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Hobbes, Locke, and the Christian Commonwealth

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Abstract

Locke refrained from engaging explicitly with Hobbes in any of his writings. Locke's policy of non-engagement should be interpreted, we argue, neither as evidence of his lack of interest in (or ignorance of) Hobbes's arguments, nor as an attempt to conceal from the uninitiated Locke's covert Hobbesian commitments. Locke's silence reveals rather than conceals. What it reveals is an absolute determination to “distinguish between the business of civil government and that of religion, and to mark the true bounds between them”. Approached in this way, precisely because Locke's account of the “business of civil government” says nothing about ecclesiastical government, the second of *Two Treatises* can be read, in its entirety, as a powerful critical response to Hobbes. To see why, it is necessary to grasp that Part III of *Leviathan* (“Of a Christian Common-wealth”) is integral to Hobbes's positive argumentative purposes in the work.

Keywords

modern political theory – Christ – gratitude – love – opinion – duty – obligation
– equality

And the Lord said unto [Moses] ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

Deuteronomy 18: 17–20 (KJV)

The question of Locke's relation to Hobbes is "perennially fascinating."¹ It is also a source of persistent frustration and fervid speculation for the very same reason: what we see is a shadow cast by what we do not see. In fastening upon the shadow, we pay homage to obscurity. Locke's obdurate opacity regarding the true nature and full extent of his debt to Hobbes, in both his published and unpublished writings, leaves us in the dark.² We are forever feeling our way, retracing Locke's steps to confirm the intuition or to puncture the illusion that he set his bearings by Hobbes. The exigencies of undergraduate teaching the world over have, for generations past, conspired to impose a more straightforward and linear sense of progression: university students are still routinely taught that Locke follows Hobbes in order of succession³ and that, in writing against him, Locke gave modern liberalism "its gospel and creed."⁴

Even scholars who are not persuaded that "lining Hobbes up against Locke and comparing their various dimensions" is the best way to approach the study of Locke concede it is implausible that Locke's "intellectual course" was not "powerfully deflected" in some way or other by "the magnetic pull" of Hobbes's

- 1 Nicholas Jolley, *Toleration and Understanding in Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 14. For a sense of the sheer volume of commentary on the relationship between Hobbes and Locke, which stands in marked contrast to the paucity of materials in Locke's corpus attesting to his knowledge of, or interest in Hobbes's philosophy, see the entry for Hobbes in John C. Attig's indispensable online Locke bibliography: <https://openpublishing.psu.edu/locke/bib/sh.html>.
- 2 An uncovenanted bonus of Felix Waldmann, "John Locke as a Reader of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*: A New Manuscript," *Journal of Modern History* 93, no. 2 (2021): 245–82 is the second appendix (277–82), which tracks Locke's direct references to Hobbes across his intellectual career. There are thirteen, of which only two require unmediated acquaintance with Hobbes's texts.
- 3 John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 77.
- 4 Michael Oakshott, *The Concept of a Philosophical Jurisprudence*, ed. Luke O'Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008), 94.

work.⁵ From Locke's day down to our own, legions of commentators have lined up to count the ways. Locke's one-time pupil, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, "endeavoured to represent him as a disciple [albeit a strangely unwilling one] of *Hobbes*." Shaftesbury, in belated company with Locke's intimates Isaac Newton and James Tyrrell,⁶ was "certain that *Locke* borrowed frequently and largely" from *Leviathan*, even as he studiously avoided declaring that debt explicitly.⁷ Locke's repeated public avowals that he was unfamiliar with *Leviathan*, and so that any similarities between Hobbes's positions and his own were purely coincidental, convinced few and scarcely stemmed the flow of speculation.⁸

The recent discovery of a resentful memoir by a senescent Tyrrell, which depicts the young Locke as an "obsessive reader" of *Leviathan*, has, apparently, "now confirmed" beyond all doubt that Locke was dissembling, thus vindicating Leo Strauss's hypothesis that he was a furtive follower of Hobbes.⁹ Yet few scholars ever doubted that Locke read *Leviathan*. The question has always been what, if anything, he took from it. Here Tyrrell's memoir offers thin gruel. After casting its aspersions on Locke's character – casting unflattering light on Tyrrell's own character in the process – it leaves us none the wiser about the particular passages in Locke's texts that bespeak a sustained engagement with

- 5 Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, 78 (adding in parentheses that it is "perhaps not even a way"); summarising Peter Laslett's position in his editorial introduction to John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 67–91. References to *Two Treatises* [TT] are provided to treatise and paragraph number.
- 6 See Mark Goldie, "Tyrrell, James (1642–1718), Political Theorist and Historian," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). As Goldie notes, Tyrrell was one of Locke's closest friends, the two first having met at Oxford in 1658. Their relationship "waxed until 1683, but was sometimes tense thereafter."
- 7 Joseph Wharton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols. (London, 1782), ii, pp. 343–4; Shaftesbury to Michael Ainsworth, 3 June 1709, in *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University* (London: J. Roberts, 1716), p. 39; Isaac Newton to Locke, 16 Sept. 1693, in *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E.S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976–89), iv, 727–8; James Tyrrell to Locke, 27 July 1690, in *Correspondence of Locke*, iv, 107–9.
- 8 See John Locke, *Mr. Locke's Reply to the Bishop of Worcester's Answer to his Second Letter* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1698), p. 422, for Locke's claim that he was "not so well read in Hobbes [...] as to be able to say, what were [his] Opinions"; and compare *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1697), in *John Locke: Vindications of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. Victor Nuovo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), p. 229: "I tell him, I [...] did not know that those words he quoted out of the *Leviathan*, were there, or any thing like them."
- 9 Waldmann, "John Locke as a Reader of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*"; Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 202–51; Nasser Behnegar, Devin Stauffer, Rafael Major, and Christopher Nadon, "From Laslett to Waldmann: The Case for Reconsidering Strauss on Locke," *Review of Politics* 84, no. 4 (2022): 570–91 (at 571).

