology (Ryan
1988). Therefore, Hobbes took upon himself the goal to recognize, but limit an individual’s
internal private conscience, such that it would have no actionable political consequence.

5.2.1 Conscience as Opinion

In contrast to the Christian view of conscience, which argues that it presents a universal
moral standard of all men, Hobbes sought to present conscience merely as a private intellectual
area. It is interesting that Hobbes’s first discussion of conscience arises in his discussion of
science and opinion (VII.4). For Hobbes, science and opinion are two different conclusions of
the syllogistic connection of words: science, if the process begins from clear definitions and is
properly joined together, and opinion, if the syllogisms are incorrect or if imprecise, absurd, or
senseless words are used (VII.4). And yet, to discuss conscience, Hobbes takes an interesting
turn, first discussing what it means to be conscious of something. In this, Hobbes alludes the
intersubjectivity of fact, noting that men are conscious of something if “two or more men know
of the one and same fact” (VII.4). Hobbes then links the intersubjective agreement of fact between men with the literal Latin meaning of conscience, indicating that conscience is when two or more men are in agreement with (con) one another on the conditional knowledge of words (i.e., science, as defined by Hobbes (VII.4)). Thus, “it was and ever will be reputed a very evil act for any man to speak against his conscience” (VII.4), not because conscience is a morally protected area, but rather because doing so rejects “the fittest witnesses of facts of one another” (VII.4) and thus undermines speech, knowledge, and science. Ultimately, many people corrupted the meaning of conscience by making the term a metaphor (VII.4). According to Hobbes, a metaphor is an abuse of speech because it is an attempt to deceive, placing an individual subjective interpretation in place of the conventional meaning of the word (IV.4). This led “men vehemently in love with their own new opinions..., and obstinately bent to maintain them, gave those their opinions also that reverenced name of conscience” (VII.4). Thus what was previously agreed upon fact is now mere individual opinion.

The very nature of conscience as opinion, however, places it in a protected sphere. Despite the sovereign’s authority within the regime, Hobbes does recognize that the teleological purpose, or goal, of the regime places certain limitations upon the sovereign’s power. Since the individual gives authority to the sovereign in order to establish peace and protect their life (XIV.1,4), the sovereign has all means to reach that end, as long as those means are not destructive to the goal. This means there is a natural limitation to the authority based upon the purpose of such authority. Hobbes recognizes this limitation, when he notes that no man can enter a covenant which undermines the right of nature (XIV.29-30) and once in such a covenant, the sovereign cannot command an individual to do that which violates such
natural right, e.g., commit suicide (XXI.12), self-incriminate (XXI.13), or any other purpose which undermines the end for which sovereignty was established (XXI.15). The right to privately-held opinions is, for Hobbes, one area where the sovereign’s power does not extend, because it is a violation of an individual’s natural right, and subsequently natural law, to “force him to accuse himself of opinions” that are not his (XLVI.37). This protection, however, is only limited to an individual’s private internal opinions, because the sovereign cannot “extend the power of the law, which is the rule of actions only, to the very thoughts and consciences of men...notwithstanding the conformity of their speech and actions...But to force him to accuse himself of opinions, when his actions are not by law forbidden, is against the law of nature...” (XLVI.37). This is crucial to understand for the authority of the sovereign “to decide which opinions and doctrines are inimical to peace and to forbid their being taught” (XVIII.9; DC VI.11) is not the power over thoughts and opinions. Rather, it is the authority to judge which thoughts and opinions support the broader political goal of public peace, and declare opinions, which are destructive to that end as anathema and unable to be made public. However, so long as opinion remains an internal thought and has no outward impact upon an individual’s action, it is outside the power of the law, and therefore of the sovereign. While clearly a derivation of his broader political theory, it is also driven partly by Hobbes’s personal self-interest.

5.2.2 Private vs Public Application of Conscience

132 Emphasis added
133 While self-interest is clearly present in the examination of the issues, particularly noting that at the time of authorship, there were no laws against positions he espoused and that ex-post facto laws would be inappropriate (EW). It must be understood that it was not self-interest alone (Mintz 1968, 410) for the topic and argument is made in relation to Hobbes’s broader theological and religious writings.
In October 1666, the English House of Commons began to consider a bill which would make heresy a crime, with a particular examination of Hobbes *Leviathan* (Sommerville, 1992; Springborg, 1994). While that specific bill failed, subsequent iterations continued to be offered in Parliament in 1674, 1675, and 1680, which led to the public burning of Hobbes’s works in 1683 (Springborg 1994). This public outcry against his works caused Hobbes to fear that he too would be burned as a heretic (Aubrey, I.156). In light of this, Hobbes wrote three papers which delve into the history of heresy within the church and England itself (EW. IV 387; Appendix II; Mintz 1968). Despite Hobbes’s interest in writing these histories in which he explicates a definition, source, and punishment of heresies in the Christian church, arguably as an apologetic for his own published positions, only the version appended to the Latin version of the *Leviathan* saw print in Hobbes’s lifetime (Mintz 1968, 410). Hobbes’s primary argument against the punishment of heresy is that all religious belief is an individual choice, and ultimately the validity of the choice is between that person and any god that may reward or punish the individual’s choice (App II.31). Hobbes’s argument is based upon religious belief as ‘chosen’, or *sumitur*, as it originally appeared in the Latin. The selection of such a term in relation to religious adherence, however, has Hobbes take sides in a fervent and ongoing debate in Christianity. The assertion that man “chooses” to believe, and hence his religion, is a rejection of the post-reformation Protestant doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace, which were supported in both the 39 Articles of 1562 and Westminster Confession of Faith of

---

134 One of these documents was only made available for scholarly inquiry in the latter half of the twentieth century (Mintz 1968).
1646 (39 Articles X; XVIII; WCF X.2). Yet, Hobbes argues that such a choice, even if the belief is erroneous or evil, must be tolerated because error “is not, by its nature, a crime” (App II.32). “Nor can error become a crime, so long as it is kept with the breast” (App II.32). Therefore, Hobbes view of religious toleration, is grounded upon practical reason of a public/private distinction in which private opinion is a protected natural right. The reach of the law is limited to only those things which have been made public, either through word or action, but a belief that is solely private within the thought of a man is unable to be regulated because the law can never know whether an individual’s belief conforms to the public proclamations without violating an individual’s natural right. Since it is a violation of the law of nature to self-incriminate for a crime punishable by death (xxi.13), the civil authority can never discover whether an individual does or does not hold the requisite opinions; so long as they remain only opinions.

