

A CRITIQUE OF HOBBS'S CRITIQUE OF BIBLICAL AND NATURAL RELIGION IN *LEVIATHAN*

Thomas L. Pangle

This essay is a critical exposition of Thomas Hobbes's atheism, focusing on the natural-scientific and theological foundations of his philosophy.

While Thomas Hobbes is generally recognized as a preeminent political philosopher, he is, to say the least, much less regarded as a theologian or religious thinker.¹ Yet it suffices to inspect the frontispieces and tables of contents of Hobbes's greatest works, *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, to see that Hobbes proclaimed theology to be a central part of political philosophy. What is more, Hobbes esteemed himself as having provided the first successful, rational resolution of the most fundamental issues in religion as well as in politics and morals.

In his insistence that theology is central to political philosophy, Hobbes stands, I believe, on impregnable ground. The most important religious or theological question is, what ought one to do, how ought one to live, in order to obey Divine commandment or law; and the source and the sanctions of Divine law insure that such law is the supreme law governing human existence. "It is manifest enough, that when a man receiveth two contrary Commands, and knows that one of them is Gods, he ought to obey that, and not the other, though it be the command even of his lawful Sovereign" (*Leviathan* III 43, p. 609). "The question of the Scripture, is the question of what is Law throughout all Christendome, both Naturall, and Civil" (*ibid.*, III 33, p. 415). Hence the most urgent political or moral question — who and what human authority one is obliged to obey — depends absolutely on some prior answer to the theological question.

What is truly strange, then, is not Hobbes's emphasis on theology but rather the tendency of our contemporary political philosophy to avoid theological issues. Yet perhaps the strangeness diminishes if we view the disappearance of theological disputation from political theory as a possible tribute to the success of Hobbes or his influence. May not Hobbes have put the whole realm of theology, especially as it is viewed by the learned or sophisticated, the "educators," on a new

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path that led to its becoming ever more politically impotent and hence (apparently) irrelevant in the modern West? Rousseau, it will be remembered, credited Hobbes with being the thinker who had come closest to overcoming the "perpetual conflict of jurisdiction which has rendered every sort of good polity impossible in the Christian states": "of all Christian authors the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who has seen well the evil and the remedy." Hobbes fell short, however, because he failed to reckon sufficiently with the "dominating spirit of Christianity," which dominating spirit "is incompatible with his system" (*Social Contract* IV 8).

Rousseau may have lived too close to Hobbes in time to have been able to gauge accurately the full historical momentum of the Hobbesian effort. Looking back from the perspective of the mid-twentieth century, the Marxist scholar C.B. Macpherson ascribes to Hobbes a "leap in political theory as radical as Galileo's formulation of the law of uniform motion was in natural science, and not unrelated to it." That leap consisted in "deriving right and obligation from fact," or in "assuming that right did not have to be brought in from outside the realm of fact, but that it was there already."

While it may be said that, from Plato on, rights and obligations had always been inferred from men's capacities and wants, the inference had always been indirect: from men's capacities and wants to some supposed purposes of Nature or will of God, and thence to human obligations and rights....Purpose or Will, brought in from outside the observed universe, was hypostatized as an outside force constantly imposing itself (by way of reason or revelation, or both) on men.²

Leo Strauss, in his last planned book, paid high if qualified tribute to these passages in Macpherson's book.³ I venture to say that Macpherson stated here more boldly and clearly than Strauss himself ever did the fundamental reason for Strauss's own decades-long preoccupation with Hobbes.

Yet precisely if Macpherson is right, or if Marx is right in asserting that "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism,"⁴ it is all the more remarkable that Macpherson never takes up the question as to what arguments Hobbes employed in order to dispose of the religious alternative, both natural and revealed. Precisely if Hobbes effected a revolution in moral and political thinking that dealt Christian theology and religion, as political forces — and theology and religion in general, as political forces — some body blows whose consequences proved, over the course of time, to be steadily more crippling, we need to recover and even to reenact Hobbes's critique of Christianity and religion. For whether Hobbes was right or wrong, and perhaps especially if he was right, we are in danger of becoming the passive tutees

or creatures of his historically successful critique; we run the risk of a progressive estrangement from perhaps the most fundamental human question, that of the existence and character of Divine Law; and, *a fortiori*, we run the risk of a progressive forgetting of the ways in which this question can be answered, and of the relative merits of the competing sorts of answer.

This danger is evident not only in Macpherson. In a graver form it manifests itself among those who try to reduce Hobbes to one or another version, or mixture of versions, of the Protestantism of his time. To fall into this historicist delusion is to insulate oneself from the bracing and illuminating challenge of Hobbes's critique of religion. Thus Glover, a prominent example, declares flatly and without argument that Hobbes's "theology is of little intrinsic worth." Glover is representative of that legion of scholars which grants that Hobbes himself took very seriously the need to provide a basis for his thought in biblical and religious criticism, but which tries to castrate Hobbes's criticism by viewing it as a relic of historically parochial seventeenth century preoccupations. This assessment fails to reckon with the possibility, upon which Hobbes himself insists, that while the religious strife Hobbes and his fellows had to confront was unique in its specific character and perhaps its intensity, precisely this uniqueness brought to the surface and to a clarity rarely matched in history a permanent human problem: the problem whose investigation Calvin condemned; the problem, *quid sit deus*.⁵

The Puzzle of Hobbes's Rhetorical Strategy

There is indeed weighty evidence suggesting that Hobbes viewed his elaborate biblical exegesis and theological argument in *Leviathan* as a necessary and prudent rhetorical response to the exigencies of his historical situation. This evidence appears when one takes a bird's-eye view of the Hobbesian corpus of political philosophy in its successive stages of elaboration. Hobbes's first complete, though at the time unpublished, and in many ways frankest and most lucidly organized exposition of his political philosophy (*The Elements of Law*, 1640) contains relatively little biblical exegesis or theological argument. The amount of such exegesis and argument in his first published (Latin) exposition of his complete political philosophy (*De Cive* or *On the Citizen*, 1642) is considerably increased, but comes nowhere near that found finally in *Leviathan* (1651) — his most famous and influential published exposition of his philosophy as a whole. Since Hobbes's basic philosophic theses changed only in secondary or even tertiary ways in the course of the "development" exhibited in his three complete expositions, it is reasonable to conclude that the most massive apparent

change — the dramatically increasing attention devoted to theology and biblical commentary — is a change in rhetorical strategy or mode of presentation rather than in doctrine.

Yet what exactly was Hobbes's rhetorical strategy? One possibility is that his aim was mainly defensive. Hobbes asked himself how he might enable the independent-minded few, who accepted and understood his new teaching in the main, to embrace and advance it in public with the least opprobrium, and how he might persuade the many, who are impressionable "like clean paper" (*Leviathan*, 379), that the doctrine and its adherents were not beyond the pale of Puritan independency centered on the relatively tolerant Cromwell. Hobbes concluded that he needed to try to support his new account with a more elaborate demonstration of its consistency with and even rootedness in the Protestant Bible, as the authoritative text all sides had to acknowledge. This conclusion was given political urgency by the collapse of traditional monarchy and established religion in the face of the Long Parliament, whose biblicism was rank with destabilizing divisiveness, but just might prove fallow soil for a biblically based teaching on absolute sovereignty.⁶ This defensive reading of Hobbes's strategy is supported by the observation that the detailed exegesis and theological discussions come in Parts Three and Four of *Leviathan*, that is, *after the complete* elaboration of Hobbes's doctrines "concerning the Constitution, Nature, and Rights of Sovereigns; and concerning the Duty of Subjects" — as Hobbes stresses in the final paragraph of Part Two (II 31, pp. 407-8; see also the chapter's opening paragraph, 395). The last two parts of the book come to sight as theological apologetic and application.

The evidence thus adduced is ambiguous, however, and this interpretation becomes more problematic the more closely it is considered. To begin with, this evidence is not incompatible with the possibility that Hobbes took advantage of the breakdown of established religious authority to expose more starkly the essential theological premises and implications of his argument.

Certainly, the controversies into which Hobbes enters in most of his biblical exegesis and theological speculation are of a very broad and permanent, and not merely temporary or local, significance. As Hobbes explains in the Appendix to the later Latin version (ch. 2, beg., Molesworth, p. 560): after the King, to please Parliament, was compelled to take out of the hands of the bishops the authority to punish heresy, "every kind of sect appeared writing and publishing whatever theology each wished. Then the author of the said book [*Leviathan*], living in Paris, wrote making use of the common liberty."

In the second place, the *Leviathan's* posture toward orthodox interpretations of the Bible is not easily characterized as accommodating. It is true that Hobbes claims that the Bible supports and indeed

exhibits or in some sense teaches his doctrine of natural law and sovereignty. But what is striking in the light of his successive elaborations of his political philosophy is how much less strongly he makes this claim than in the previous expositions. As Strauss points out (referring to *On the Citizen*, chaps. 4 and 11, and *Leviathan*, ch. 20, pp. 257-260): "In *De Cive* Hobbes devotes two special chapters to Scriptural proofs of his own theories of natural law and of absolute power of kings; in the *Leviathan* there is nothing that corresponds to the first of these chapters, and the content of the second is disposed of in two paragraphs in the chapter which treats of the natural State."⁷ Yet the transition between the two works appears somewhat less dramatic, and the trajectory of development appears clearer, when one studies the crucial chapter of *On the Citizen* devoted to scriptural ratification of Hobbesian natural law (especially in comparison to the parallel chapter in the earlier *Elements of Law*, ch. 18), and discovers a biblical interpretation so tendentious and selective as to provoke grave doubt of Hobbes's sincerity. As soon as one compares chapter four of *On the Citizen* with the scriptural texts to which it refers, one finds oneself compelled to wonder, which is Hobbes's deepest intention: to show that his teaching is in accord with Scripture; or, to show how far it departs from Scripture, and how unreasonably demanding and vindictive the scriptural morality is? Space permits only a few leading illustrations.