distinctively Hobbesian positions.¹⁰ The situation remains broadly as it was in 1969 when John Dunn observed that, in *Two Treatises* at least, “the Hobbesian arguments are not answered,” but instead “merely and blandly ignored.”¹¹

There remains in any case the prior difficulty of establishing definitively which positions ought to be considered distinctively “Hobbesian.” Interpretations like Strauss’s, which are determined to approach Locke ‘through’ Hobbes, leave themselves open to the accusation that they misrepresent fundamental aspects not only of Locke’s philosophy but Hobbes’s too. The practice of pairing the two within a single frame of reference has a distorting effect which, at the limit, obliterates the differences between them.¹² It is clear besides – as Locke himself once protested – that finding one of his propositions in Hobbes’s texts does not prove that it originated there or that Hobbes was his source or his guide in formulating it.¹³ All it proved to Locke was that even “good and candid Men, are often misled, from a fair unbiassed pursuit of Truth, by an over-great Zeal for something that they, upon wrong Grounds, take to be so” and which compels them to see things a certain way.¹⁴ No doubt the rejoinder that it was not he but his critics who were setting their compass by Hobbes served a present turn, but it catches the shadow of a stubborn truth: it is very difficult to give an account of thinkers like Hobbes or Locke without seeing in them a reflection of our own preoccupations, and more difficult still to accept that what preoccupies *us* may have been far less important to *them* than we would like to think.

10 The claim of its discoverer, Felix Waldmann, that the memoir represents the “holy grail” of Locke scholarship is a highly suggestive one, not least because grail quests tend to end in failure leavened only by a renewed sense of the unattainable. See “Lost Memoir Paints Revered Philosopher John Locke as ‘Vain, Lazy, and Pompous,’” *Guardian*, 24 June 2021: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jun/24/lost-memoir-paints-revered-philosopher-john-locke-as-vain-lazy-and-pompous>.

11 Dunn, *Political Thought of Locke*, 82–3. Dunn allows that Hobbes’s “ghostly presence” may be detected in the pages of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* and *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, but not in *Two Treatises*. No mention is made of *Epistola de Tolerantia*.

12 For an argument to this effect see Timothy Stanton, “Hobbes and Locke on Natural Law and Jesus Christ,” *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 1 (2008): 65–88.

13 As Jon Parkin notes, when hunting for Hobbes’s disciples it must be recalled that “borrowing terms is not the same as borrowing positions”: “Thomas Hobbes and the Problem of Self-Censorship,” in *The Art of Veiled Speech: Self-Censorship from Aristophanes to Hobbes*, ed. Jan Baltussen and Peter J. Davis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 293–317 (at 309).

14 Locke, *Second Vindication*, p. 229.

Consider a recent example. If one shares Jeffrey Collins's assumption that Hobbes's emergent enthusiasm for Independency, allied to his advocacy of an Erastian civil religion, are the decisive features of *Leviathan*, and were considered such by contemporary readers – including Locke – then Collins's further supposition that Locke's early sympathy for these causes shows that he was consciously operating in the shadow of Hobbes's work will seem extremely compelling.¹⁵ To someone who does not share that assumption, the decision to place such great weight on a single, and decidedly equivocal, passage in *Leviathan*¹⁶ will seem perverse, given the broader thrust of Hobbes's arguments elsewhere in the text. The fact that Hobbes excised the relevant passage from the Latin version of 1668 will be as relevant as the assumptions to which we are already committed allow it to be. To anyone with other assumptions again, the one set of arguments as much as the other will seem arbitrary persuasions to a point of view which is as much a product of prior commitment as it is a product of proof.

The present essay is wide open to these sorts of objection. It links Hobbes and Locke as protagonists. It may be said to place undue weight on one portion of *Leviathan* – albeit a fairly hefty portion, which its author styled as its third 'part' – and be accused likewise of wilful perversity. It is relatively easy to juxtapose various propositions from Locke's *Two Treatises* to others in Parts I and II of *Leviathan* – about natural law, the state of nature, the original contract, natural rights and so on – to construct a kind of surreptitious dialogue between the texts; but Locke's text says nothing whatever about the question that preoccupies Hobbes in Part III: namely, the relation between ecclesiastical and civil government.

That is not to say that this question did not preoccupy Locke. Far from it. He was entirely in agreement with Hobbes that no question was of greater importance. "I regard it as necessary above all," Locke declares at the outset of *Epistola de Tolerantia* (1689), "to distinguish between the business of civil government and that of religion, and to mark the true bounds between the

15 Jeffrey Collins, *In the Shadow of Leviathan: John Locke and the Politics of Conscience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); developing further the interpretation of Hobbes offered in the same writer's, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). (We leave to one side the dearth of positive evidence of Locke's support for Owenite Independency in the 1650s.)

16 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012), ch. 47, pp. 1114–16 [385]. References are provided to chapter and page number in Malcolm's edition, followed in square brackets by page number in the 1651 edition.

church and the commonwealth.”¹⁷ These same words contain the clue that indicates why the issues addressed in Part III of *Leviathan* have no place in Locke’s *Essay concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil-Government* – to give the full title of the second of his *Two Treatises*. They also intimate why, when he *does* traverse ground in the *Second Treatise* that had been indelibly marked by Hobbes before him (be it the state of nature or the original contract or what have you), he is content to dismiss Hobbes peremptorily and in passing, rather than considering it necessary for his purposes to “make [...] an argument.”¹⁸

This policy of non-engagement should not be interpreted as evidence either of Locke’s lack of interest in (or ignorance of) Hobbes’s arguments or as an extended exercise in elaborate evasion intended to conceal from the uninitiated Locke’s covert Hobbesian commitments. His silence reveals rather than conceals. What it reveals is an absolute determination to “distinguish between the business of civil government and that of religion, and to mark the true bounds between them.” Approached in this way, precisely because Locke’s account of the origins and “business of civil government” says nothing about ecclesiastical government, the *Second Treatise* can be read, in its entirety, as a powerful critical response to Hobbes and his claims about the boundless scope of sovereign authority in “*a Common-wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*.”