This distinction is perhaps most clearly seen in Hobbes discussion of public and private worship:

Curley notes in his translation the word sumitur can be “less provocative(ly) translated ‘assume’ or ‘taken’” (527, note 17). However, the root sumo is an active verb and any translation must indicate an individual willful action to receive (and thus, inherently indicates an ability to reject), which is precisely antithetical to the reformed Protestant view of irresistible grace. This doctrine argues, as Calvin notes, that God compels man’s will to accept the gift, and while “it is not violent, so as to compel men by external force; but still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, which makes men willing who formerly were unwilling and reluctant,” (Calvin 1956, 6). Thus, Hobbes argument for toleration within Christianity is itself premised upon a divisive, and particularly in Puritan England, largely rejected premise. This is not to say that there were not people of Hobbes’s opinion (Tyacke 1990), but that those who held such a position, termed Arminians for their agreement with Jacob Arminus and the Remonstrance of 1609, in England “represented an utterly radical theological innovation” (Wallace 1982, 220). While Hobbes’s argument is premised upon a particular, minority, theological view, it does not mean the argument falls if predestination exists. One could argue, perhaps even more strongly, that if someone ought to be tolerated because the belief was their own will, how much more so if someone’s religious belief is an imposition from God which forces men who “formerly were unwilling and reluctant” to believe a doctrine. In this sense, then, Hobbes’s argument for the privatization of belief as the basis for toleration need not be denied by rejecting this premise.

Emphasis added.
Again, there is a public and a private worship. Public is the worship that a commonwealth performeth as one person. Private is that which a private person exhibiteth. Public, in respect of the whole commonwealth is free, but in respect of particular men is not so. Private is in secret free; but in the sight of the multitude, it is never without some restraint (XXXI.12).

Private worship, in so far as it is in secret, i.e., never brought into visible display, is free. This is because such private thoughts are a natural right and beyond the reach of the law.

Punishment for violations of law can only take place when it can be shown that something fell short of (or transgressed) the requirement of law. However, that ‘something’ must be known to another, so that it can be compared to the dictates of law. As long as that something is truly private, known only by oneself, that area of knowledge or belief cannot be judged by another and the law is incapable of regulating them. It is clear that Hobbes does create a minute area of individual sovereignty inaccessible to law, an area that is rooted upon individual thought and belief. While this may not be the contemporary liberal view of toleration, it certainly is the foundation upon which it is built (Schmitt 2008).

5.3 External Limits of Conscience

The distinction between private and public worship also indicates the second part of Hobbes’s view, which may be termed the “intolerant” part of Hobbes’s toleration. While opinions are private, the moment those opinions become actions, they become public and part of civil society. While there is freedom in the internal private belief, once those beliefs become expressed, either in word or deed, they are no longer private but become public, and thus

---

137 This raises an interesting question of whether such beliefs can be taught privately to one’s own children. This would be incorrect, because the natural right protection of one’s opinions is rooted in the protection against self-incrimination (XXI.13; XIV.30), and thus the sovereign would be able to command two individuals to be witness against each other.
under the authority of the law. Hobbes argued that the sovereign is God’s representative on earth, having the same religious authority as Moses did for Israel (XL.7). Thus, it is within the power and authority of the sovereign to determine what is or is not the word of God (XXXIII.21-22; XLII.43), appoint religious leaders and pastors (XLII.67), and to establish the form, content, and actions of public worship (XXXI.37). Each action permitted relates to the public expression and practice of religious belief, not the private conscience. Yet, by creating these distinct spheres, Hobbes recognizes the necessity in completely severing the connection between personal belief and public action.

5.3.1 Disassociating Action from Belief.

In light of the apparently conflicting teachings on the individual’s private belief and the authority of the sovereign, Hobbes presents two arguments regarding the external application of private belief. The first is to show that belief does not require action (and thus, there will never be something that is required for your salvation that would violate the command of the sovereign. Further, as the subsequent section notes, obedience to the law absolves the

---

138 Hobbes’s association of the Christian sovereign with the office of Moses provides an interesting question on whether the sovereign should be thought of merely a representative of God, or God himself. This question arises in light of Hobbes’s ambiguity on the relationship between God and Moses. In one instance Moses is understood to be God’s representative (XVI.12), however a subsequent statement by Hobbes indicates that God is ‘personated’ by Moses as a member of the trinity (XLII.3). This ambiguity led some of Hobbes’s contemporary readers to conclude that Moses is not merely a representative, but is a personification of God in physical form. As Hobbes notes in his response to certain objections against the Leviathan “For since Moses also bore the person of God in some manner (as All Christian kings do), he seems to make Moses on person of the Trinity. This is quite careless...” (App II.12). While Hobbes notes the carelessness of such an open expression, he does not actually deny the conclusion. The carelessness is corrected by removing an offending passage from the OL (XLII.3) and altering the interpretation (App III.11-14), without ever denying the conclusion. Further, in this alteration it is maintained that the sovereign, particularly those holding the Christian religion, bears the person of God in precisely the same manner of Moses. Future research would do well to determine if Hobbes position indicates that the sovereign is in fact God himself rather than ‘merely’ his representative on earth.
individuals of responsibility, even if it is an impious act). Second, he has to argue how commands of the sovereign do not undermine private belief.

In order to address the first, it is necessary to remind ourselves of Hobbes's theory of obligation. As argued in chapter 3, Hobbes carefully uses religious words in his description of obligation in order to undermine man's obligation to God and show that grace and faith do not actually create an obligatory relationship (Ch 4.3). This is consistent with Hobbes's general view of religion and Christianity. However, Hobbes also seeks to redefine the fundamental basis of Christian salvation. Christian writers have long recognized the complexity and details of a systematic theology in the Christian religion (e.g., Calvin 1960; Berkhof 1996). Given the variety of doctrines, many Christian writers have also entered into a discussion of what is the most basic form, or least common denominator, of Christian doctrine; i.e. what is and is not a necessary belief in order to obtain salvation. Since the Scripture indicates that a man cannot believe that which he has not heard (Romans 10:14-15), Aquinas argues that “regard[ing] the primary points of our articles of faith, man is bound to believe them..., but as to other points of faith man is not bound to believe them explicitly, but only implicitly, or be ready to believe them” (2006, 2a2ae q2 a5). For Aquinas, the most basic doctrine of belief was Jesus’ incarnation and the Trinity (Sommerville, 1992, 146; 2006, 2a2ae q2 a7-8). Later authors proposed different fundamentals, but the effort was a continual reduction of the explicit theological content of the beliefs (Sommerville 1992, 146-147), thereby widening the acceptable variations of dogma. Given the rise of religious wars, finding a common denominator amongst the different sects of Christianity became politically important, and making that foundation the lowest common denominator would most likely achieve broader
agreement, wider acceptance, and reduction in the causes of war. It is little wonder then that Hobbes himself entered into this discussion by offering his own argument of the most basic foundation of Christianity (XLIII), for as Hobbes acknowledges as he introduces the topic, the most frequent cause of civil war is based upon the apparent difference between religious belief and civil commands (XLIII.1).