Hobbes's Purported Attribution of his Natural Law to Scripture

Hobbes begins by promising to show "those places in which it is declared, that the Divine law is seated in right reason." He quotes eleven passages from the Bible, not one of which so much as mentions right reason, as he indicates in the sentence with which he closes the section: "all which are *descriptions (descriptiones sunt)* of right reason" (*On the Citizen*, ch. 4, sec. 2).

Hobbes then (sec. 3) purports to adduce texts to show that his "fundamental law of nature, namely that peace was to be sought for, is also the sum (*summa*) of the Divine law." The very first passage he refers to is *Romans* 3:17, which Hobbes himself paraphrases thus: "Righteousness, which is the sum of the law, is called the way of peace." Hobbes concludes this list of citations with the famous word of *Proverbs* 3:1-2, according to which the hearer is enjoined to keep God's commandments, to which peace shall be added *as one among several consequences*.

But of course even righteousness of heart is too meager a formulation of the Bible's view of the "sum," and, we may add, the severe demands, of true morality. A few sections later (sec. 12), Hobbes purports to prove that the Bible endorses his understanding of equity as "containing in it all the other laws besides": rational equity, Hobbes reminds us, consists in every man's allowing to others "the same rights they would be allowed themselves." This, Hobbes says, is "the same which Moses sets down (Leviticus xix.18): *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. And our Saviour calls it *the sum of the moral law*. (Matthew xxii.36-40)." (Compare Hobbes's reduction of biblical charity and love, as well as biblical righteousness, to mere obedience in *Leviathan*, III, 43, p. 611).

Especially revealing are the sections dealing with those natural laws which Hobbes admits to be contradicted by the Scripture: for example, the natural law forbidding retributive punishment as a species of vainglorious cruelty (sec. 9). There are those, Hobbes observes, who think this law is "plainly disproved from hence; that there is an eternal punishment reserved for the wicked after death, where there is no place for amendment or example." Hobbes rejects with contempt the Puritan or Lutheran response, that would refer this to God's glory which is above any law. But what is the right response? Hobbes does not say. He limits himself to offering a "more correct" response than the unacceptable Puritan or Lutheran one: "the institution of eternal punishment was before sin, and had regard to this only, that men might dread to commit sin for the time to come." In the next sentence, which begins a new section, Hobbes quotes the passage (Matthew 5:22) where Christ introduces (long after sin or the fall, of course) a new, additional legal requirement and new, additional threat of hell-fire punishment to his astonished audience of sinners. Even worse, near the end of the chapter (sec. 21), in the context of showing that the Bible agrees with him that the moral law applies to inner conscience and not merely outward actions, Hobbes quotes the following from Isaiah 29:13-14: "The Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, *therefore I will proceed, &c.*" (my italics). The God of the Bible, Hobbes reminds us, is nothing if not retributive.

Hobbes moves to a conclusion (sec. 23) by pointing out that "the rule by which I said any man might know, whether what he was doing were contrary to the law or not, to wit, what thou wouldst not be done to, do not that to another; is *almost (pene)* in the self-same words delivered by our Saviour (Matthew vii.12)." Hobbes has the nerve to add (sec. 24) that just as there is nothing in the natural law that is not endorsed by the Scripture, so there is *no* scriptural commandment that is not contained in the natural law summarized in this negative "golden" rule — except, he admits, "that one commandment, of not marrying her

who is put away for adultery." This is the sole moral law of Christ that could not be deduced by an intelligent materialist who had never encountered the New Testament. But even this, Hobbes notes, was "brought for explication of the Divine positive law, against the Jews."

The Iconoclastic Tenor of *Leviathan's* Teaching on Scripture

When we turn to *Leviathan*, we find not only that Hobbes has jettisoned any sustained attempt to ratify his laws of nature by scriptural authority, but that he now proclaims more loudly, and elaborates at much greater length, a theology and a biblical exegesis so shocking, to any traditional Christian sensibilities that the presentation is rather difficult to conceive of as a rhetorical device of conciliation with or appeal to the conventionally pious sentiment of Hobbes's own time. Certainly Hobbesian theology never experienced respectability, and Hobbes's reputation as an atheist shadowed his writings — and *Leviathan* above all — from the very beginning.⁸ If Hobbes was attempting in *Leviathan* to conciliate conventionally acceptable Christian theology, he failed conspicuously — and it is hard to believe he could have expected to meet with very great success.

No doubt Hobbes provides for himself and his adherents a thin veil of apparently earnest biblicism; and he frequently voices doctrinal opinions that seem to place him just barely within the perimeters of one or another Christian outlook. That such fig leaves are not superfluous is clear from the number of our scholarly contemporaries who seriously believe, and devote hundreds of pages to arguing, that Hobbes was a Christian. To be sure, the audience Hobbes confronted in his own time was more serious, passionate, and sophisticated about the Bible and religious questions generally. But even among Hobbes's contemporary critics, the fig leaf worked to some extent, as is evident, for example, in the first published criticism of *Leviathan*, that by Sir Robert Filmer.⁹

The overall tenor of Hobbes's biblical interpretation is, however, sharply provocative and unsettling. Hobbes characteristically makes interpretive claims that drive the serious reader back to the biblical text with bewilderment, astonishment, or even outrage. It is precisely the extent and the tenacity of Hobbes's extraordinary biblical commentary in *Leviathan* that incites controversy; and it seems clear that Hobbes intends to incite controversy.

After all, Hobbes draws attention in the very Epistle Dedicatory of *Leviathan* to the likely offensiveness of his use of Scripture. In the body of the work he does not hesitate to highlight the radical

unorthodoxy of his views on crucial and deeply disturbing points. Most notable are his contentions that there is no basis whatsoever in revelation or nature for the immortality of the soul, or even for its existence, as distinguishable in any sense from the body; or for the existence of either heaven or hell. Hobbes admits, nay, he stresses that "the doctrine is now, and hath been for a long time far otherwise; namely, that every man hath Eternity of Life by Nature, in as much as his Soul is Immortal;" that "the *Kingdome of God* in the Writings of Divines, and specially in Sermons, and Treatises of devotion, is taken most commonly for Eternall felicity, after this life, in the Highest Heaven." He further admits that there is plain scriptural support for the orthodox view: "there are divers places, which at first sight seem sufficiently to serve the turn" to "prove that the Soule separated from the Body, liveth eternally."¹⁰

Hobbes's direct and explicit challenge, in the *Leviathan*, to the immortality of the soul and hence to all religious orthodoxy as he conceives it, goes with his repeated injunctions to the reader to think for himself, to bring every religious claim before the bar of sovereign individual reason, to accept nothing on traditional authority in matters of theology. Hobbes readily concedes that we may have to bow to and accept on trust many things in Scripture and Divine doctrine that are incomprehensible to reason; he indeed sternly warns against attempts to find esoteric, intelligible philosophic meanings underlying mysterious biblical passages (*ibid.*, III, 32, p. 410). But he insists that we must each of us use our own reasoning faculty, just as the first Christians did, to decide for ourselves, as they decided for themselves, which human beings or texts are worthy of our trust in their claims to have suprarational revelation from God.¹¹ Hobbes contends that the ultimate autonomy of individual reason is entailed in the Scripture. Since the Old Testament itself teaches that "there were many more false than true prophets....Every man then was, and now is bound to make use of his *Naturall Reason*, to apply to all Prophecy those Rules which God hath given us, to discern the true from the false."¹²

"Those Rules which God hath given us" consist of three empirical criteria: 1) the miracles performed by the purported prophet; 2) the purity and Divine favor exhibited by the prophet in his life; and 3) the logical consistency of his newly promulgated teaching with established doctrine — by which, Hobbes insists, the Bible means the established doctrine according to the interpretation of the ruling political sovereign, who is always the supreme prophet of God. But Hobbes points out that the first two of these criteria depend ultimately, again, on our subjective reasoning, and as such are irretrievably inconclusive: to answer the "question, how a man can be assured of the Revelation of another, without a Revelation particularly to himself," is "evidently impossible":

Miracles are Marvellous workes: but that which is marvellous to one, may not be so to another. Sanctity may be feigned; and the visible felicities of this world, are most often the work of God by Naturall, and ordinary causes. And therefore no man can infallibly know by naturall reason, that another has had a supernaturall revelation of Gods will; but only a belief; every one (as the signs thereof shall appear greater, or lesser) a firmer, or a weaker belief.¹³

The third criterion is an expression of Hobbes's teaching that the sovereign is the judge of all publicly allowable opinions and that everyone is duty bound to accept and endorse in speech and writing whatever religious doctrine the sovereign declares to be lawful. But this authority of the sovereign is ultimately derived from no other source except the consent — that is, the reasoned assent — of each subject. Similarly, the interpretation of the Bible which reads the Scripture as endorsing such supreme civil authority receives its authority finally from Hobbes's ability to persuade the reason of each reader. Besides, in the immediate historical circumstances, Hobbes is especially in need of creating allies or supporters by appealing to autonomous personal reason in order to break men away from their false, traditional or communal beliefs in religious authority, based on false traditional readings of the Bible. For Hobbes's teaching — that the secular Christian sovereign (e.g., Cromwell, or Charles I, or Louis XII of France) is not only the sole legitimate authoritative interpreter of Scripture, not only the sole judge of true prophecy, not only the vicegerant but the *very voice of God on earth* (*ibid.*, III 43, pp. 612-613), God's supreme prophet (III 36, p. 469), such that pious Christians cannot possibly have faith in or believe in God or in Christ (unless they claim supernatural revelation themselves), but can and must have all their faith only in their political sovereign who tells them of God and Christ and the meaning and sacred status of the Scripture (III 43, pp. 612-613) — is a teaching so unprecedented (as Rousseau noted) as to take the breath away from the most radical Erastian, not to speak of Bodin, Richilieu, or Cromwell himself. In matters of church and state, as in all other civic matters, Hobbes's philosophy exhibits a paradoxical but consistent dialectical movement *to* overwhelming authority *from* radical, enlightened, individual liberty and distrust of all previous or traditional authority: each individual must reason his own way to the acceptance of the need for submission to "absolute" religious authority of a new kind and derivation: "the question of the Authority of the Scriptures, is reduced to this, *Whether Christian Kings, and the Sovereign Assemblies in Christian Common-wealths, be absolute in their own Territories, immediately under God; or subject to one Vicar of Christ, constituted over the Universal Church* [Hobbes's

italics];...Which question cannot bee resolved, without a more particular consideration of the Kingdome of God; from whence also, *wee are to judge of the Authority of Interpreting the Scripture*" (my italics; III 33, p. 427).