1 Hobbes, Locke, and the Order of Succession

To read *Two Treatises* in these terms is to presuppose what many – perhaps most – modern interpreters of Hobbes have been unwilling to grant: that Part III of *Leviathan* is integral to his positive argumentative purposes rather than a massive fig leaf designed to protect the account of “the Rights of Sovereign Power, and the Duty of Subjects” that Hobbes had already “derived” from “the Principles of Nature onely” in Parts I and II from accusations that it was an egregious affront to Christian truth.¹⁹

17 John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia/ A Letter on Toleration: The Latin and English Texts*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and trans. J.W. Gough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968): references are provided to the page number in this edition (here, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 65).

18 Dunn, *Political Thought of Locke*, 82–3. Dunn identifies *Two Treatises* II, §19 (“some Men have confounded” the “plain difference between the State of Nature, and the State of War”) and §137 (the error of “supposing” that men either would, or legitimately could, have “given up themselves to the *absolute Arbitrary Power* and will of a Legislator” as the condition of entry into civil society) as sideswipes at Hobbes.

19 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 576 [195].

Few readers nowadays approach *Leviathan* as a work of Christian politics.²⁰ As Amy Chandran observes, there has been a “recent revival of interest in *Leviathan*’s theology and ecclesiology,” but attention has centred squarely on the ways in which Hobbes brings his philosophy to bear on various Christian conceptions.²¹ Rather less attention has been paid to the ways in which he brings Christian conceptions to bear on his political subject matter.²² Over forty years ago Richard Tuck wondered aloud why Hobbes scholars had failed to take up the crucial question to which the late J. G. A. Pocock had drawn their attention more than twenty years earlier, namely: “Why should Hobbes have felt so deeply about the theology described in Part III [of *Leviathan*]?”²³ Tuck’s own answer to the question, as far as it went, was largely negative: Hobbes applied his materialist philosophy to theology to relieve men’s fears by exposing the absurdity of ideas like demonic possession, eternal damnation to hell, and so forth, which had been used to keep them in thrall to a spiritual authority that set itself up over and against the authority of the sovereign. The possibility that the answer to this question might lie in the fact that *Christianity*, as Hobbes interpreted it at least, was essential to the realisation of the Commonwealth he described in *Leviathan* has received little by way of concerted interrogation.²⁴

20 This approach had been a minority one even before Quentin Skinner dismissed it as misconceived, historically incredible, lacking textual warrant, and unworthy of serious consideration. See Quentin Skinner, “Hobbes’s ‘Leviathan,’” *Historical Journal* 7, no. 2 (1964): 321–33. Skinner’s primary target was F. C. Hood’s *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes: An Interpretation of ‘Leviathan’* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964).

21 See Amy Chandran, “Transubstantiation, Absurdity and the Religious Imagination: Hobbes and Rational Christianity,” in this special issue; and Chandran, “Hobbes in France, Gallican Histories, and *Leviathan*’s Supreme Pastor,” *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 2 (2023): 359–87, for the gains in understanding that may be made by revisiting this question.

22 This is true even of A. P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), which argues (28) that Hobbes was “trying to reconcile Christian doctrine with modern science and a tenable political theory.”

23 Richard Tuck, “The Civil Religion of Thomas Hobbes,” in *Political Discourse in Early-Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas T. Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120–38 (on 132); J.G.A. Pocock, “Time, History, and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes” [1970], reprinted in Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 148–201.

24 One striking exception is Joshua Mitchell, *Not by Reason Alone: Religion, History, and Identity in Early Modern Political Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), esp. 46–72.

The possibility is raised in an important recent essay by Sarah Mortimer, who declares that “Hobbes believed that Christianity was *uniquely* able to complement and strengthen the civil philosophy to which he was committed,” and that “his theology was *central to his project*.”²⁵ But the possibility is not pursued, as Mortimer turns to the sources of Hobbes’s theology rather than the ways in which it was indispensable to his entire theory. This last thought raises in turn the arresting possibility that Hobbes may have *agreed* with the innumerable commentators who have insisted that the “Morall and Civill Science,” as developed in Parts I and II of the work, was inadequate to secure what Hobbes’s theory promised to deliver: a commonwealth immune from death and decay, and which could provide an unprecedented degree of security (and even prosperity) to its members.²⁶ Rarely has it been suggested that Hobbes’s commonwealth was, and of necessity had to be, a *Christian* commonwealth, as opposed to a commonwealth in which the character of the civil religion promulgated and enforced by the sovereign power mattered less than the “comprehensive subordination of the church to state control.”²⁷

This is not surprising. Hobbes’s illustrious status as “without question the exemplary political theorist of modernity” is predicated on the postulated fact that his political philosophy is “meant to depend on principles which

25 Sarah Mortimer, “Christianity and Civil Religion in Hobbes’s *Leviathan*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. A. P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 501–19 (at 501, 516; italics added).