Additionally Hobbes redefines the fundamentals of Christianity, which are the common denominator for salvation. While there are numerous other Christian doctrines, Hobbes notes that most are superfluous or exist merely to enhance worship and the honor of God (XXXI.8-34) and not necessary for salvation. The only beliefs that are necessary for salvation, and thus the only ones Christians must follow, are “two virtues: faith in Christ and obedience to the laws” (XLIII.3). While these two virtues (oddly not called articles of faith) are less specific than those offered by Aquinas, the first is more in line with Hobbes’s contemporaries, such as Chillingworth (Sommerville, 1992, 146). Faith in Christ need not be an active faith, such as following the commandments, nor a belief in Christ’s miracles or resurrection, rather for Hobbes, it is merely a belief in Christ’s identity as Jesus: “That Jesus is the Christ” (XLIII.11). The term Christ is the Greek variation of the Hebrew Messiah which in its etymology, does not contain any concept of deity. Rather it was used to describe both priests and kings through Israel (as well as one Gentile king)\(^{139}\) who are given a position of authority. It is possible that Hobbesian “faith” in Jesus as merely identifying that he IS the Christ (Messiah) is minimal as it

\(^{139}\) Interestingly, the Hebrew term Messiah is not exclusive to Jewish people. Cyrus the Great, ruler of Persia, was called God’s anointed (Messiah) in his capacity of restorer of the Jewish Temple (Isaiah 45:1). This helps indicate that recognizing someone’s identity as a (the) Messiah does not insinuate the presence of a divine or even moral component.
acknowledges his authority within the Jewish people but, taken literally, does not contain any relation to deity. Taking Hobbes’s definition, this would mean that according to the Bible, demons would be saved for they knew and declared the identity of Jesus as Christ (Luke 4:41). Further, Hobbes’s position argues that man must “believe” that Jesus is the Christ. Since “belief” and “knowledge” are distinct (XLIII.8,10). Belief in Jesus as the Christ would be similar to the belief man has that the Scriptures are the word of God and ought to alert the reader to the weakness of Hobbes’s proposition. Hobbes has already shown that there is no way for man to know that scripture is the word of God, and belief of scripture is really only in the preachers (who use religion for their advantage). It would seem that belief in Jesus as the Christ, just as the belief that the Scripture is the word of God (XLIII.8), can only be derived from an appeal to authority, i.e., parents, pastors, or others whom “the law allowed and appointed to teach us” (XLIII.8). Faith in Christ is a societal norm on the identity of Jesus, but such faith is merely the internal persuasion of the mind on Jesus identity and not his deity or the veracity of his, and his supporters, claims. This helps illustrate the radical nature of Hobbes’s Christian fundamentals and how much they differed from more traditional and orthodox Christianity.

It is the second virtue, obedience to the laws that is most important. Yet, in Hobbes continued discussion of these two virtues, he frequently links the word “obedience” to “justice”

---

140 The demons also recognized Christ’s deity as the Son of God (Luke 4:41), which would indicate that even if Jesus’s deity were a necessary component of acknowledging Him being the Christ (which, I argue for Hobbes is not the case), the demons would still have Hobbesian faith. This indicates that the Biblical presentation of faith, which would exclude demons from possessing, requires more than mere identity acknowledgement. Just as a scholar can acknowledge qualities and positions of those they study, without agreeing or following those positions.

141 This linkage to belief in Christ as similar to belief in scripture ought to alert the reader to the weakness of Hobbes’s proposition, for he has already shown that there is no way for man to know that scripture is the word of God, and belief of scripture is really only in the preachers (who use religion for their advantage). See Chapter 2.
or “repentance” (XLIII.19, 20). There seems to be an inherent ambiguity in the term obedience, in relation to its object. While those versed in Hobbes’s thought will rightly assume that Hobbes is speaking about the civil laws by the sovereign, many religious readers may first think this refers to the laws of God. To address this possible interpretation, Hobbes links religious obedience with the idea of repentance (XLIII.4, 19, 20) which does not require any action.

The alteration of a Christian principle, from one calling believers to an active faith, into a principle of inaction is a common strategy of Hobbes (e.g., altering the golden rule from a command of how one must treat others (Matthew 7:12) to a command of inaction (XV.35). For Hobbes, repentance is “a turning away from sin, which is the same as the return of the will to obedience” (XLIII.4). The religious act of obedience, i.e., repentance, is returning “to the will” to obey. Thus, repentance does not require an act of obedience - it merely means willing to obey or the last act of deliberation in the contemplation of obedience (XLIII.19 and VI.63).

Ultimately the will, or thought, to obey is a sufficient form of obedience; negating any need to act, this is because “God…accepteth in all our actions the will for the deed” (XLIII.4). The obedience necessary for salvation is not following the commands or laws of God, rather it is merely wanting to obey those commands. In this way, Hobbes solves the perceived tension of conflicting claims of authority to man’s obedience (XLIII.1) by arguing the requirements for salvation do not create a conflicting claim to obedience by a separate authority, and thus one should obey the Sovereign (XLIII.4). Thus, when Hobbes states elsewhere that “The subjects owe their sovereigns simple obedience in all things wherein their obedience is not repugnant to

---

142 For a detailed discussion of Hobbes’s alteration of the golden rule into a passive command in the Leviathan and other treatises, see Vaughn 2007, 50ff.
the laws of God” (XXXI.1) it ought to be understood that man owes simple obedience to the sovereign, because there are no such commands which conflict with the laws of God. Thus there is never a situation in which the fundamental belief of Christianity necessary for salvation opposes obedience to the civil sovereign (XLIII.22). This inactive obedience allows Hobbes to replace Christian obedience to God with faithful obedience to the sovereign and thus the intent to obey god is fulfilled in the devotion and obedience to the sovereign.

5.3.2 Individual Public Intolerance

Having established religion as a purely private belief, one in which faithfulness requires no outward action, Hobbes must address the issue at the heart of today’s view of religious toleration, that religious belief should be accommodated, and even the basis for a legally recognized exemption to the general law (Masland 1942, Secret 2013). Rather than using religious belief as a basis for commanded action, it is necessary to see whether an appeal to religious conscience can prevent action.