We may tentatively conclude that the chief aim of Hobbes's rhetorical strategy is offensive rather than defensive.¹⁴ And his offensive aim is twofold. At the most serious and long range level, he seeks to liberate strong minded readers from religion, and enlist their aid in reducing drastically the authority of religion over political life. A more intermediate goal is exploding the spectrum of theology, or the driving of that spectrum dramatically to the left, toward scientific, materialistic, mundane, and humanistic Bible "readings" and theologies. In this way not merely the fragmentation, but the secularization of Christianity will be advanced, and the danger that citizens will sacrifice their natural good, worldly security for the sake of imaginary supernatural or otherworldly goods will steadily diminish. Hobbes is apparently willing to incur for himself, in his own lifetime, considerable opprobrium as a troublemaker in order to break wide open a space for intermediate but in some ways more effective materialistic reinterpretations of the Bible. For an illustration of the subsequent lines of theological speculation that I believe would have satisfied Hobbes's hopes, I would adduce the line leading from Hobbes through Locke to David Hartley, thence to Joseph Priestley, and finally to Thomas Jefferson.¹⁵

In order to test and confirm this assessment of the intention underlying Hobbes's treatment of religion, let us turn to a more detailed consideration of some key points in his biblical exegesis.

Hobbes's Teaching on the Holy Spirit and Prophecy

The appeal to the supreme authority of personal, skeptical reason brings out starkly the profoundly anti-Puritanical as well as anti-Lutheran character of Hobbes's approach to Scripture and hence to covenant theology. Hobbes insists that reason alone, without any Divine inspiration from the Holy Spirit, without any gift of suprarational grace, is the sole, pure, sufficient judge of the meaning of Scripture, "from which, all rules and precepts necessary to the knowledge of our duty both to God and man, without Enthusiasme, or supernaturall inspiration, may easily be deduced" (*Leviathan*, III 32, p. 414). Now Puritans surely did not denigrate reason, or deny its importance in scriptural interpretation; they were strong against "enthusiasm," or the antinomian claim to direct inspiration of prophecy, apart from learned, rational, and traditional scriptural interpretation (as the affair of Anne Hutchinson in America in 1636-37, or the attack

by the faculty of Yale on George Whitfield in 1744 illustrate); but they insisted, as Perry Miller puts it in the Introduction to his authoritative document collection, that "over against this there is quite another kind of knowledge which only the elect can acquire, whereby they 'see things in another manner; to tell you how, they can not; it is the beginning of light in heaven'" (quoting John Cotton). For the Puritans stressed the overwhelming fact of the Fall, and the attendant corruption of the natural mind by sin, to such an extent that the mind left to natural reason cannot even become sufficiently aware of its own corruption. Left to itself, Puritans charge, the natural light of reason seeks peace and comfort and the pursuit of earthly happiness rather than radical transcendence. In the words of Thomas Hooker (before he fled England in 1630, as Miller says, "one of the most conspicuous leaders of Puritan sentiment in the land"): "There is a weakness, impotencie and insufficiencie in the understanding to reach this right discovery of sin, for however there remaynes so much glimmering in the twilight of Natural reason, and so much sensibleness in the stupid benumbedness of the corrupt conscience of a carnal man, that it can both see and sensibly check for some grosser evil, or some such sins, or venom of sin, as crosseth his own peace and Comfort, or those ends which he sets up as the chiefest good at which he aymes, but to search into the entrales of sin, and discern the spiritual composition of the accursed nature thereof, he can in no wise attayn this by all the labor and light he hath." From the Puritan perspective, as Miller summarizes it, "our premises are not secured by approaching the Bible convinced beforehand that what is contrary to reason cannot be contained there, or that what is against the light of nature cannot possibly be intended, but the Bible itself gives us the premises of reason." For the Puritan, "reason does not make clear the sense of Scripture, but the clear sense of Scripture creates the reason." Or in the words, again, of Thomas Hooker: "the godly doe not only apprehend the meaning of the words in the Scripture, and are able to discourse of the reasons therein contained, but they discern also the spiritualnesse of the work of grace, that is discovered in the same."¹⁶

In sharp contrast, the presupposition of Hobbes's reading of the Bible is not the Fall but the State of Nature — the original, natural, desperate condition of humanity, caused not by sin but by the unenlightened or unrestrained passions of man; and "the Desires, and other Passions of man, are in themselves no Sin" (*Leviathan*, I 13, p. 187; cf. II 27, pp. 335-336). Men come out of this horrible condition not by inspiration of grace or Divine assistance but by reasoning with a view to what is required to satisfy their most powerful passions or desires.

Hobbes does not leave things at the question, "how shall a man know his own Private spirit to be other than a beleef, grounded upon the Authority, and Arguments of his teachers; or upon a Presumption of

his own Gifts?" (*ibid.*, III 43, p. 613). The reliance on inspiration Hobbes treats as a species of madness, and on this basis labels Suarez, a thinker generally respected for his reasoning ability, as having been in the grip of insanity when he wrote endorsing such reliance (I 8, pp. 141-147). Hobbes admits or draws our attention to the fact that the Jews "called mad-men Prophets" (I 8, p. 143; see also II 29, p. 371); but he expresses puzzlement as to why they should make such a "strange" mistake, since, he insists, there is no warrant in any scripture for the belief that anyone receives inspiration from God. When the Bible uses the word "inspiration" it never means it: "to take *Inspiration* in the proper sense," Hobbes later assures us, "is not to take the word in the sense of the Scripture" (III 34, p. 441). "The Scriptures by the Spirit of God in man, mean a mans spirit, enclined to Godlinesse" (I 8, p. 143; see also III 34, p. 430). For an example, Hobbes cites Numbers 11:25, where, as Hobbes says, "God is sayd to take from the Spirit that was in *Moses*, and give it to the 70 elders." At first, Hobbes leaves the reader in bewilderment as to how in the world this crucial passage (cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, I 40) exemplifies his interpretation of "the Spirit," since it plainly contradicts his interpretation. Later, Hobbes repeatedly returns to discussions of this passage, insuring that the reader will focus upon it, and all that is implied in Hobbes's treatment of it.

In the course of his thematic discussion "of the signification of SPIRIT" (*Leviathan*, III 34, pp. 432-433), Hobbes explains that what the Bible means by "the Spirit of God" which God took from Moses and put upon the seventy, is simply that they began to "prophecy according to the mind of Moses, that is to say, by a *Spirit* or *Authority* subordinate to his own." He makes his meaning even plainer when he returns again to the passage in the course of his thematic discussion of the meaning of prophecy. Prophecy has three meanings in the Bible, according to Hobbes: 1) speaking from God to man or from man to God, 2) predicting the future, and 3) speaking incoherently. The most frequent meaning is the first, and does not in any way entail inspiration: anyone who so much as says a prayer, or sings a hymn, before an audience, is a prophet in the biblical sense, since in some places the word "signifieth no more, but praising God in Psalmes, and Holy Songs" (III 36, pp. 456-467). Doubtless, some prophets are more authoritative than others, but this is never because of Divine inspiration. Now as for the giving of the spirit to the seventy elders, the Bible means that there was nothing "supernatural" in this event, any more than when the Bible speaks of God's "calling," or "annointment," or so-called "inspiration" of the other subordinate prophets; "the Spirit of God in that place, signifieth nothing but the Mind and disposition to obey, and assist Moses in the administration of the government." It was the same "disposition"

shared by everyone else who was appointed to some task by Moses and followed his orders (III 36, pp. 464-465).

To be sure, there were "extraordinary prophets," but they were not inspired, according to the Bible, read as Hobbes says we ought to read it: the extraordinary prophets "took notice of the word of God no otherwise, than from their Dreams, or Visions; that is to say, from the imaginations which they had in their sleep, or in an Extasie: which imaginations in every true Prophet were supernaturall; but in false Prophets were either naturall, or feigned." But then Hobbes concedes, and thus draws our attention to the fact, that "the same prophets were neverthesse said to speak by the Spirit"; he reassures us that the Bible cannot mean what it says. "Spirit" here means nothing but vision, i.e., human imagination. Hobbes quotes the Bible quoting God saying "My servant Moses is not so...with him I will speak mouth to mouth,...as a man speaketh to his friend"; Hobbes assures us that this means by "a Vision, though a more cleer Vision than was given to other Prophets" (III 36, pp. 461-462; see also III 34, p. 441). To understand what is implied in Hobbes's insistence on visions or dreams as the only medium of extraordinary prophecy, we must keep in mind what he says at the very outset of his biblical exegesis:

How God speaketh to a man immediately, may be understood by those well enough, to whom he hath so spoken; but how the same should be understood by another, is hard, if not impossible to know. For if a man pretend to me, that God hath spoken to him supernaturally, and immediately, and I make doubt of it, I cannot easily perceive what argument he can produce, to oblige me to beleieve it...there is nothing that exacteth either beleefe, or obedience....To say he hath spoken to him in a Dream, is no more than to say he dreamed that God spake to him; which is not of force to win beleef from any man, that knows dreams are for the most part naturall, and may proceed from former thoughts; and such dreams as that, from selfe conceit, and foolish arrogance, and false opinions of a mans own godliness....To say he hath seen a Vision, or heard a Voice, is to say, that he hath dreamed between sleeping and waking: for in such manner a man doth many times naturally take his dream for a vision, as not having observed well his own slumbering (III 32, pp. 410-411).