26 Cp. Michael Oakshott, “Introduction to *Leviathan*” [1946], in *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), 55–6, who observes that “Hobbes’s critics have shown a regrettable tendency to fix their attention on the obvious errors and difficulties and to lose sight of the philosophy as a whole. There has been a deplorable over-confidence about the exposure of faults in Hobbes’s philosophy. Few accounts of it do not end with the detection of a score of simple errors, each of which is taken to be destructive of the philosophy, so that one wonders what claim Hobbes has to be a philosopher at all, let alone a great one.” S.A. Lloyd, *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes’s Leviathan: The Power of Mind over Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15–36, makes a similar point, whilst observing that such critics evaluate the soundness of his argument based entirely on Parts I and II, and “virtually ignore half of the book.”

27 Collins, *Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 11. Hobbes’s “instrumental thinking about religion,” Collins continues (14), “at once neo-pagan and strikingly modern, placed Hobbes outside of the Christian Erastian tradition”; his “task” (33) was that of “undermining Christianity while preserving its instrumental value”; *Leviathan* “urged Christian sovereigns to emulate the ancients” (44), and suggested “a model of Christian theology that would render it as politically malleable as the pagan religious doctrines had been” (45). Hobbes was, in short, “a thinker inimical to Christianity itself” (56).

are entirely comprehensible within the frame of our political order.”²⁸ We are told that Hobbes’s achievement was to construct “a theory of sovereignty with recourse only to materials available from within a secular political theoretical framework.”²⁹ The “mighty Leviathan” is “the modern secular state,” which is “based not on humans’ hopes for salvation or their desire to fulfil their political natures, but on their fear of death and desire for self-preservation.”³⁰ The negative purpose of Part III of *Leviathan* is, on this reading, clear enough: to obviate any appeal to an “authority higher than man,” because in the absence of “this higher authority, in Hobbes’s view, the principal cause of civil war within and between commonwealths would be removed.”³¹

If this interpretation of Hobbes carries the day – which requires us to discount Hobbes’s own claim that we ought to speak “reverently” of the sovereign as a “*Mortall God*, to which wee owe *under the Immortal God*, our peace and defence”³² – then the contrast with Locke’s political theory is a dramatic one indeed. Locke ultimately authorizes individuals, severally and collectively, to appeal to precisely such an authority – “Heaven” – to justify throwing off their obligation to obey their “Prince or Legislature,”³³ on the basis that “obedience is due in the first place to God, and afterwards to the Laws.”³⁴

From the vantage point of modern political theory, Locke’s “serried forty-year defence of theocentrism is a very distant battle,” and probably already a “forlorn” one even in his own lifetime.³⁵ Hobbes is “exemplary” because he was the first to grasp what is now taken for granted: that political theory “seeks foundations, principles, norms, facts,” and must be “rigorous, exhaustive and unambiguous, and based on some thoroughgoing theory of justice, liberty,

28 James Alexander, “Three Arguments Relevant to the History and Theory of Monarchy,” *History of European Ideas* (Online First, 2021): <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2021.1914378>, 8–9.

29 Paul Sagar, *The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the Theory of the State from Hobbes to Smith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 136.

30 Peter J. Ahrens Dorf, “The Fear of Death and the Longing for Immortality: Thomas Hobbes and Thucydides on Human Nature and the Problem of Anarchy,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000): 579–93 (on 579).

31 Bernard H. Baumrin, “Hobbes’ Christian Commonwealth,” *Hobbes Studies* 13, no. 1 (2000): 3–11 (on 3).

32 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 17, p. 260 [87].

33 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §242.

34 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 127.

35 John Dunn, “From Applied Theology to Social Analysis: The Break between John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. István Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 119–36 (at 135).

rights or law.”³⁶ The decisive victory of Hobbes’s preference for a consistent logic of secular politics maroons Locke on the hither side of a great divide. He is yesterday’s man, an inconvenient obstacle to our attempts to write (and to teach) the kind of perspicacious story about the history of modern political thought which, Adam Smith contended, pleases the imagination: one in which “every last event seems [...] to be introduced by the foregoing, and to introduce the succeeding,” with the result that “[t]he ideas excited by so coherent a chain of things seem, as it were, to float through the mind of their own accord, without obliging it to exert itself, or to make any effort in order to pass from one of them to the other.” With Locke in the picture, however, “[t]he imagination no longer feels the usual facility of passing from the event which goes before to that which comes after,” instead suggesting “an order of succession to which it has not been accustomed, and which it therefore finds some difficulty in following, or attending to.”³⁷ The present essay argues that, by disturbing the accustomed “order of succession,” Locke invites us to “exert” ourselves by questioning Hobbes’s place in it too.

2 The Rights of Sovereignty in a Christian Age

It is best to confront doubt at the outset.³⁸ We do not wish to dispute Hobbes’s claim that “the Rights of Sovereign Power, and the Duty of Subjects” can be “derived” from “the Principles of Nature onely; such as Experience has found true, or Consent (concerning the use of words) has made so; that is to say, from the nature of Men, known to use by Experience, and from Definitions (of such words as are Essentiall to all Politicall reasoning) universally agreed on.”³⁹ Reservations may be entered as to the importance of natural theology – of however mitigated a variety – to the account Hobbes provides but revealed theology (what Hobbes calls the “Prophetickall” word of God) does not affect

³⁶ Alexander, “Three Arguments,” 8–9.

³⁷ Adam Smith, “The History of Astronomy,” 11.8, in *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, ed. W. P. D. Wightman, J.C. Bryce and Ian S. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). For a luminous example of Locke playing this role, see Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

³⁸ This admonition is owed to Ian Harris, “John Locke and Natural Law: Free Worship and Toleration,” in *Natural Law and Toleration in the Early Enlightenment*, ed. Jon Parkin and Timothy Stanton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 59–105 (at 63).