The basis for an individual seeking exemption upon religious grounds of religious conscience is found in the idea that “whatsoever a man does against his conscience is sin” (XXIX.7). Such opinion was widely espoused by Protestant reformers in support of their disobedience to authority (Calvin IV.X.5) and was the central argument for Luther in his trial for heresy, “To act against conscience is neither right nor safe” (Diet of Worms 1521). For Hobbes, such an opinion is one of the major diseases which leads to the dissolution of the

---

143 It is important to remember that, while some scholars argue that the natural law is the law of God (Warrender 1963, Martinich 1992) others have cleanly severed that relationship by arguing Hobbesian natural law is merely self-interest (Nagal 1959) or prudence (Peacock 2010). However, even if one grants that the natural law is the law of God, it would not undermine this interpretation, for Hobbes has already recognized and admitted that the authority of the sovereign can never undermine the natural right which gave birth to that authority (XIV.29)
Recognizing the centrality that this proposition had upon the religious mind, Hobbes mounts a two-pronged assault upon the position, first showing it to be against reason and the goal of society, and second showing that scriptures supports the opposing view. Hobbes notes that the idea that violation of conscience is sin is the first disease of a commonwealth (XXIX.6) because it is rooted in a fundamental “presumption of [an individual citizen] making himself judge of good and evil” (XXIX.7). Christians viewed conscience as the moral voice of God to an individual (Romans 2:14-16, Calvin III.XIX.15). For Hobbes, no individual within a commonwealth can possess this ability, as not only is there no “summum bonum” (XI.1) by which man can derive a standard, i.e., nothing is just or unjust unless the law declares it so (XIII.13). There can be no such thing as a “conscience,” in the relevant sense.

When men seek peace through covenant (XIV.5), they transfer all means necessary to achieve the goal of peace (XIV.21). This particularly means giving up one’s own private judgments as it affects action. Thus, e pluribus unum is established in the unity of the sovereign (XVI.13) as representative of each individual (XVIII.1). Since the people authorized the sovereign as their representative, they are the author of all his decisions (XVI.14) and particularly “the rules of propriety (or meum and tuum) and of good, evil, lawful, and unlawful…” (XVIII.10). This means, rationally, that the presumption that any individual in civil society has the ability, of himself, to determine what is good or evil, is a violation of the very nature and structure of civil society.

While, in the state of nature where there is no common authority, the individual may be able to determine what is good or evil (XXIX.6) since in the state of nature the terms “good” and “evil” are mere descriptors of an individual’s passions, his desires or aversions (VI.7). However, once one has entered the social covenant each individual in civil society has subjected that judgment
to the authority of the sovereign and thus the author of decisions of the sovereign. It is therefore nonsensical to say that one has authored the definition of good and evil, as established in the law, and then argue that one holds exemptions or different opinions.

While this rational argument is a consistent derivation of Hobbes’s political premises, Hobbes is aware that there are people who would reject those premises based upon religious doctrine. For those citizens, as the first three chapters have argued, Hobbes redefines key components of religious belief, such that they can now be interpreted consistently with his political goal. But for those who, incorrectly, feel they are bound by obligation to obey the prophetic word of God in the Bible, Hobbes offers a Biblical example and interpretation to counter the reformational doctrine: Naaman (II Kings 5:17-18; XLII.11; XLIII.23). The importance of this example has long gone unrecognized in Hobbesian studies.

Hobbes attempts to show that there is no Biblical reason for an individual to disobey a sovereign, even in the worst scenario. Having already addressed the issue of belief as a private thought, it is clear that any command by a sovereign to “not believe in Christ” is irrelevant, because belief is wholly private and has “no relation to, or dependence at all, upon compulsion or commandment” (XLII.9) and can “never follow men’s commands” (XLII.11), showing the pure realm of belief is a right reserved to the liberty of the subject (XXI.1-2). The question then is what if a sovereign commands the external form of worship counter to one’s internal belief, causing one to deny their faith. Hobbes is aware that this is a fundamental concern of religious people, for Christ’s own words indicate that such an act would negate one’s salvation; for “whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 10:33). Hobbes reminds readers that historically, “Many Christians, good Christians, too, even if
they were not very brave---- renounced the Christian faith when they were faced with death and torture” (App. III.32) and that, not only did the Council of Nicaea establish no penalty for adherents who did this under threat of death, he also dismisses the concern by reminding readers that Peter did just that “though a sin of weakness, which Christ easily forgave” (App. III.32). In Hobbes’s discussion of Peter, he is dismissive of the severity of the act. In the same sentence, Hobbes goes from describing Peter’s act as a “great sin”, to that of a “sin of weakness”, to one which was “easily forgiven” (Ap III.32). Hobbes is walking the reader down descending levels of concern, and ends at the null position, for it does not matter if Peter’s act was or was not a sin, because Christ forgave him.144

Since no modern man can be an apostle, the most pertinent biblical example has to do with Naaman: the commander of the Syrian army who was healed of leprosy145 by the prophet Elisha and converted to belief in God. As Naaman prepared to leave, returning to the jurisdiction of his king who worshipped a ‘false’ god, he presented a special request to the prophet Elisha. Naaman said:

please let there be given to your servant two mule loads of earth, for from now on your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. In this matter may the Lord pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon your servant in this matter. He said to him, ‘Go in peace.’ (II Kings 5: 17-19a).

144 It is even more evident that Hobbes wishes to limit the idea that denial is a sin. The reason that such an act was a sin for Peter was not that he denied Christ, but that he was specially appointed as an apostle/disciple, and in that office he denied Christ. The sin was not in the act, but in the specific office holder engaging in the act. Further, one can deduce that such an act would no longer be sin because no man now holds the office of apostle, since “the work of an apostle was to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ” (XLII.52)

145 The dominant English translations have stated that the disease was one of leprosy, though Robert Alter coins the term “Skin-Blanched” arguing that the disease was more pigment discoloration than lesion on the skin (Alter, 2013, 751)
This Biblical example is critical, as it is an example of a ‘true convert’ conforming to the requirements of another religion. Hobbes notes that Christian rulers and citizens freely admit that Mahomedan should conform to the outward worship commanded by a Christian sovereign (XLII.11). However, they argue for the opposite when a Christian subject is under the rule of a non-Christian ruler. The story of Naaman directly addresses this position for Christians as it involves a proselyte, who believes in the God of Israel having to outwardly conform to the worship of a false god, which is the most extreme example where appeal to conscience would prevent the action.

The use of the Naaman story is not Hobbes’s attempt at pulling at an obscure Biblical passage to support his position. II Kings 5 was the source of great discussion in the 16th and 17th centuries. Europe was divided between the Christian camps of Protestant and Catholics, and often an individual citizen was mandated to worship in a particular form in violation of their own conscience. Those Protestants who lived in Catholic regimes and conformed to the outward worship commanded by their sovereign became known as Nicodemites (Zagorin, 1990 12). The debate between conformity in the Protestant/Catholic camp played out in England as well where Catholic nobles “asked the Council of Trent whether they could go to church while attending the queen, when they bore the sword of state and the like” (Zagorin, 1990 136). The argument for the legitimacy of conformity found Biblical support in the appeal to the story of Naaman (Zagorin 1990). Despite the similarity in the appeal, religious scholars offered various interpretations. Some scholars argued that this account does not provide a general principle, 146 Christians would argue that the difference arises from adherence to true verse false religions. However, as discussed in the next section, for Hobbes, all religious doctrines are equally true (or false) and thus no religion can claim special treatment based upon its closer conformity to a universal truth.
but rather a limited one, which applies only to neophytes (Zagorin 1990, 73; 144), or that such action can only be used by officials of the state (Zagorin 1990, 136), or only for the preservation of life and property (Zagorin 1990, 223).  