Hobbes does admit, and thus highlights for us, the fact that there is an undeniable biblical doctrine according to which Moses was addressed by God as a "supreme" prophet, and hence in a manner superior to the imaginary visions or dreams by which God addressed the "extraordinary prophets." But Moses shares this supreme elevation with every "High Priest, every one for his time, as long as the Priesthood was Royall," and then with every "pious king" — for the

peak of prophecy, according to the Bible as Hobbes teaches us to read it, is political sovereignty. Of course, how it is that God speaks to sovereigns, according to the Bible, in a manner more direct than to any extraordinary prophet who does not hold political sovereignty, "is not manifest" — nay, "it is not intelligible." The Bible read as Hobbes reads it is curiously silent, or rather, speaks in unintelligible language, on the one sort of prophecy that really counts. One thing is sure: God, as presented by the Bible read reasonably, never spoke to Moses by the Holy Spirit, in any other sense than is "naturall, and ordinary" or that attributes "nothing to him supernaturall" (III 36, pp. 462-463). In other words, Hobbes all but denies that there is any claim to revelation, strictly speaking, in the Old Testament: he carefully distinguishes "Prophecy," on the one hand, from what he variously calls "Sense Supernaturall," "Revelation, or Inspiration"; and ascribes only the former to the Old Testament.¹⁷ The rationalizing treatment of prophecy steadily evaporates the Bible's claim to suprarational insight, leaving behind a crystalline residue whose unintelligibility becomes more glaring as it loses its supportive medium or context. By insisting that the Bible is reasonable, Hobbes pertinaciously drives his readers to wonder how that which is above reason can be reasonable, or how one can logically or intelligibly distinguish what is beyond reason from what is contrary to reason, what is supra-rational from what is irrational. Hobbes thus forces us to confront the gulf between the compelling force of what is known and the claim to compelling force of what is unknown or unclear.

But the Bible, Hobbes continues always to insist, presents a knowable and clear, because reasonable, message. So is it not astonishing that the Jews, who had so clear and rational and explicitly uninspired a Bible to guide them, characteristically attributed inspiration to prophets and madmen? The only Jews who clearly escaped this error, according to Hobbes (I 8, p. 145), were the Sadducees, "who erred so farre on the other hand, as not to believe there were any spirits (which is very neere to direct Atheism)." But how does the Sadducees' reading of the Bible, as rendered here by Hobbes, differ from that of Hobbes? The Sadducees, Hobbes later notes, were the only Jews who interpreted correctly the meaning of "angels" in the Bible — as fancies of the human imagination (III 34, p. 435). "Then too, there were Sadducees among the philosophers" of the Greeks, Hobbes slyly observes (Appendix, ch. 1, p. 525, Molesworth).

To illustrate the error characteristic of the Jews, Hobbes cites (I 8, p. 144) the reaction the Scribes had to Jesus. They said he was possessed: Mark 3:21. When one checks the scriptural context one discovers that this happens to be the text in which Jesus declares that the only sin which will never be forgiven is blasphemy against "the Holy

Spirit" (cf. IV 44, p. 650). Hobbes, I daresay, was a singularly rash spirit.

Hobbes goes on to admit, and indeed to wonder aloud at, the fact that the New Testament reports that Jesus claimed to cast out spirits, who are reported by the Bible to have confessed Christ aloud as they departed. Hobbes suggests that "it is not necessary to interpret those places otherwise, than that those mad-men confessed him" (I 8, pp. 145-146). After all, Hobbes notes, the Bible also says that Jesus rebuked the winds, and rebuked fevers, as if they were alive and inspirited; that Jesus said a man could have a spirit in him that left him, wandered abroad, and then returned into him with seven additional spirits; that Jesus claimed that when he breathed on people the Holy Ghost entered into them (I 8, pp. 145-146; and IV 45, p. 673). For Hobbes does not cease to remind the reader of the utterly fantastic things the Scripture actually says, and says in unambiguous language (see especially IV 45, pp. 660-663). When he is not thematically analyzing the meaning of inspiration, prophecy, and spirit, in order to give a "reasonable" reading to the Bible, Hobbes repeats the unambiguous doctrine of the Scripture according to which "the Holy Ghost, or Comforter" was "speaking, and working in the Apostles: which Holy Ghost, was a Comforter that came not of himselfe" (I 16, p. 220; see also III 42, p. 522). He repeats the doctrine that "the Holy Ghost descended visibly on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost" (*De Homine*, ch. 15, sec. 3). But in his thematic analysis of the biblical meaning of the word "Spirit," Hobbes says that "the wind, that is there [Acts 2.2] said to fill the house wherein the Apostles were assembled on the day of Pentecost, is not to be understood for the Holy Spirit" (III 34, pp. 441-442), and Hobbes dares to go so far as to say, "these words (Luke 4.1) *And Jesus full of the Holy Ghost...* may be understood, for *Zeal* to do the work for which hee was sent by God the Father"; for "the word *Ghosts*," Hobbes insists, "signifieth nothing, neither in heaven, nor earth, but the Imaginary inhabitants of mans brain" (*Leviathan*, III 34, p. 433).

What we have seen in thus following Hobbes's treatment of the fundamental themes of Inspiration, Prophecy, and the Holy Spirit (blasphemy or denial of which is the most grievous sin according to Christ), would be repeated if we followed Hobbes's treatment of angelology, the word of God, miracles, or other basic themes of biblical hermeneutics. Hobbes seeks to engage the thoughtful and serious but doubting believer, or the disbeliever who remains doubtful about his disbelief in the face of the possible truth of the Bible. At great cost to interpretive plausibility, Hobbes wrenches from the biblical text and tradition a coherent, politically sober, morally humane or decent, teaching — in order to show how totally the Bible must be distorted in order to arrive at such a message: how incoherent, politically

anarchic, madly spiritual, and in the final analysis unintelligible the actual message of the text itself is. Even or precisely when he forces on the text a version of his own doctrine of sovereignty — as in his interpretation of the location of sovereignty in the Jewish state after the death of Moses — Hobbes reveals what appears to him to be the extraordinary incompetence and chaotic outcome of the authentic, unforced, biblical political understanding and political organization.

To put it very straightforwardly, and at the risk of appearing to countenance Hobbes's blasphemies: Hobbes tries to show the reader that if he accepts Jesus, he accepts a man of questionable sanity, whose febrile imagination led him to rebuke winds and fevers, who believed he saw devils coming and going in people by the handfulls, who claimed to speak with these devils, who claimed he could breathe God into people, who said doves could bring God onto people, and who threatened anyone who denied this wild spiritualism with the punishment of eternal and unforgiveable suffering in an afterlife, while promising eternal bliss to those who believed and obeyed him and his authorized heirs — whose designation he left totally unclear. This man was merely carrying to its conclusion a Jewish religion that identified madness with Divine inspiration and taught that God's spirit, trumping all other intellectual and political authority, was constantly popping up in all sorts of people, by the hundreds. Hobbes highlights Paul's assumption that any one ranting or singing in public, in church or out, is probably in the throes of prophecy, and dwells on Moses's creation of seventy prophets in the blink of an eye — to the consternation of his relatively sensible lieutenant Joshua; but Hobbes also notes that "of 400 Prophets, of whom the K. of *Israel* asked counsel, concerning the warre he made against *Ramoth Gilead*, only Micaiah was a true one" (III 32, p. 412). Nor does Hobbes suggest that the other 399 were liars. After all, the Bible teaches, Hobbes notes, that "[Joel 2. 28] *Your sons and your daughters shall Prophecy; your old men shall dream Dreams, and your young men shall see Visions*" (Hobbes's italics; III 36, p. 461). Traditional Judaism carried to extremes the prophetic impulse seen in all religion; Judaism went still further, by insisting that no government was worthy of obedience that could not find authority in a capricious prophetic holy spirit sent by a single, supreme deity which promised to manifest itself in a shattering messianic future. Among the pragmatic Romans, Hobbes notes, we do not "read, that any religion was there forbidden, but that of the Jews who (being the peculiar Kingdom of God) thought it unlawfull to acknowledge subjection to any mortall King or state whatsoever" (I 12, p. 178). In short, Hobbes provides an anti-biblical argumentation consisting in a detailed and painstaking exegesis that claims to expose, from the Bible itself, the total inadequacy of the biblical faith as a sensible guide to human life.¹⁸

Insofar as Hobbes's ironic exegesis is aimed not only at ridiculing, but at truly refuting the claims of the Bible, it appears to suffer from a decisive defect. Hobbes does not show that prior to the ironic imposing of his sensible or rational "reading" on the text, he has first attempted, in candor and without prejudice, to discern the Bible's own coherent teaching, beginning from the Bible's own premises and outlook. Hobbes appears to assume that no such coherent teaching or reading is discoverable. Hobbes no doubt gives some hints, in the course of his ironic exegesis, of those passages and teachings which confirmed his suspicions as to the absurdity of the Bible's teaching; but does Hobbes take the reader by the hand, as it were, and lead him step by step from an appreciative or at least open-minded reading to a steadily more disillusioned or contemptuous understanding of what the text actually conveys? Does Hobbes even encourage in the reader the desire and need to undertake such a hermeneutic ascent? Does he go even as far as Spinoza in this crucial respect? But without demonstrating such an ascent, can Hobbes claim to have settled the meaning of Scripture — the meaning even or precisely for the truly rational and rationally demanding reader? Can Hobbes claim to have done more than provoke and upset the believer: can he claim to have refuted faith that claims to find intelligible guidance in the Scriptures?