³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 576 [195].

its contents. The rights of sovereignty are, Hobbes emphasises, always and everywhere the same as a matter of definition: neither extended nor abridged if the society or sovereign (a distinction, for Hobbes, without a difference) in question happens to be Christian. Indeed, if “by the Law of Nature [...] the Civill Sovereign in every Common-wealth, is the *Head*, the *Source*, the *Root*, and the *Sun*, from which all Jurisdiction is derived,” it is difficult to see how those rights possibly could be extended.⁴⁰

The same is true of the subjects’ duty to obey. Christians enjoy no rights – for example, to liberty of conscience – that are not common to all human beings as such.⁴¹ It follows that the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers had all that they needed to formulate a civil science that outlined the rights of sovereigns and duties of subjects with perspicuity and precision. Their failure to do so – and Hobbes was not reticent about the scale of their failure – was not a consequence of their ignorance of the Holy Scriptures. That being said, there were matters stated in revelation, not least God’s promise of eternal life in return for repentance and obedience, that furnished the followers of Christianity, sovereigns and their subjects alike, with particularly weighty reasons for wanting to establish their respective rights and duties with the greatest possible clarity. Hobbes was certainly of this view, and he endeavoured to satisfy this *desideratum* in *Leviathan* – with impressive (if to some minds somewhat misplaced) confidence that he had succeeded.

Locke agreed with all the positions we have attributed to Hobbes in the preceding two paragraphs – bar one. Any and all rights that we hold, Locke maintained, we hold in common under natural law.⁴² Locke’s account of the original, extent, and end of both civil and ecclesiastical government is, as Ian Harris observes, “conducted through the information of natural theology: revelation figures only in ways that reinforced or complemented its content.”⁴³ He stated unequivocally that “[p]otestas civilis ubique eadem est” – the civil power is the same everywhere.⁴⁴ It followed that those in want of the light

40 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 904 [312].

41 Here we dissent from the interpretation of Hobbes’s position offered in Richard Tuck, “Hobbes, Conscience, and Christianity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. A.P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 481–500.

42 As Locke made clear in his early lectures (1663–4) on the subject: *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. W. von Leyden (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954).

43 Harris, “John Locke and Natural Law,” 68.

44 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 83. For discussion see John Dunn, “The Claim to Freedom of Conscience: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Thought, Freedom of Worship?” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole P. Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 171–93.

provided by the Scriptures faced no insuperable difficulty in their attempts to place “Political Power” upon its true foundations and to establish its legitimate extent and end.⁴⁵

That they had bungled the attempt was another point of agreement between Locke and Hobbes, which may be one reason why both men “neglected the Ornament of quoting ancient Poets, Orators, and Philosophers, contrary to the custome of late time.”⁴⁶ Locke agreed, too, that the promise of eternal life gave Christians compelling reasons, which the ancients had not, to resolve the perplexities of conflicting claims to divine and civil authority to establish the true scope (and limits) of political power once and for all.⁴⁷ The only position from which Locke dissented – and dissented very emphatically – was Hobbes’s assertion that “by the Law of Nature,” all jurisdiction is derived from “the Civill Sovereign in every Common-wealth.” That Locke does not so much as mention ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the *Second Treatise* tells its own story, and not less powerfully for doing so silently.

In the work in which he did discuss ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the *Epistola*, Locke was very far from silent. There we find him declaring: “*sub Evangelio nulla prorsus est respublica Christiana*” (there is absolutely no such thing under the Gospel as a Christian commonwealth).⁴⁸ This declaration irresistibly calls to mind the title of Part III of *Leviathan*: “Of a Christian Common-wealth” (in the Latin edition, *De Civitate Christiana*).⁴⁹ As we shall see, there is considerable textual evidence to support the contention that Locke developed his own account of the relationship between civil and ecclesiastical government with something very close to Hobbes’s alternative in mind. We have endeavoured to explain why it is impossible to *demonstrate* that Locke consciously took Hobbes as his foil. It is for readers to judge whether the textual evidence we adduce is sufficient to substantiate the contention we are advancing.

45 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §2.

46 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ‘Review and Conclusion’, p. 1139 [394].

47 See Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 122–49.

48 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 116–7.

49 It might be added that one of Hobbes’s purposes in *Leviathan* was to expose as a purely verbal one the distinction between *civitas* and *respublica* – the city (or “commonwealth”) and the “free” city (or “popular commonwealth”) – a republic being no more or less free in principle than the most absolute monarchy. Hence his repeated emphasis that the Latin equivalent of the English “commonwealth” was *civitas*. Compare *Leviathan*, ‘The Introduction’, p. 16 [1]; ch. 17, p. 260 [87]; ch. 26, pp. 414–6 [137]; and ch. 21, p. 332 [110]: “Whether a Common-wealth be Monarchicall, or Popular, the Freedome is still the same.”

The evidence in question relates as much to what we might call the grammar of Locke's texts as to their propositional content.⁵⁰ His account is relayed in the course of books about specific subjects which deploy rather than explicate presuppositions that were very different from Hobbes's; and they disclose these only to the extent that explicit statement advances the argument in hand, as when Locke questions boundaries that Hobbes had rendered impermeable – as that between faith and reason – or erects boundaries that Hobbes had dissolved – as those between ecclesiastical and civil government and civil government and civil society (or the civil condition).