Other scholars, such as the Franciscan priest Nicholas of Lyra, argued that far from excusing conformity which violates one’s conscience, the story does not actually present a clash of values. Under this interpretation, there was no religiously unlawful act being asked, rather Naaman’s question is merely “that he might perform the same duty to his master in the idol’s temple as he lawfully did elsewhere” (Zagorin 1990, 32), and as such there was no actual religious reverence to idols (Zagorin 1990, 147). Other scholars opposing conformity argue that Elisha did not approve the request (App III; Zagorin 1990 136). Much of this interpretive dance, however, seems inconsistent with the actual text, for Naaman asks permission to bow down, the precise act that the King to Syria is doing in the presence of the idol (II Kings 5:17-19). Thus, despite his conversion, Naaman is asking permission to conform to the visible worship practices legally required by his king to the Syrian god Rimman (Alter, 2013; 754).  

Rather than engaging in the same interpretive dance as the aforementioned scholars who are “casting atoms of Scripture, as dust before men’s eyes, make everything more obscure than it is.” (XLIII.24). Hobbes appears to insist upon the interpretive principle of the reformation, that of Sola Scriptura (Curley 1996, Brandon 2007). It is important to realize that

---

147 The transition from self-preservation to protection of property is interesting to notice, as it provides a more frequent base of appeal for outward conformity in violation of internal conscience. Clearly the issue of life or death arises, but is not something that the majority of people would likely experience. However, paying fines, jail time, or the confiscation of property would be a more likely punishment. By inserting loss of property, the rare use becomes common place, for who is to dictate how much property must be lost in the name of conscience. If any reduction of the leisure of one’s life is at stake by holding to conscience, then one should not do so. Further, it also makes the transition from loss to gain simple, for if one can gain MORE by outward conformity, who is to say that is any different than suffering loss, for by not conforming one is suffering an opportunity cost.
Hobbes himself did not agree with the principle of Sola Scriptura (Springborg 2012) as Hobbes denies the foundational premise of divine inspiration (XLV.25) and presents a skepticism of its authors (XXXIII.4-8), leading to questioning its claims to truth (Chapter 2, Ft 18). Yet, Hobbes also frequently engages in a discussion under the guise or premise of Sola Scriptura, in order to show that even if such a position were granted, it would not undermine Hobbes’s teaching. Hobbes argues his interpretation will “allege none but in such sense as is most plain and agreeable to the harmony and scope of the whole Bible” (XLIII.24). In this sense, Hobbes looks at the Biblical text of II Kings 5 and argues that “by bowing before the idol Rimmon, he denied the true God in effect, as much as if he had done it with his lips” (XLII.11). Hobbes recognizes the action of Naaman to be one of outright idolatry and, importantly, a violation of his new found religious beliefs. This outright action could be interpreted as no less blatant denial than the words of Peter who denied Christ. Hobbes notes the statement of the prophet Elisha as approval of the plan (XLII.11), for “in this passage they cannot be understood otherwise than as a permission” (App III.32). Yet, Hobbes argument for conformity is interesting, for, based upon his conception of authorship (XVI), Naaman is personally blameless because he is not acting of his own accord, but “compelled to in obedience to his sovereign...[and] to the laws of his country, that action is not his, but his sovereign’” (XLII.11).

Hobbes argues that responsibility for an external action is transferable because of the concept of agency: since the sovereign is the author of commands to the citizen, the citizen is excused for the actions, even if it was commanded in violation of a law (XXVII.27) because they were not the author of such action. This arises, not only because the sovereign cannot punish the obedience to his own commands (XXVII.27), but also because the transfer of responsibility
through agency. Since the actor, or subject, is merely the tool and not the author of the action, the responsibility, and thus blame or praise for the action, is rooted in the author (XVI.7; Lloyd 2009, 283). Hobbes explicitly connects the transfer of responsibility based upon authorship in his discussion of the sovereign’s ecclesiastical power.

[As] a civil sovereign he may make laws suitable to his doctrine, which may oblige men to certain actions, and sometimes to such as they would not otherwise do...And, yet, when they are commanded, they are laws; and the external actions done in obedience to them, without the inward approbation, are the actions of the sovereign, and not of the subject, which is in that case but an instrument (XLII.106).

There can never be a clash between the private conscience and the external action required at the hand of the sovereign, for if the belief and the law are in agreement the citizen will obey, and if the belief and the law are opposed, the citizen is an actor and must comply to the law, but doing so does not undermine his internal belief since he is merely an instrument and not the author of the action. Thus, Hobbes interpretation of the Naaman story provides a general principle found in his view of author, actor, and personification, but grounds that view upon a Biblical example. Through using the Biblical story as means to convey his argument, Hobbes is more likely to persuade religious individuals who may be reticent to follow Hobbes’s teaching when it was merely grounded upon reason. Ultimately, Hobbes’s argument shows that the internal private belief of an individual does not conflict with the power of the sovereign over the external actions because, religious belief does not require or mandate any external action, nor does it prevent action because the individual is an instrument and not the author, thus the responsibility for the action is transferred to its author, the sovereign.

Having argued for the existence of a private conscious, and showing both relational and biblical arguments as to why that conscience must remain private and cannot cause an
individual to express those private opinions nor can those private opinions prevent an individual from obeying the public commands of a sovereign, Hobbes turns to the philosophic foundations of religions.

5.4 Equality of All Religion and epistemological skepticism

It is important to note that, as the case of Naaman shows, when an individual is commanded to act against his belief, the religious consequence of the action is transferred from the individual to the sovereign. It is in this way that Hobbes hopes to alleviate the conscience of individuals who obey the sovereign’s commands, by creating a cognitive disassociation between the belief and the action. While this seems to alleviate the individuals’ concerns over belief and action, it transfers and seemingly heightens the concern a sovereign would have: for no man would want to suffer eternal punishment (or, as Chapter 1 argues Hobbes view of Hell indicates temporal punishment and annihilation) for thousands of actions he commanded. Because the responsibility of an action is transferred from the actor to the author, i.e. the sovereign a sovereign may be worried about ensuring the belief he commands is the true belief. It is in response to this that Hobbes provides the third leg to his argument for toleration, all religious doctrine are equally true (or false) and the sovereign’s choice of which religion to enforce is a prudential choice.