Natural Theology

In order to bring into focus the fundamental question that is prompted by Hobbes's overall procedure, we must not lose sight of the massive fact noted earlier: the detailed discussion of the Bible and revealed doctrine in Parts Three and Four of *Leviathan* comes *after* the elaboration of Hobbes's own doctrine of human nature, natural law, and sovereignty. In the course of that elaboration, Hobbes treats of religion in general, exploring its psychological roots and its epistemological and empirical (natural scientific) foundations. These explorations, especially in chapters 7, 8, and 12, raise, as we have had occasion to recall, a number of provocatively skeptical doubts about the truth of all claims to religious inspiration. Hobbes presents some rather plausible suggestions, and illustrations, of how claims to inspiration can be reduced to misinterpretations of perfectly natural dream-states, whose contents correlate with what can be empirically discovered about the psychological profile and background of the purportedly inspired prophets. But Hobbes does not move from these sections immediately to his detailed biblical exegesis and doctrinal discussions. The later, detailed discussion of the Bible and Christianity is not, then, as it is in Spinoza's *Theologico-political Treatise*, part of the protreptic to the

chief positive teaching, on natural right and the principles of sovereignty. The discussion of Scripture in *Leviathan* does not serve the function of preparing the reader to be open or favorably disposed to a teaching that follows upon or is interwoven with the exegesis. The elaborated discussion of the Bible and Christianity would appear rather to be aimed principally at a reader who has already followed and been at least impressed by, if not strongly attracted to, the doctrine previously presented, in both its positive and its skeptical aspects. Hobbes, we may surmise, has in view readers who are revolted at the fanaticism, strife, misery, and chaos into which biblical religion has led civilization — readers who are desperate to hear a rational, empirical, objective, and sane doctrine of religion, justice, and authority. Hobbes presents such a doctrine, and then, in a kind of ancillary or mopping-up operation, turns to a detailed, ironic re-reading of the Bible.

This means to say that Hobbes's revealing of the absurdity of the Bible through an ostensibly favorable, but in fact ironically scornful, exegesis cannot be the heart of his critique of the religion or of the Bible. For at bottom, this ridiculing of the Bible presupposes, on his own part but also even on the part of his most seriously intended audience, an already established, strong disposition to disbelieve the Bible. What is the rational basis of this predisposition? Or is this predisposition itself no more than a faith, a faith in reason or the empirically evident, which, as a foundation, is no more rational — seemingly much less self-conscious — than the faith Hobbes claims to triumph over? One possible candidate for a strictly rational foundation is natural theology, or a demonstration, on the basis of premises and empirical evidence available to unassisted reason, of the existence of a God who is so reasonable and evident as to make the biblical presentation of God appear childishly ludicrous.

Certainly Hobbes does present a natural theology, in successive, and increasingly puzzling, elaborations throughout *Leviathan*. The first elaboration, in Part One, is, we are by now not surprised to find, far the most coherent and perspicacious. Hobbes begins (I 11, p. 167) by correctly observing that the inquiry into the causes of things is such that for one who undertakes it, "of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternall; which is it men call God." (Hobbes does not show why this speculative "thought" expresses a true proposition: why, that is, perpetual regress is false — or why such regress is any more inconceivable than an eternal first cause.) Gathering steam, Hobbes leaps from the implicit acceptance of the truth of this dubious "thought" to the untailed assertion that "it is impossible to make any profound enquiry into naturall causes, without being enclined thereby to believe there is one God Eternall" — "though," he adds,

drastically undercutting the assertion, "they cannot have any idea of him in their mind," but only the idea of a cause, "which men call God."

Hobbes immediately proceeds to make a fundamental distinction between the few who make profound inquiry into this first cause, and the vast majority "who make little, or no enquiry into the naturall causes of things" (*ibid.*, pp. 167-168). These latter totally transform the "thought about the first cause," by mingling it with "the feare that proceeds from the ignorance itself, of what it is that hath the power to do them much good or harm": the vast majority of mankind "are enclined to suppose, and feign unto themselves, severall kinds of Powers Invisible." These powers they proceed to worship, hold in awe, invoke, and thank. This "feare of things invisible, is the naturall Seed of that, which every one in himself calleth Religion."

It is therefore doubtful, to say the least, whether true philosophers, or men who "plunge profoundly into the pursuit of causes," liberating themselves from the childish hopes and fears we all start out enslaved to, have any natural religion. Genuine philosophers, as the next chapter stresses, in their pursuit of the causes of things, "shall at last come to this, that there must be (as even the heathen Philosophers confessed) one First Mover"; "and all this without thought of their fortune, the solicitude whereof, both enclines to fear, and hinders them from the search of the causes of other things" (my italics; I 12, p. 170). In *De Corpore* I 8, Hobbes explicitly denies that philosophy can speak of God by nature, or that there can be a natural philosophic theology. In his later chapter on the Kingdom of God by Nature in *Leviathan*, Hobbes reminds us that the chief philosophic doctrine on the First Mover is that of Aristotle, who asserts that the world is eternal and does not have a beginning in time. Hobbes insists that this teaching is tantamount to atheism: "to say the World was not Created, but Eternall, (seeing that Which is Eternall has no cause,) is to deny that there is a God" (II 31, p. 402). Going slightly beyond what he will later say in *Leviathan*, in *On the Citizen* Hobbes also insists that for those who hold, there is no evidence that God, though omnipotent, exercises "government" over mankind, the sentence holds, "what is above us, does not concern us. And seeing there is nothing for which they should either love or fear him, truly he will be to them as though he were not at all."¹⁹

Certainly in *Leviathan* Hobbes proceeds to ascribe natural religion only to those ignorant masses who add, to the thought of the first cause, a profound anxiety that leads them to imagine ghosts or spirits, to believe in the possibility of infallible predictions of the future ("which are naturally, but Conjectures upon the Experience of time past" — I 12, p. 175), and to attribute to the first cause something like the human soul. These unphilosophic many whose imaginations prompt such vain conclusions, and these only, would have a reason for

honoring the first cause in their hearts. For honor, Hobbes has taught us at length, with marvellous precision and vividness, two chapters previously, is a manifestation of the value we set on a being, as having power to do us particular good or ill in the future (ch. 10, esp. pp. 152-156; compare esp. p. 172 of ch. 12 and II 31, pp. 399-401). Even the very name "God" is ascribed to the first cause only "that we may honor him" (I 3, p. 99). The fact that profound thinkers manifest in public such honor would then be reasonably ascribed to their recognizing how advantageous it is to their own power to conform to the desperate imaginings of the vast majority among whom they must live.

Hobbes divides the "cultivators" of the "seeds" of natural religion into "two sorts of men." There are those "gentile" lawgivers and poets who proceeded "according to their own invention"; and there are "*Abraham, Moses, and our Blessed Saviour*; by whom have been derived unto us the Lawes of the Kingdome of God," giving "precepts to those that have yeilded themselves subjects in the kingdome of God" (I 12, p. 173). The kingdom of God would then be that government the God of the Bible exercises over those who have consented to His rule in a covenant made possible "where God himselfe, by supernaturall revelation, planted religion" (I 12, p. 178). For there is no covenant "with God without speciall Revelation" (I 14, p. 197). Any kingdom of God *by nature* is excluded.

Yet Hobbes immediately begins to muddy these clear waters by declaring that "it is true, God is King of all the Earth by his Power," and referring us to "an other place" where he will "speak more largely of the Kingdome of God, both by Nature, and Covenant" (I 12, pp. 178-179). In the margin, he indicates that that place is, not as we might suppose, the chapter in which he thematically treats of the Kingdom of God by Nature (ch. 31) but instead chapter 35, "*Of the Signification in Scripture of KINGDOME OF GOD, of HOLY, SACRED, and SACRAMENT.*" As this title indicates, Chapter 35 treats not of natural religion or theology but of the revealed biblical theology; and, in that context, incidentally of God's rule, over those humans with whom he has no covenant, *as that rule is to be understood through the medium or in the light of revelation*. The chapter speaks not of God as first cause, but of God as creator: "from the very Creation, God not only reigned over all men *naturally* by his might; but also had *peculiar* Subjects, whom he commanded by a Voice, as one man speaketh to another. In which manner he *reigned* over Adam" (III 35, p. 443). The discussion proceeds, then, on the basis of a premise that is unevident to natural reason: Hobbes allows the fundamental distinction between natural and revealed theology to be blurred. Thus he says that even prior to the covenant, Abraham had a quasi-contractual relation to the natural law or moral law: speaking in uncharacteristically imprecise language, Hobbes says: "to the Law morall he was obliged before, *as by*

an Oath of Allegiance" (my italics, III 35, p. 443; contrast the characteristically precise reference to the oath of allegiance, signified by the circumcision, on the very next page). Can this statement be sustained except by supposing that Abraham had, even before the covenant, some *supernatural* intimation of God as king, to whom he had sworn some allegiance — "there being no Obligation on any man, which ariseth not from some Act of his own" (II 21, p. 268)?

It is true that Hobbes from time to time speaks as if there is some sense in which the natural law, the law of reason, is also a Divine law, an edict of a purposeful or willful deity demonstrable to unassisted reason. Thus Hobbes says that prior to the covenant, Abraham and his seed "as to the Morall law," were "already obliged"; "nor was there any Contract, that could adde to, or strengthen the Obligation, by which both they, *and all men else* were bound naturally to obey God Almighty" (my italics, III 40, p. 500). Somewhat later Hobbes says that prior to the delivery of the Ten Commandments, God "had given no Law to men, but the Law of Nature, that is to say the Precepts of Naturall Reason, written in every mans own heart" (III 42, p. 545). But these precepts, we have been repeatedly taught, "in the condition of meer Nature (as I have said before in the end of the 15th chapter,) are not properly Lawes, but qualities that dispose men to peace, and obedience. When a Common-wealth is once settled, then are they actually Lawes, and before" (II 26, p. 314). These precepts are "improperly" called laws: "they are but Conclusions, or Theorems"; they are properly called laws only "if we consider the same Theoremes, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things" (II 15, pp. 216-217). But how is the first cause known by unassisted reason, i.e., apart from the biblical notion of God the Creator, to communicate any word, to command anything, or even to have such a right to command?