This said, it is necessary to add that Locke licensed at least one separation, or distinction, whose importance Hobbes also emphasized. "We must distinguish," Hobbes declared, "between the *right* and the *exercise* of sovereign power; for they can be separated."⁵¹ The way in which political power had been exercised (and its exercise contested) in the past, as indicated by the pages of history, both sacred and prophane, ancient and (very) modern, was largely irrelevant to the question of how it ought to be exercised.⁵² "For though," Hobbes observed, "in all places of the world, men should lay the foundation of their houses on the sand, it could not be inferred, that so it ought to be."⁵³ If "this part of Christendome"⁵⁴ had long been wracked with seemingly

50 In speaking of the grammar of Locke's texts we mean to refer to the ways in which, besides containing sequences of propositions, they embody his presuppositions. In speaking of his presuppositions, we have in mind what Collingwood intended when he wrote about "absolute presuppositions." See R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), Part 1, esp. ch. 5. It may be worth adding, as Collingwood himself once did in passing, that it is precisely because people have different presuppositions that the "frivolous and superficial type of history" which simply "says that A is influenced by B or that A borrows from B" must be dismissed out of hand. It focuses on propositions apparently advanced in common but it "never asks what there was in A that laid it open to B's influence, or what there was in A which made it capable of borrowing from B" namely, their shared presuppositions. See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), 128. We are yet to be persuaded that Locke shared Hobbes's presuppositions. It is interesting that Collins, *Shadow of Leviathan*, mentions presuppositions only once (117) and then in a way that overlooks the crucial distinction Collingwood drew (*Metaphysics*, 29–33) between absolute and relative presuppositions.

51 Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive/ On the Citizen*, ed. and trans. Richard Tuck and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). References are provided to chapter and paragraph number (here, *De Cive*, XIII.1).

52 For an extended argument to the effect that Hobbes's concern to distinguish between the right and the exercise of sovereign power was much greater in *Leviathan* than in earlier recensions of his political theory, see Sandra Field, *Potentia: Hobbes and Spinoza on Power and Popular Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

53 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 20, pp. 320–2 [107].

54 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1104 [381].

interminable “Schisms, Separations, Contentions, Animosities, Quarrels, Blood and Butchery,”⁵⁵ Hobbes and Locke were alike of the view that this was because the “right” and the “exercise” of “Political Power” (Locke) or “sovereign power” (Hobbes) had come apart, to a quite unprecedented extent, in commonwealths that had embraced Christianity. This raised in its turn a rather vexing question.

In his account of how (as Hobbes put it) the Papacy erected its “*Ghost[ly]*” empire on the ruins of “the deceased *Roman Empire*,”⁵⁶ Adam Smith’s contemporary, Edward Gibbon, famously observed:

The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption, which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings.⁵⁷

Hobbes and Locke agreed that this melancholy duty fell likewise to students of politics. It was necessary to establish the rights of sovereigns and the duty of subjects anew because, in the Christian era, the extent (and limits) of each had become hopelessly muddled.

Christianity was, Locke observed, “the most modest and peaceable religion that ever was.” The “Consequences that seem to me deducible from the Principles of Christian Politiques, (which are the holy Scriptures,)” Hobbes declared, were entirely consistent with a civil science that was uniquely “conducive to peace.”⁵⁸ Hence the question: “how it comes to passe that [the] Christian religion hath made more factions wars, & disturbances in civil societys then any other?”⁵⁹ The question provoked in its turn a disquieting suggestion. Perhaps “this is the genius, this the nature of the Christian religion itself, to be turbulent and destructive of civil peace”? If so, then “truly the Christian Religion is the worst of all Religions, and ought neither to be embraced by any particular Person, nor tolerated by any Commonwealth.”⁶⁰

55 Locke, *Second Vindication*, p. 177 n.

56 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1118 [386].

57 Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Womersley, 3 vols. (Allen Lane: Harmondsworth, 1994), 1.15, p. 446.

58 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 954 [331]; [1668] ch. 47, p. 1129 [327].

59 John Locke, “An Essay concerning Toleration” (1667), in *An Essay Concerning Toleration and Other Writings on Law and Politics, 1667–1683*, ed. J. R. Milton and Philip Milton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 301.

60 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 145.

If we take Hobbes at his word, he was no less committed than was Locke to squashing this suggestion. Hobbes tells us, in his Latin verse autobiography, that he was impelled to write *Leviathan* in furious haste by a determination to absolve the Christian religion from any blame for the civil dissensions that were so often justified in its name – including, most pertinently, the “four years Rage” of the civil war, “in which many thousands of citizens were killed, and the King was shamefully slaughtered.”⁶¹ No, Hobbes declared: “such Crimes and Sufferings I *Will not* impute unto the Deity.”⁶² In Part IV of *Leviathan*, Hobbes provided a graphic description of the way in which the subversion of Christian doctrine “in this part of Christendome” had blinded sovereigns to the true extent of their “Power” and subjects to the true extent of their “Duty,” thereby throwing them back into the condition of enmity, confusion, and brutality with which his story began.⁶³

Locke’s vision of the consequences of the corruption of Christianity for civil peace and amity among men was, if anything, darker still. A return to a state of nature construed along Lockean lines – “a State of Peace, Good Will, and Mutual Assistance” – may seem mild by comparison to Hobbes’s nightmarish vision but the effects were no less devastating given the systematic, and unprecedented, violations of natural law that Locke foresaw.⁶⁴ Indeed the effects radiated outwards: to the members of heathen political societies who were exposed to the violent depredations wrought by Christian commonwealths seeking dominion over them in the name of evangelical charity and love.⁶⁵ The whole of Christendom was propelled into a sustained “*State of War*,” in which “an appeal to the Law, and constituted Judges lies open, but the remedy is deny’d by a manifest perverting of Justice, and a barefaced wresting of the Laws, to protect or indemnifie the violence or injuries of some Men, or Party of Men.”⁶⁶ In this deplorable condition might, so it seemed, made right. “Far be it from anyone,” Locke thundered, “to think Christ the author of those disorders, or that such fatal mischiefs are the consequence of his doctrine, though they have grown up with it.”⁶⁷

61 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 46, p. 1097 [323].