Subsequent political theorists overtly rooted their arguments for toleration on the appearance, if not actual, equality of all religions (Locke 2010, McKinnon 2005). The equality of all religions can be based in either the absolute equality, in that all religious are inherently equal, or it can be rooted in an epistemological skepticism, which argues that knowledge of the comparative truth of one religion over another is not possible, and thus various religious
doctrines should be treated as equal. It is this latter skeptical form of equality that Hobbes and subsequent supporter of toleration emphasize. Locke makes this explicit when he states if “magistrates of the world cannot know, certainly know, the true religion to be the true religion”, then it is necessary to tolerate divergent opinion (Locke 2010, 123). The skepticism of philosophers, such as Descartes, led to a clear division and separation between knowledge and belief, or what became known as faith and reason.

The issue of religious epistemological skepticism is a key component of Hobbes’s religious theory. It is made evident in the earliest discussion of religion when Hobbes offers a definition of religion as “Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from the tales publically allowed, Religion; not allowed Superstition” (VI.36). Here Hobbes offers distinctions of religion that vary, not based upon the content of the religion’s doctrine, but only based upon its origin or its legality. Religious ideas come from one of two sources: either they are created by the individual, generally to explain things they do not understand or they come from the tales or stories of other trusted individuals (XII.4). While the source of the religious doctrine can either be internal from the individual or external from the stories of others, the source of the story is not sufficient to determine into which category it falls. Legality is the primary distinguishing fact of whether a teaching is religion or superstition. Reflecting upon this fact for a minute indicates that, in Hobbes’s view, the difference between religion and superstition is found in relation to declared law, not to the substance of the teaching. This indicates that, for Hobbes, content of religious teachings are unimportant, particularly for the sovereign in his establishment of one over another. This is the first sign of Hobbes’s establishment of elite toleration. There is no inherent content or even origin of the religious
idea that would lead one to be superior to the other, difference is only imposed relativistically by the will of the sovereign.

It may be charged that Hobbes does attempt to distinguish true religious doctrine based upon the content; continuing the previous quote, he states, “[a]nd when the power imagined is truly such as we imagine, True Religion” (VI.36). Here, Hobbes seemingly indicates that there is a third category, a subsection of religion, that which conforms to reality and that which does not. While this has the appearance of divergence based upon content, in reality it does not. There are two things to note in this final component, first is that “True” is a subcategory of religion only for Hobbes does not acknowledge that there can a true superstition. This means that the conformity of the religious doctrine to reality is not itself the mark of whether it is true or not, rather the doctrine must first be publically allowed if it is to be religion, and then and only then can we determine if it is true. This categorization may diminish the gulf between true and false religion, but such interpretation is consistent with those who would argue that Hobbes’s homage to religious conventions, and particularly Christianity, is insincere and frequently ironic (Cooke 1996; Curley 1992; Forester 2003; Strauss 1963; Strauss 2012). Differentiating between true religion and false religion both permits the various sects of Christianity to rest in their conviction of being correct,148 while simultaneously allow Hobbes to maintain his appearance of orthodoxy across sects.

148 This would be particularly important in the English world where in the centuries before Hobbes the established religion has vacillated between Protestant and Catholic iterations. Hobbes notes that preference for one’s own thought is the original distinction between religion and superstition in the state of nature, noting “this fear of things invisible is the natural seed of that which everyone in himself calleth religion, and in them that worship or fear that power otherwise than they do, superstition” (XI.26).
Further, to support the reading that Hobbes’s use of the term “true religion” is ironic, one must investigate precisely what it is that makes a religion true. As Curley notes, there is a linguistic issue with Hobbes’s presentation of “true religion” between the English and Latin version, changing it from “when the power imagined is truly such as we imagine” to “when those powers are really such as we have allowed” (Curley 1994, Ft nt 3).\(^{149}\) The fact that Hobbes altered this presentation indicates the original and subsequent presentations offer variant propositions that are worth examining.

While Hobbes’s alteration is an attempt to remove the difficulty associated with his concept of imagination, it is worth noting that the original English presentation is consistent with the Hobbesian view of God. The object of true religion is the “power invisible” (VI.36) and this power invisible is created by one’s own imagination out of fear (XI.26) or tales publically allowed (VI.36). However, since this invisible power is the subject of man’s imagination, it must be material (I.2) and cannot be an infinite power (III.12), since that is unimaginable. Thus, the object of man’s fear, which can become either superstition or religion, is consistent with Hobbes’s re-interpretation of God (see Ch 2.6 for previous discussion), but in no way has to be God, for it can be any material finite object. Thus, for Hobbes, the key aspect for true religion is not based upon the object of worship, but it is based upon the legitimacy of the fear placed upon the object of worship which is made clear in the Latin iteration of the definition: “when those powers are really such as we have allowed, true religion” (VI.36.OL).

\(^{149}\) The passage in Latin is “Quando autem Potentatiae illae revera tales funt quaees accepimus, Vera Religio.”
Hobbesian true religion is based upon the accuracy, or legitimacy of the attribution of power to the object of one’s fear, which means any religion is true so long as it has sufficient power to secure believers. Power, however, is not an end in itself, rather it is a “means to obtain some future apparent good” (X.1) and can arise from legitimate possession of those means, or from the mere perception of the means. Hobbes argues that often the source of power is not within the possessing object, but is derived from the attribution of the subjects, and thus “Reputation of power is power” (X.5), being the object, or merely having the reputation as the object, of love or fear of many is power (X.6), and even eloquence, regardless of content, is power (X.12). This raises a question of causal relationship, whether a true religion exists because religious leader or sects have of power that is then recognized, or if a group of people by associating together create and project the power onto the religious beliefs. For Hobbes, either of these are possible, but given our inability to know revelation from God (XXXVI.3), or trust prophets (III.7; XXXVI.15) and revealed scripture (XXXIII.4) the latter is most likely. This means, that for Hobbes, true religion is any religious doctrine which is legally allowed, for that makes it religion, and which is obeyed by a group of individuals which create and project the power to the religion that they then believe it has, thus making it true.