Looking back from his "Review and Conclusion," Hobbes says that what he declared in Chapter 35 was that the covenant with the Jews "distinguished them from the rest of the world, over whom God reigned not by their consent, but by his own Power" (p. 522). This implies that by nature God rules humans as total slaves, or as Hobbes puts it in another place, beings who are "absolutely in the power of their Masters, as Slaves taken in war, and their Issue...and that are bought and sold as Beasts" (IV 45, p. 667). This would seem to suggest that if or insofar as natural justice rests on God, it rests on tyranny or despotism of an unmitigated sort. But the only evidence Hobbes gives for God's ownership of mankind and mankind's chattel slavery is again scriptural (IV 45, p. 668). Moreover, since the slave relationship he describes is one in which the slaves are held by no right except the immediate threat of execution or physical "fetters" (see also II 20, p. 256; II 30, p. 377; *On the Citizen*, I 14), it follows that in order to establish this as the true rule of God by nature or reason, empirical evidence must be

forthcoming of God's immediate capital punishment or physical fettering of those who disobey him, above all scoffers and atheists. In *On the Citizen*, Hobbes asserts that "the atheist is punished either immediately by God himself, or by kings constituted under God;...by the right of war, as the Giants warring against God" (*On the Citizen*, XIV 19; cf. Appendix to Latin *Leviathan*, ch. 2, p. 548, Molesworth). But Hobbes never even attempts to offer one scintilla of evidence for this assertion. Later in *On the Citizen*, and again in *Leviathan*, on the contrary, Hobbes admits that atheists, and also "they that believe not that God has any care of the actions of mankind," are free of the Kingdom or chattel slavery of God by nature (directly contradicting his statements that all men are under that kingdom): for atheists "acknowledge no Word for his," and therefore have "no fear of his threatenings" (*Leviathan*, II 31, p. 396; *On the Citizen*, IV 2).

And why should they? Granted that the first cause of the universe "causes" in some very indirect sense all things; what demonstrable connection is there between this power over everything and *ruling*, by enforcement of the laws of nature? How does the first cause favor the keeping any more than the breaking of the laws — since the first cause causes both vice and virtue? How does the first cause rule mankind any more or in any sense other than it rules ants, stones, and the planets? How does it differ from the law of gravity, which we are compelled to "obey" but which we know it would be madness to worship, or to call upon to support the moral law?

Hobbes takes up thematically the kingdom of God by nature in Chapter 31 of *Leviathan*. We observe, to begin with, two striking features of this chapter.²⁰ First, Hobbes stresses at the outset that he has already completed his whole doctrine of human nature and obligation. The only reason he turns, or returns, to natural religion is as a part of the task of showing what the laws of God are, or in what sense God is supreme sovereign, and thus to show what, if any, are the limits to civil obedience. The discussion of the kingdom of God by nature is thus introduced as the beginning of the discussion of the kingdom of God simply; it is part of the apologetics; it is not part of the foundation for the doctrine. The religious foundation was laid in Chapter 12, "Of Religion," whose teaching we have already shown. Secondly, and in a way implied in what we have just noted: in this chapter Hobbes begins at once to speak in an imprecise or blurred way of the kingdom of God by nature in its relation to the kingdom of God by scripture. In order to substantiate his opening assertion that by nature God is king, Hobbes does not adduce, as anyone familiar with the tradition of natural theology might expect, any empirical evidence, such as the beauty and order of the visible heavens (cf. Plato *Laws* 886a), but only the songs of David about the Cherubins. He proceeds on the basis of evidence that is unevident, not to say impertinent, to natural reason.

But Hobbes immediately raises some very pertinent and troubling questions. He rejects as imprecise the attempt to claim God is ruler by sheer power over mankind: "to call this Power of God, which extendeth it selfe not onely to Man, but also to Beasts, and plants, and bodies inanimate, by the name of Kingdome, is but a metaphoricall use of the word." He alone, Hobbes continues, "is properly said to Raigne that governs his subjects, by his word, and by promise of Rewards to those that obey it, and by threatening them with Punishment that obey it not" (*Leviathan*, II 31, p. 396).

The first thesis needing empirical demonstration, then, is that God has a non-metaphorical word he communicates to men by nature, a word that demonstrates his "Providence." Hobbes conspicuously fails to demonstrate or show the empirical grounds for this Providential claim. He asserts that the relation of God to humans is like that which would obtain among humans (mortals) in the state of nature where one mortal had "Power irresistible": such a mortal would have "defended both himselfe, and them, according to his own discretion" (II 31, pp. 397-398). The obvious flaw is that God or the first cause, even if it be understood as somehow an actor in nature at present, is not mortal and therefore has no conceivable reason for defense; this analogy presupposes precisely that attribution of a soul to the first cause which Hobbes in Chapter 12 numbered among the delusions of the many who failed to enquire profoundly into causes.

Hobbes next raises the grave question of why there is no empirical evidence for any sanction or punishment by the God of nature for his laws of nature. Hobbes admits that this is of such difficulty as to have "shaken the faith, not onely of the Vulgar, but of Philosophers and which is more, of the Saints, concerning the Divine Providence." Hobbes offers as his only response a relapse into biblical authority, i.e., into evidence that is unevident to unassisted reason. He brazenly claims in the next sentence that he has just "spoken of the right of God Sovereignty, as grounded onely on Nature" (II 31, pp. 398-399).

Hobbes then turns to the question of what honor is due to the God of nature as "dictated to men, by their Naturall Reason onely, without other word of God," and proceeds to an elaborate discussion of the honors men extrapolate to God from their honoring of other men: "the end of worship amongst men, is Power." Honor, as we have seen, presupposes that the man honored seeks power as an end; but, Hobbes now admits, "God has no ends." There is no point in honoring the first cause, except insofar as we attribute to it human needs: "the worship we do him," Hobbes admits or indeed underlines, is directed "by those rules of Honour, that reason dictateth to be done by the weak to the more potent men" (II 31, pp. 399, 401). The absurdity of natural religion is brought out most succinctly by Hobbes when he says that we contradict our honoring of God when we dispute God's nature, because we know

that by natural reason we can know nothing of this nature — and hence, of course, nothing honorable or caring about honor in him or it, nothing about anything we have to hope or fear from him or it (II 31, p. 404). This utter absence of any evidence for anything honorable or honor-seeking in God is confirmed when Hobbes returns in conclusion to the crucial issue of the evidence or lack of evidence for Divine sanctions for and hence Divine rule by the laws of nature: the sole sanctions are the natural consequences that follow from failing to act according to the precepts of reason (II 31, pp. 406-407). The “kingdom of God by nature” is simply *la force des choses* — the way things are, in a nature which allows humans to figure out and construct for themselves precepts or qualities that will in the long run advance their collective interests.

Hobbes’s elaboration of natural theology may provide a resting place for those satisfied with a halfway house between scriptural religion and full rationality, but the discussion would appear to have as its most serious aim the demonstration of the absurdity or childish character of natural religion. Hobbes’s natural theology, together with his psychological account of inspiration or “dreaming,” constitutes the most fundamental part of his natural science or natural philosophy. As such, this part of Hobbes’s natural science proceeds, or attempts to proceed, as we have seen, on the basis of premises, evidence, and argumentation that would be acceptable to an open-minded “ancient,” or Aristotelian, or “Sadducee,” as well as to any “modern,” or Galilean. This natural theology or science, so understood, would seem to be intended to demonstrate the utter lack of grounds discoverable in nature for supposing the existence of a providential or morally significant deity.

But even if we were to grant that Hobbes has succeeded in disposing of cosmological proofs of the existence of God, and even if we were further to concede that his analysis of dreams and visions and the imagination makes super-rational prophecy or revelation seem wildly implausible, why would we be compelled to concede the *impossibility* of revelation or prophecy? For who says prophecy — especially or precisely if it is super-rational — has to be plausible or even intelligible, i.e., rationally intelligible? Does not Paul, appealing to the authority of Isaiah, in fact anticipate the Hobbesian and all similar rationalist attempts to dispose of revelation?

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (Is. 29:14). Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?...And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human

wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5).

How has Hobbes disposed of the possibility of a prophetic inspiration that is radically mysterious, and thus incomprehensible, for all those except the few who have in fact experienced the Divine call or been blessed with Divine assistance in recognizing its earthly spokesmen? In other words, even if we grant the strongest possible force to Hobbes's arguments, even if we grant that all traditional Thomistic or Christian-Aristotelian doctrines of natural theology or teleotheology fall before his assault, and that no middle ground is left between Hobbesian rationalism and what appears, to reason, to be a kind of faith in the absurd; we are left wondering how and why Hobbes thinks that on his own grounds he has disposed of revelation.

To this objection the Hobbesian philosophy offers the following response. Faith in the simply absurd or simply mysterious is not at issue. However inscrutable the biblical God may be, He is the God of Righteousness (see e.g., Romans 1-3). What is at issue, then, is faith in a providential and legislative deity, a deity which provides essential supernatural support and sanction for justice, for the moral law — which the Bible claims cannot stand without this support. God is intelligible, even in His mysterious, supernatural and super-rational being, insofar as that trans-rational being represents the completion or essential supplement to which justice, rationally conceived, inevitably points and looks. But, Hobbes contends, justice properly understood needs no such support, and is in fact endangered by the attempt to provide such support. In Parts One and Two of *Leviathan*, Hobbes claims to provide a perfectly lucid, rational account of justice or of moral life, grounded in the empirical facts of the human condition. This account is strengthened or defended by the critique of biblical and natural religion which shows, as we have seen, that the introduction of God is so far from supporting morality that it is like the introduction of a termite colony that gnaws away, in many unobtrusive but, in the long run, massively destructive ways, at the coherence and foundation of morality.