62 Thomas Hobbes, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London, 1680), pp. 9–10 (italics added).

63 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1104 [381].

64 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §19.

65 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 113–5.

66 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §20.

67 Bodleian Library, Film 77, pp. 125; 270–1.

Locke traced the disorders to another source. His own explanation exculpated Christianity and implicated instead ambitious and power-hungry clerics, headed by the Pope, who had used the Scriptures “like a Nose of Wax, to be turn’d and bent” to fit with their preferred set of fundamentals and to suit their secular interests.⁶⁸ From their first rise Christian sovereigns had been falling away from the proper exercise of their rights (or power): hence the separation between the right and the exercise of power that Hobbes emphasised in *De Cive* and developed further in Part IV of *Leviathan*. This was one reason why the task of establishing the rights of sovereigns and duties of subjects was so pressing in a Christian era. About all this Hobbes and Locke were agreed. Thereafter there was a parting of ways.

Hobbes had argued that Christian sovereigns had failed to exercise their power to the full and, in failing to exercise it, enabled “ambitious or desperate men” to deny that they possessed it and thereby emboldened them “to overturn the order of the commonwealth.”⁶⁹ “I blame those,” Hobbes declared, “that in the beginning [of the rise of the Papacy], when their power was entire, by suffering such Doctrines to be forged in the Universities of their own Dominions, have holden the Stirrop to all the succeeding Popes, whilst they mounted into the Thrones of all Christian Sovereigns, to ride and tire, both them, and their people, at their pleasure.”⁷⁰ Christian sovereigns had, in short, “unadvisedly let [...] goe [...] their own Right,” and it needed to be “recovered” and exercised in its plenitude.⁷¹ Only by these means would the promise of the Reformation – and Hobbes’s everlasting commonwealth with it – be realized.

Hobbes’s stated wish that Christian sovereigns “would all resolve to be Kings, [...], by holding the Reins of Government wholly in their own hands” meant bringing the Papacy to heel.⁷² Like any other “Christian Civill Sovereigne,” the Pope was rightfully lord and master over those who by their own consent and by God’s ordination were subjects “in [his] own Dominions,” and likewise free to exercise his rights in both temporal and ecclesiastical government accordingly.⁷³ But he possessed universal jurisdiction only within his own domain. It was high time all other “Christian Civill Sovereignes” followed his lead by claiming (and exercising) the “Power of the Pope” in *theirs*.⁷⁴

68 Locke, *Second Vindication*, p. 126.

69 Hobbes, *De Cive*, ‘Preface to the Readers’ [1647], §6.

70 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1114 [384].

71 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1106 [382].

72 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 912 [315].

73 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 872 [302].

74 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 47, p. 1110 [383].

Hobbes willingly granted to Bellarmine that the Pope has his “Authority [...] *de Jure Divino*” “where hee is also the Civill Sovereign”; but the same had to be granted to (and ought to be claimed by) all Christian Kings in their own commonwealths.⁷⁵ For “what lawfull Jurisdiction,” Hobbes demanded to know, “though but Civill, is there in a Christian Common-wealth, that is not also *de Jure Divino*?”⁷⁶ After all, Hobbes observed, the “Holy Scriptures teach that Christian subjects should obey their kings and sovereigns, and their ministers, even if they are heathen, not only for fear, but for conscience’s sake, *as they are ordained by God* for our benefit.”⁷⁷

For Locke, contrariwise, Christian Princes (and legislatures) had increasingly exercised “Power without Right,” precisely because they *had* taken their cue from the Papacy. By endeavouring to “reduce” their subjects “to Slavery under Arbitrary Power,” by collapsing all “lawfull Jurisdiction” into the “Civill,” and by claiming their power *de Jure Divino* they put “*themselves* into a State of War with the People, who are thereupon absolved from any farther Obedience, and are left to the common Refuge, which God hath provided for all Men, against Force and Violence.”⁷⁸ For Hobbes, the Christian commonwealth was the solution to the bloody tumults and contentions that had followed in Christianity’s wake. For Locke, it was the preeminent cause of “all the Train of Mischiefs, which have so long harassed and defamed Christianity.”⁷⁹

3 Of Hobbes’s Christian Commonwealth

Did Hobbes *really* valorize the Christian commonwealth? Or is Part III of *Leviathan* – as Paul Sagar amongst others maintains – merely an artefact of Hobbes’s recognition that “his secular theory of politics must be squared with the realities of religion as a historical and sociological fact of the seventeenth century”? Is it nothing more than “the specific application of political science to contingent circumstances”⁸⁰ – circumstances which belatedly compelled him to hide his intention to banish all “authority higher than man” (an

75 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 906 [313].

76 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 900 [311].

77 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 46, p. 1095 [322] (*italics added*).

78 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §222 (*italics added*).

79 Locke, *Second Vindication*, p. 177 n.

80 Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*, 136 n. 125.

intention which is betrayed by his claim that all jurisdiction derives from the civil sovereign) behind the carapace of Christian politics?⁸¹

We have already noted Hobbes's insistence that Christianity did not confer any additional rights of sovereignty, which remained always and everywhere the same. One of Hobbes's clearest statements of this view conducts us to a crucial point of clarification. If Christianity did not alter the "right" of sovereignty, it did offer Christian sovereigns invaluable guidance about how (and additional reasons why) they ought to exercise that right. It also indicated how they ought to justify it, and its exercise, to their subjects.