In this case, for the 16th century English reader, Christianity is the true religion because “the faith of Christians ever since our Savior’s time hath had for foundation, first the reputation of their pastors, and afterward…Christian sovereigns, who are therefore supreme pastors” (XLIII.6), which is merely to say that Christianity had the power of eloquence and legality of

\(^{150}\) Please see Chapter 2 for a full discussion of Hobbes’s alteration of the Christian understanding of scripture, prophecy, and revelation.
sovereigns to make “the powers which are feared are true powers” (App III.9). This definition of true religion is tautological, for it is true if what is feared are true powers, but the true powers come from its reputation and eloquence as allowed by the sovereign. This also means that if a religion is true based upon the power derived from popular adherence and sovereign command, then any religion could be ‘true’ depending on time or place. This would mean that Greco polytheism was the true religion of Ancient Athens and Islam is the true religion of Iran. In this sense, the choice of which religion to ‘make’ the true religion is a prudential choice of the sovereign (Remar 1992) combined with the susceptible acceptance of that particular system.151

It should not come as a surprise that Hobbes refuses to use the content of a religion as the basis for judging truth or falsity, for based upon his theory of knowledge, Hobbes argues that it is impossible to know whether religious doctrines conform to reality or not. Hobbes’s epistemology of materialism is offered as a rejection of an alternative to the epistemology of revelation (McClure 2011). Hobbes was well aware that much of modern Christian teaching is based upon an Aristotelian foundation (XII.31, XLVI.14), and since his first chapters are intended to reground the epistemological teaching of the universities away from its use of Aristotelian physics (I.5) through the introduction of an epistemology grounded upon sense and the absence of innate ideas (I), a necessary consequence is an epistemology which rejects

---

151 It is critical to realize that no sovereign is able to ex nihilo create a religious system. Rather, sovereigns have to work with the material they are presented, and thus their prudential religious choice is rooted in path dependency theory (for explanation and literature review see Greener 2005 and Pierson 2000). This means the sovereign’s prudential choice, will generally, be within a variation of a pre-existing system, rather than a wholly new position. The transition from Judaism to Christianity; Roman Catholicism to Protestantism; Protestantism to Mormonism all are examples. Each step, while a different emphasis and iteration, is not wholly new and generally claims to be a ‘proper’ return to the ‘original’ position of the previous system. This does not mean there can be no punctuated equilibrium in religious founding, but those are rare (Machiavelli, The Prince VI)
revelation (XLVI.4). While only a few scholars have pursued the connection between Hobbes’s epistemological foundation and his religious teaching (Martinich 1992, McClure 2011) it is important to realize that this epistemological shift to a large degree explains Hobbes vociferous examination of religion. Either Hobbes is attempting to provide an interpretation of religion, and Christianity particularly, consistent with his new epistemology (Martinich,)

152

or he is attempting to shroud his new epistemology in the cover of religious rhetoric in order to make it more acceptable (Chapter 1). While the latter position is most tenable from Hobbes’s writings, whichever position is held Hobbes’ work is to erect religious belief upon a new foundation, which turns out to be shifting sand. This new foundation leads to the equality of religion because it establishes epistemological skepticism in religious knowledge.

Hobbes notes that his epistemological position leads to a limited assessment of religion, particularly the belief in the divine: as Hobbes argues using only natural reason, mankind can make no positive declaration about God (XXXI.28) except, perhaps, that he exists (XI.25),

153

and

152 Martinich recognizes that Hobbes is offering a new epistemology (45) and that his project was to salvage Christianity into this new standard of knowledge (7). This explains why Martinich argues Hobbes is a failure (7-8), because the inherent tension between revelation and materialistic reason make explaining one upon the foundation of another as unlikely, if not impossible. Of course the success or failure of Hobbes’s project depend on precisely what that project is. If it is, as Martinich argues, trying to make them compatible, it is “that Hobbes’s philosophy is one of those glorious failures” (8). However, if on the other hand the project was, as this dissertation argues, to establish the epistemological theory of scientific materialistic reason, but to present this new foundation veiled in such a way to make it, at least appear, consistent with the previous and accepted theories of knowledge, then the new foundation would, over time, erode and replace the previous epistemological foundation. And as Hobbes states, his goal is to correct “the citizens’ minds [which] were gradually corrupted by writes of pagan politics and philosophy” (XLVII.29). Hobbes notes that the matter used to form his artificial man is “corrupt” (XLVII.29 OL) through pre-existing opinions, and thus Hobbes could not merely give a short rational account of his teaching, for his teaching is like religious teaching, “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” (XXXII.3), for the corrupt citizens will become a modern, scientific, rational man, if they accept Hobbes’s teachings covered in the veil of religion, rather than examine and realize its undermining effect.

153 The vagueness is necessary because while Hobbes does express the ability to know God exists in other works (XXXI.24;DC ii.21), it is manifestly clear that the God which exists is not the same as the Christian God (chapter 2.6), and may be nothing more than first energy which initiated the big bang, and that this belief in God is only an “inclin[ation]” (XI.25). Further in De Cive, Hobbes notes that the existence of God is a consequence that people
is a corporal body (IV.21). God is a word that does not have meaning in itself, but only signifies man’s inability to conceive him (III.12). For, there can be no knowledge of God because all religious words used to describe him are negative “as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible,” showing man’s inability to conceive of God; are superlatives of honor “as most high, most great, and the like,” highlighting man’s own weakness rather than any positive attribute of God; or indefinite declaration of honor such “as good, just, holy, creator” which are not descriptors of God, but signs of admiration (XXXI.28). These negative words are all that nature dictates in worship (XXXI.10) and everything else is arbitrary. This means that when religious believers use positive terms in worship they are arbitrary, and when used in a public setting solely subject to the sovereign’s command (XXXI.12; see also XLII.6 and XXIII.6). Consequently, Hobbes argument indicates that nature cannot distinguish any positive aspect of religion, and therefore there is no single doctrine which is inherently right or wrong. Rather, all positive statements of religious belief and worship are arbitrary. Since all doctrine is merely positive, the sovereign has legitimate arbitrary authority to establish which ever religious doctrine, whether it be Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, or any other positive content, is equally arbitrary for the sovereign to choose. This would also mean that, if the sovereign so chooses, a religious value of toleration is an acceptable form (Abizadeh 2013).

worship Him, for “there can be no will to honour him, who, we think, hath no being” (DC XV.14). Yet to take the fact that someone believes there is a God to mean there actually is a God (perhaps a reference to the Ontological argument of Anselm) would mean men cannot be deceived, which Hobbes repeatedly denies (III.12; XXI.9; XXXVII.11). Further, Hobbes states that God’s existence is not demonstrable, but can only be accepted by faith (TWDMU xxvi).

154 Of course, Hobbes also admits that the Sovereign should teach the Leviathan in the universities because it would allow the dispersion of Hobbes’s argument in civil and moral doctrine (R.C. 16)
Hobbes hints at the general equality of all religion in his discussion of the gentile religion. Many of Hobbes’s harshest critiques are softened under the guise of being directed at the ‘gentile’ or non-Christian religion. Hobbes notes that these gentile religions arise from man’s ignorance and inability to distinguish dreams and fancy from actual vision and sense (II.8), leading man, out of fear, to create God (XII.6). It is clear that for Hobbes, all gentile religions, whether it be the primitive religion of the indigenous people of South America, the polytheism of the Roman gods, or even the monotheism of Islam, are founded upon the same seeds and thus equal in truth (or falsity) (XII.20). While this is clear, the question arises whether Hobbes holds Christianity as somehow distinct.