It is true that Hobbes himself sometimes invokes the biblical God's sanctions, in order to threaten sovereigns who would abuse their powers, or to console subjects who are, like Uriah the Hittite or Naaman the Syrian, victims of such abuse (*Leviathan* II 21, p. 265; III 42, pp. 527-529). Nevertheless, in his crucial refutation of the fool who "hath sayd in his heart, there is no such thing as Justice," Hobbes explicitly "takes away the feare of God" as a crutch for his argument (*ibid.*, I 15, pp. 203-206). The vague, occasional threats of Divine punishment for errant sovereigns raise some troubling questions about the adequacy of

Hobbes's doctrine of the rights of sovereignty, but they are not in Hobbes's own view essential. They are best understood as deployments of available rhetorical weaponry in a fight for justice that scorns any ultimate dependence on such arms.²¹

But when we do attempt to follow with care Hobbes's purely secular argument against the "fool" who in Machiavellian fashion denies the very existence of justice, we are compelled to note the weakness of that argument, a weakness that is so conspicuous that we are led to wonder whether Hobbes himself really believed in his own argument. Raymond Polin has gone so far as to assert, not only that "the philosophy of Hobbes dispenses with God," but to claim further that the Hobbesian sovereign is essentially the same as the Machiavellian sovereign: concerned with glory and prestige, and living in effect in a "triumphant state of nature."²² Now this, as Strauss pointed out in his decisive if respectful critique of Polin, seems totally to miss the force of Hobbes's commitment to, and teaching to the sovereign about, natural law — or indeed natural right, from which *moral* foundation, Strauss never ceased to stress, natural law is derived. Hobbesian natural right cannot be correctly conceived as immoral or amoral.²³ But is Hobbesian natural right Hobbes's last word about justice, or is it still the rhetorical foreground for an ultimately Machiavellian philosophic life? Is Hobbes's purely natural or rational doctrine of justice his attempt to show that moral life is grounded on principles that require no God, or is this doctrine the next to last step in a progressive liberation of the reader to what purports to be the truly reasonable, authentic life and outlook in which morality is no longer a serious concern, and *therefore* God is superfluous?

Whichever of the last two alternatives one eventually inclines toward, the question of the adequacy of Hobbes's rationalism remains. For in either case, one may legitimately ask whether Hobbes has started from an adequately rich and broad articulation of those moral experiences and opinions that are the primary empirical manifestations of justice or of the moral law. Not only does Hobbes's contractualism represent a remarkably thin and meager evocation of what we mean by the just or the righteous; Hobbes does not seem to take very seriously the fact that the moral experience is naturally complicated and enriched by being enmeshed in other powerful experiences, of being inspired or transfigured, and in erotic longings, for immortality and sublimation or self-transcendence, that are not dispelled, or even responded to, by his purported resolution of the moral problem. Perhaps this criticism would not be decisive, or would lose much of its force, if Hobbes succeeded in convincing us of the validity of his resolution of the problem of political obligation and authority. The great question is whether he can do so, and, in the first place, whether his solution is based on an adequate analysis of the moral experience or the

experience of justice, of the longing for justice, as it comes to sight at the very beginning or in naive common sense or in the facts of life.

Hobbesian and Classic Natural Theology

As a reasoned or undogmatic theological position, Hobbes's rational theology merits and rewards comparison with the fountainhead of rationalist theology. "Theology" is a word that originates with Plato: *Republic* 379a. Plato's most sustained presentation of theology is found in the tenth book of the *Laws*. The Athenian Stranger there presents a public teaching to the effect that *nous*, or intelligence, governing self-moving soul, is the highest divinity, the ultimate source of all orderly goodness in the cosmos, and as such is most visibly evident in the motions of the visible stars, which are gods. This doctrine foreshadows Aristotle's teaching on *nous* and the visible astral deities. The Platonic-Aristotelean *nous* can sometimes appear to be as impersonal, and as indifferent to human concerns, as the first cause to which Hobbes gives the name God. But at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1179a24-32) Aristotle argues that *nous* not only provides a model which humans can and ought to aspire to imitate, but that if they do so, if they honor the contemplative life as superior to the political, it is likely that they will discover a care or friendship emanating from the Divine. For his part, Plato's Athenian Stranger associates *nous* not only with the splendor of the stars but also with the moral splendor of the virtues: there cannot be conceived intelligence without care, and the greatest or most perfect intelligence without the greatest or most perfect caring. The Athenian Stranger's theological arguments are presented as a foundation of the penal law, and the arguments culminate in a myth which leaves little doubt as to the judgment, leading to condign reward and punishment of men's souls after mundane death.

Yet the silence on the unchanging ideas in the theology of the tenth book of the *Laws* reminds us of the manifold and diverse, even contradictory, ways in which Plato presents or discusses the divinity ruling nature. Plato does not hesitate to present that divinity in myths, orthodox and unorthodox, as well as in arguments. Plato's account of divinity reflects or partakes of the manifold mystery of divinity, as it is encountered in religious, erotic, and moral experience and in the cosmic and human existence that solicits such experience. Plato insists that the Divine mystery and the experiences and opinions through which we have access to it be taken seriously, that is, confronted squarely as the subject of continued conversational questioning. Hobbes engages relatively little in this kind of sympathetic evocation and then dialectical scrutiny of moral and religious opinion. The most important differences between the Hobbesian and the Platonic natural

theology follow from this deepest difference embedded in their political philosophies, or from the differing results of their very different sorts of questioning of moral and religious experience. Hobbes is convinced that human existence finds an ultimate source of guidance in principles that do not require a radical transcendence of political life, opinion, and law. Plato denies this proposition. For Plato, the taking seriously of the claims of justice and civic duty leads beyond political life and law and shows that those claims cannot possibly constitute the self-sufficient or self-sustaining end of life. Such an end is available only in the Divine life devoted to the search for and contemplation of the permanent necessities and principles of things.

Now Hobbes too ascribes a certain greatness to the philosophic life, and he too assimilates it to the Divine. But the God to which he assimilates the philosophic life which he considers truest or most self-conscious is the creative God of the Bible, who knows with certainty because He makes what He knows, and takes full responsibility for ruling or guiding His creation.

Philosophy, therefore, the child of the world and 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...imitate 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 every one stamped with its own name and set in order; that is to say, your method must resemble that of the creation....But whatsoever shall be the method you will like, I would very fain commend philosophy to you, that is to say, the study of wisdom, for want of which we have all suffered much damage lately.... Neither do voluptuous men neglect philosophy, but only because they know not how great a pleasure it is to the mind of man to be ravished in the vigorous and perpetual embraces of the most beautiful world (*De Corpore*, Author's Epistle to the Reader; see also chapter 8, sec. 1).

We cannot avoid observing that the biblical God is a God of love: loving and demanding to be loved. Hobbes certainly does not stress the imitation of this aspect of the biblical divinity; but is this not in fact a most important dimension of the biblical God, even or especially for the Hobbesian imitator of the biblical God? Is not the deepest failing of Hobbes his failure to scrutinize his own love of mankind?

In urging mankind at its highest to ape and to usurp the place of the biblical God, Hobbes shows at once his greatest dependence on, and his most radical rebellion from, the biblical God. Hobbes seems to have thought that the reasonable possibility of the existence of a capriciously willful, punitive, loving, and mysterious God such as the

biblical could be excluded only from a world which he had succeeded in recreating, at least in principle, as a sane and intelligible world.

Notes

1. The disregard of Hobbes's theology is most striking in C.B. Macpherson's "Introduction" to his paperback edition of *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1985). The reader of this introduction is left utterly without a clue as to what could be the point of the last three hundred pages of the book that is being introduced. All references to the *Leviathan* will be to parts, chapters, and pages of this edition. At the other extreme from Macpherson (in every sense) is Carl Schmitt, *Der Leviathan in der Staatslehre des Thomas Hobbes: Sinn und Fehlschlag eines politischen Symbols* (Cologne: Hohenheim, 1982, enlarged from the original ed. of 1938). Hobbes is "der grosse Dezisionist" (p. 82) whose thought is grounded on the faith that "Jesus is the Christ," and who brings a radically modern, anti-natural law, yet somehow deeply medieval (p. 165), Christian political theory to its inviting fulfillment (see esp. p. 132). Schmitt thus carries on his lifelong battle with his old antagonist, "der juedischer Gelehrter, Leo Strauss": pp. 20-21; see also *Der Begriff des Politischen: Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987), pp. 121-122.
2. C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 76-77; see also pp. 72-73, 82-83, and notes C and E, p. 293 and p. 294.
3. Leo Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 230-231.
4. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," opening sentence: quoted from Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 53.
5. Willis B. Glover, "God and Thomas Hobbes," in K.C. Brown, ed., *Hobbes Studies* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 141-168; quotation is from p. 146. Glover concludes his article with favorable reference to Oakeshott's judgment, in criticism of Strauss, that "the greatness of Hobbes is not that he began a new tradition" but that "he constructed a political philosophy that reflected the changes in the European intellectual consciousness which had been pioneered chiefly by the theologians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries": Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction," *Leviathan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), p. liii. For Calvin, see the discussion in Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, trans. E.M. Sinclair (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 193-195.
6. "In 1651, when the work was first published," writes Schneider in the introduction to his widely used, abridged, school edition of the *Leviathan*, "the religious parts were for immediate application to the crisis in which Cromwell found himself...the treatment of covenant theology in Part III

of *Leviathan* is thoroughly Puritan": Herbert W. Schneider, ed., *Leviathan, Parts I and II* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), pp. vii-viii, x.

7. Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and its Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 71. It is pertinent to add the observation that whereas *On the Citizen* treats the kingdom of God by nature (that is, natural and purely rationalist theology), in the same part (entitled "Religion") as the kingdom of God by revelation, *Leviathan* puts the two discussions in separate parts, and marks the divide emphatically (compare the opening of ch. 32 of *Leviathan* with the opening of chapters 15 and 16 of *De Cive*): the organization of *Leviathan* indicates very plainly a much greater gulf between reason and revelation than does *On the Citizen*. (All quotations from *On the Citizen* will be in Hobbes's translation, published in 1651 as *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and society*.)
8. Howard Warrender, in his Editor's Introduction to *De Cive: The Latin Version*, vol. 2 of *The Clarendon Edition of the Philosophical Works of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 23-24, suggests that the more favorable reception of Hobbesian thought on the Continent is due to its being received by way of *De Cive* rather than the more provocative *Leviathan*, which in England was received with vitriol above all because of its religious teaching. See also Richard Tuck, "Introduction," *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. xxiii-xxv, for the risks and sanctions Hobbes incurred as a consequence of his more extreme religious unorthodoxy in *Leviathan* as contrasted with *De Cive*.
9. "Observations Concerning the Originall of Government, Upon Mr Hobs *Leviathan* Mr Milton against *Salmasius* H. Grotius *De Jure Belli*" (1652), in Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and other Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
10. *Leviathan*, III 35, p. 442; IV 44, pp. 637, 644ff. As an example of the lengths to which scholars go in trying to shoehorn Hobbes into contemporary religious niches, we may adduce the recent claim made by George Wright, in his introduction to his very useful translation of the "1668 Appendix to *Leviathan*" (*Interpretation* 18:3 (Spring 1991) 331-332). According to Wright, "Luther's view of the mortality of the soul was like that of Hobbes," and Hobbes "persevered in" the doctrine of the mortality of the soul "for the same reasons" as Luther. But in the very passage Wright quotes to support his claim, Luther says: "hell signifies,...as I judge, that secret withdrawing place, where the dead sleep out of this life, whence the soul goes to her place, whatsoever it be, for corporeal it is not,...The dead are therefore out of all place. For whatsoever is out of this life is out of place. Even as after the resurrection, we shall be clear of place and time" (quoted from *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* at 9:10). Hobbes does not say the soul sleeps after death; he says it does not exist, before or after death, and that after death nothing is left but the moldering body (see note 66 to Wright's trans., on p. 394). For according to Hobbes nothing exists that is not body, even God (see Appendix, p. 381 of Wright's trans., p. 561 of Molesworth); there is no "place" for the soul

"clear of place and time" (the very sentence of Luther is a perfect example of what Hobbes calls insane ravings); and after the resurrection nothing except bodies will exist, on this earth and in space and time as we know them. Wright makes the blunder of supposing that because both Luther and Hobbes reject the *natural* immortality of the soul, it follows that they agree on the mortality of the soul. Similarly, there is only a barely negative affinity between Hobbes's view and the views of those Church Fathers such as Methodius and Irenaeus (see *Against Heresies* 2.34.4), who saw in the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul a Hellenistic or philosophic heresy promoted by Origen (who had argued that the doctrine of the resurrection of bodies was an exoteric teaching "for the simpleminded and the ears of the common crowd" hiding a "secret meaning" according to which what was to be resurrected was a new and miraculously created body (*Against Celsus* 5.19 and 22-23; cf. 3.80). It would appear from the authoritative texts (e.g., Ambrose, *On the Passing Away of his Brother Satyrus*, esp. 2.50-52, 65; Athenagoras, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, esp. secs. 13, 16, 18, 20-23; and above all Methodius of Olympus, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, esp. 1.11-13) that those Fathers who rejected or expressed reservations about the *natural* immortality of the soul, tended to do so in the name of the *supernatural* immortality of the soul conceived as incorporeal spirit made immortal by the incorporeal, miraculous action of the Holy Ghost. The encratic heretic Tatian the Assyrian seems to have been perhaps the most outspoken opponent of the natural immortality of the soul (*Oration to the Greeks* sec. 13); but his heresy was fanatical anti-materialism; he stands at the opposite pole from Hobbes. Hobbes repeatedly draws our attention (*Leviathan*, III 43, p. 617; IV 44, p. 657; Appendix, ch. 1, p. 358 of Wright trans., p. 524 of Molesworth) to Christ's conversation with the thief crucified alongside him, who believed, saying, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom"; to which Jesus Christ replied with the words, "Verily I say unto thee *today* shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). Hobbes never even attempts to reconcile this indelible and unforgettable pronouncement with the Hobbesian denial of the existence of heaven, of Christ's present kingdom, and of the soul's immortal existence in another realm immediately after death. See also Hobbes's conspicuously evasive treatment of Mark 9:1 at *Leviathan*, IV 44, pp. 640-641.

11. *Ibid.*, III 42, pp. 542-543; see also pp. 545 and 43, p. 550; Appendix, ch. 1 at the end.
12. *Leviathan*, III 36, pp. 466-477 (my italics); see similarly IV 45, p. 677; IV 46, pp. 700, 702; IV 47, p. 711; Appendix, ch. 1, Molesworth, p. 525; contrast *Elements of Law*, I xi 10.
13. *Leviathan*, II 26, p. 332; III 32, pp. 410-412.
14. Glover ("God and Thomas Hobbes," pp. 146-147) claims that it would "obviously" be "not consistent" for Hobbes to have sought *both* to destroy Christianity by elaborate *reductio ad absurdum* and to protect himself from persecution, to bolster the appeal of his views, by appealing to the religious beliefs of his readers: "for success in the *reductio ad*

absurdum would remove the protection and support." This comment is contradicted by Glover himself in the same paragraph, where he admits the possibility that Hobbes aimed different messages at different portions of his readership, and the *reductio* only at a few; moreover, Glover overlooks the obvious possibility that Hobbes intended and expected the enlightening, destructive message to take several generations to have its full effect in the world. Hobbes frequently indicates that his project will require several generations to have its full educational effects.

15. See Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century Background; Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), chaps. 8 ("David Harley and Nature's Education") and 10 ("Joseph Priestley and the Socinian Moonlight"), esp. p. 169. For Jefferson's materialistic deism, see especially his letters to John Adams of 14 March and 15 August 1820, 11 April 1823, and 8 January 1825, in Lester J. Cappon, ed., *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 561-562, 567-568, 592-593, 606.
16. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, eds., *The Puritans*, 2 vols., revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 1:50, 51 (quoting from Hooker's *Application of Redemption By the Effectual Work of the Word, and Spirit of Christ, for the bringing home of Lost Sinners to God*), pp. 52-54, 55 (quoting Hooker's "Culpable Ignorance, or the Danger of Ignorance under Meanes," in *The Saints Dignitie*), and p. 291. In another desperate attempt to assimilate Hobbes's view to that of Luther, Wright makes the astounding claim that for Hobbes as for Luther "Christ speaks of faith directly to the believer through the text," in "the episode of hearing and believing in the penitent's life in which the history and fate of Jesus are 'laid upon him' by God" in an "evangelical onset [*evangelischer Ansatz*]" that does not "yield" to "intellectual analysis and approbation" ("Introduction" to trans. of Appendix to *Leviathan*, pp. 333-335 and 346).
17. *Leviathan*, II 31, pp. 396-397, which indeed conspicuously contradicts I 12, p. 178, which is itself followed one page later (I 12, p. 179) by the following remark: "That which taketh away the reputation of Wisedome, in him that formeth a religion, or addeth to it when it is already formed, is the enjoying of a beliefe of contradictories."
18. I have barely touched upon the two other, and, it seems to me, less important though still crucial legs of Hobbes's biblical criticism: his Spinoza-like critique of the historical sources, and his undermining of the purportedly miraculous character of the dispensation of the holy word in the Scriptures (this is the most important part of his critical teaching on miracles).
19. *On the Citizen*, XV 14; cf. *Leviathan*, II 31, p. 402: note that Hobbes does not say that it is illogical to assert omnipotence while denying governance or care; "omnipotence" is a deeply ambiguous term, since, as a form of power, it may well be limited by the criterion of the possible. Elsewhere Hobbes makes the thought-provoking remark that "all peoples who believe God to be, believe Him to be omnipotent"; this is an

especially important remark in the context, since Hobbes began his explication of the Nicene Creed by saying that the words "Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible" were equivalent to the following "proposition, as the logicians say": "He is omnipotent" (Appendix, ch. 1, pp. 511-512, 528, Molesworth).

20. These points are anticipated, though of course in the context of a totally different overall argument, in F.C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes: An Interpretation of LEVIATHAN* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 226-232.
21. Even Howard Warrender has confessed that while "upon his system of natural law Hobbes erected a superstructure, introducing the role of God, and his rewards and punishments," and "although it seems likely that Hobbes himself took this superstructure seriously, it is possible to eliminate it completely from his theory and to start simply from natural law without losing anything essential": "Hobbes's Conception of Morality," in Bernard H. Baumrin, ed., *Hobbes's LEVIATHAN: Interpretation and Criticism* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1969), pp. 74-75; see similar statements in the same author's *Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 311; and "The Place of God in Hobbes's Philosophy," *Political Studies* 8 (February 1960): 49; or "A Reply to Mr. Plamenatz," in K.C. Brown, ed., *Hobbes Studies*, pp. 89-91; see also Stuart M. Brown, Jr., "The Taylor Thesis: Some Objections," in *ibid.*, p. 71.
22. Raymond Polin, *Politique et philosophie chez Thomas Hobbes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), pp. 138-140.
23. Leo Strauss, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy," ch. 7 of *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other studies* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), pp. 170-196, esp. pp. 191-195. This review essay on Polin's book (cited in the previous note) appeared originally in a French translation by Simone Midan in *Critique*, April 1954, except for the remarkable addition to the note which appears on pp. 176-177 of the English version. It may be added that Howard Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, pp. 5-6 and 147-148, totally misconstrues Strauss on this basic (and, really, very plainly stated) point.