Shortly after leveling these critiques, Hobbes exempts Christianity and emphasizes the critiques are being directed specifically at the gentile version of religion. Despite this apparent exemption, there is great cause to doubt the sincerity of these exemption (Curley 1993, Stauffer 2010), particularly given that many exemptions are little more than saying that God (i.e., the Christian God), could, in fact, do what had just been discounted (II.8; XII.6). As discussed above, Hobbes’s definition of a “true” religion is not based upon any specific content, but can be applied to any of the aforementioned gentile religions. Ultimately for Hobbes, Christianity is to be lumped into the same category as gentile religion because it develops in the same way as gentile religion and it is founded upon the same seeds.

155 It must be recognized that “gentile” religion is not appropriated from the Jewish meaning of goyim, rather Christianity, viewing itself as a continuation of the Jewish religious tradition, has appended to mean any non-Christian religion (perhaps excepting Judaism).

156 Often these discounted actions involve some “miracle”, which as discussed in Chapter 2.7 Hobbes seeks to undermine. It is important to remember that Hobbes redefines miracles in a strict sense, and presents a position in which they can be explained by natural, rather than supernatural, causes (see also Whipple 2008).
Christianity follows the same growth pattern of other religions: for “all formed religion is founded at first upon the faith which a multitude hath in one person, whom they believe not only to be a wise man...[but] to whom God himself vouchsafeth to declare his will supernaturally...” (XII.24). Christianity, like all other religions, is founded upon the word of a man, not knowledge of God. Hobbes has already shown that we should doubt any man as a prophet for no one can know if another speaks for God (Ch 2.4; XXVI.40;XXXII.7) and inspiration from God is not a “supernatural entering of the Holy Ghost into a man”, rather it is merely a “person’s study” (XLV.25). Hobbes’s particular iteration of Christianity is designed primarily to keep people in peaceful obedience to the sovereign (XLIII.3-5; Martinich 1992, 5.15), just like the gentile religions (XII.20). Christianity, like every other religion, is designed to meet the same goal and grows through the same means as the highly criticized gentile religions.

Finally, Hobbes establishes the equality of religion through an examination of the common foundation or seed of religion. Hobbes is clear that religion is uniquely human (XII.1). This seed arises in man’s inquisitiveness to causes, thinking either backwards to their origin or forward to their effect (XII.2-4). It is not the inquisitiveness itself which is the seed of religion, for seeking answers is part of a “train of imagination” (III.5) and when the inquisitive train reaches the cause, it calls it “science” (V.17). Religion is when the process of seeking causes fails to find the true source, when man’s inquiry “cannot assure himself of the true causes of things” (XII.4). This clarifies the distinction between religion and science and means that all religion is ultimately rooted in the seed of ignorance, either one’s own or someone

157 Emphasis added
158 For an earlier detailed examination of the seeds of religion see Chapter 2.4
The genesis of religion seems to be when an individual, still within the state of nature, is incapable of explaining causes and creates an explanation, whether it be monotheistic or polytheistic and takes the form of a great feathered serpent, Greek or Roman deities, or an incorporeal spirit. Within the state of nature, there are likely innumerable religions which seek to explain these causes; but as mankind covenants together and society is created, men begin to trust “those he thinks to be his friends, and wiser than himself” (XII.4). Some religions will begin to gain a reputation, leading to greater power (X.5,7). One may be canonized into the law of that society, and as discussed above, making it a true religion. All religions are fundamentally, in their origin, born of the same seed and as such one may differentiate them based upon what they say, but not why the exist and how they arose.

In light of this, Christians, and all other dogmatic religionists, “do not know, but only believe” the accuracy of foundational teachings and truths of their religion (XLIII.8). If no religion can be known, and all religion is merely a belief that arises directly from the permitted teaching of the sovereign (XLIII.8), then the choice of which religion to establish by the sovereign is a prudential choice of what best supports the peace and harmony of his regime (Remar 1992). Given the rejection of a true religion, that all religions arise from the same seeds and differ only in the cultivation they receive, and that no religion can be known, all religions are equal in that it is fundamentally impossible to compare their truth or falsity.

---

159 Hobbes argues that religion arises “as his own fancy suggesteth” (XII.4). Fancy, for Hobbes is related “appearance” (II.2) or the remnants of sense perception after the impression of the sensory object upon man (VI.1), oddly, Hobbes frequently ties this to erroneous appearances (II.7) or optical illusions and mirages, as the geometric shapes which one “sees” after staring at the sun and then closing ones eye. (II.4). And while judgment when combined with fancy is wit (VIII.10), fancy on its own is dullness (VIII.2-3).

160 Emphasis added
Hobbes argues for an epistemological skepticism in the area of religion that, at least on the elite level, allows for each sovereign to establish which ever religious belief they wish (Remar 1992), which could be a regime of toleration (Azbidah 2013). Even if it is not a regime of toleration, this foundation of epistemological religious skepticism lays the foundation for subsequent political philosophers to argue that toleration should exist within, and among, societies (Locke 2010, McKinnon 2005). In this sense, Hobbes is a founder of modern liberalism and toleration, despite his presentation of a sovereign who can “decide which opinions and doctrines are inimical to peace and to forbid their being taught” (XVIII.9; DC VI.11).

5.5 Conclusion

As this chapter argues, Hobbes is rightly considered a founder of religious toleration, but understood as inter regentes tolerantia, toleransintolerantia inter plebem. Hobbes presents an argument of the freedom of an individual’s internal belief, because he recognizes the inherent limitations of the reach of law. Since the sovereign cannot know what a person thinks, nor can he force self-incrimination without violating the laws of nature, the sphere of private opinion remains solely under the authority of the individuals. However, having covenanted into society, the individual gives up any authority for that opinion to affect their actions and thus the sovereign has full and complete power “to decide which opinions and doctrines are inimical to peace and to forbid their being taught” (XVIII.9; DC VI.11). Hobbes presents both a rational and biblical argument in support of the disassociation of belief with action. Hobbes shows that the individual’s conscience does not require external action and that, based upon reason and the Bible, no external action commanded by the sovereign violates the conscience. Thus, privatized internal belief is not inconsistent with intoleration of actions derived from certain beliefs.
Finally, Hobbes presents an epistemological skepticism in the area of religion, arguing that all religions arise from the same seed, use the same means, and aim at the same goal. This means that no religion’s doctrine is superior to another, there is no ‘true’ religion apart from what the sovereign dictates, and that religion is an arbitrary choice by the sovereign, though regulated by the goal of peace. Through this understanding of Hobbes’s religious teachings, one can realize that Hobbes does, in fact, provide a teaching of toleration, and though it diverges based upon political position, it provides the philosophical foundations for religious toleration within a liberal society that later political theorists use to justify their position of toleration within, not merely among, societies. (Locke 2010; McKinnon 2005; Tuck 1990).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


211