Hobbes made the point in reference to one right in particular: a tutelary right to promulgate public doctrine. "[I]n all Common-wealths of the Heathen, the Sovereigns have had the name of Pastors of the People, because there was no Subject that could lawfully Teach the people, but by their permission and authority."⁸² This being so, Hobbes continues, "Civill Sovereignes" who have "embraced also the Christian Faith" would be well advised to recall that

Christianity gave them no new Right, but only *directed them in the way of Teaching Truth*; and consequently they needed no Imposition of Hands (besides that which is done in Baptisme) to authorize them to exercise any part of the Pastorall Function, as namely, to Baptize, and Consecrate.⁸³

The new emphasis placed by Hobbes on the importance of teaching in *Leviathan* has attracted considerable attention in the recent scholarship; but the connections between this, and the new material added in Part III of the work have largely escaped attention.⁸⁴ Hobbes's sovereign was strongly counselled – for he, or it, cannot be *commanded* by any other mortal – to monopolize all the mechanisms of social reproduction at his disposal: printing

81 Baumrin, "Hobbes' Christian Commonwealth," 3. Cp. Collins, *Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 35: "The work's fundamental arguments were deeply anti-Christian," something that Hobbes endeavoured to signal to his more enlightened readers (sovereigns above all); but "Hobbes understood the historic hold of Christianity. This, and not a genuine devotion to scriptural 'truths,' explains his effort to offer a reading of the Bible consistent with his philosophy."

82 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 850 [295].

83 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 862 [299] (italics added).

84 Pathbreaking in this regard was David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Cultural Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). See, subsequently, Mary G. Dietz, "Hobbes's Subject as Citizen," in *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, ed. Dietz (Lawrence, Kan: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 91–119; Teresa M. Bejan, "Teaching the Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Education," *Oxford*

presses, universities, and pulpits. Indeed Hobbes laboured the point that all public ministers, whether in state or church, exercise their authority purely at the pleasure of the sovereign, and that an important part of their office is to make known the rights of sovereignty and the reasons upon which those rights are grounded. It is, Hobbes maintains, against the sovereign's duty

to let the people be ignorant, or mis-informed of the grounds, and reasons of those essential Rights [of sovereignty]; because thereby men are easie to be seduced, and drawn to resist him, when the Common-wealth shall require their use and exercise. And the grounds of these Rights, have the rather need⁸⁵ to be diligently, and truly taught; because they cannot be maintained by any Civill Law, or terrour of legall punishment.⁸⁶

How, then, had Christianity “directed” those sovereigns who have received baptism to “the way of teaching Truth”? To what “grounds” of sovereign “Rights” does it counsel them to turn their attention?

The first point to note is that, whilst the Christian sovereign enjoys the same pastoral *right* as his heathen counterpart, he has (voluntarily) incurred an additional *obligation*. Christian sovereigns “oblige themselves (by their Baptisme) to teach the Doctrine of Christ: And when they suffer others to teach their people, *they doe it at the perill of their own souls*.”⁸⁷ To allow private persons – meaning those whom they have not authorized – to teach their subjects represents a voluntary (and recklessly imprudent) surrender of their right of sovereignty; but, for Christian sovereigns, it also violates the covenant into which they entered in baptism. The question then becomes how this obligation “to teach the Doctrine of Christ” might enable them to better inform their subjects “of the grounds, and reasons” of their essential rights – which, as we know, owe nothing to their being Christians.

The existing scholarship has very little to say on this score, perhaps because it assumes that it is Hobbes's civil doctrine, as outlined in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*, that is to be taught in the universities and preached from the

Review of Education 36, no.5 (2010): 607–26; and Arash Abizadeh, “The Representation of Hobbesian Sovereignty: *Leviathan* as Mythology,” in *Hobbes Today: Insights for the 21st Century*, ed. S.A. Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113–52.

85 Noel Malcolm notes that “rather” here is an adjective, meaning ‘prior’ or ‘of greater importance’. See *OED*, “rather,” *adj.*, 2.b.

86 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 30, p. 522 [175].

87 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 882 [305] (*italics added*).

pulpit.⁸⁸ As Jon Parkin observes, Hobbes has “been taken to be a proto-enlightenment figure, in the sense that his philosophy is understood to have attempted to deliver ordinary people from the disabling threat of disorder by establishing a transparently rational structure to justify the authority of the state.”⁸⁹ Witness the confident assertion by another eminent scholar that Hobbes exhorts the sovereign to “seize the apparatuses of socialization, such as university, church and press, and use them to service a scientific program of rational enlightenment.”⁹⁰ Yet as Part III makes clear, if subjects are to be reminded that their sovereign’s right to command (and their own duty to obey) is something they have already accepted voluntarily, they are also to be taught – almost from infancy – that the Christian sovereign holds his right *de Jure Divino*. He, or it, is “ordained by God for our benefit.”⁹¹

In other words Hobbes does not banish all authority higher than man. Christian subjects are, indeed, licensed to appeal to just such a higher authority: an authority which, precisely because it is higher than man, they hold in “reverence” and “awe,” and whose judgements cannot be questioned by mere mortal men. But that authority is represented, and its power exercised, by an “Artificiall Man” who is, as a consequence, a “*Mortall God*, to which wee owe under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defence,” and of whom subjects ought to speak “more reverently” than they are accustomed to doing.⁹² The

88 When Hobbes came in *Behemoth* to outline the “Polyticks” necessary to sustain the unstinting obedience that kept the commonwealth at peace, he outlined not the precepts of his own civil science (as set forth in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*) but instead the doctrine of Part III, which he deemed “fit to make men know that it is their duty to obey all Laws whatsoever that shall by the Authority of the King be enacted, till by the same authority they shall be repealed; such as are fit to make men vnderstand that the Ciuill Laws are Gods Laws, as they that make them are by God appointed to make them; and to make men know that the People and the Church are one thing, and haue but one Head the King, and that no man has title to gouerne vnder him, that has it not from him. That the King owes his Crowne to God onely, and to no man Ecclesiastick or other. And that the Religion they teach there, be a quiet waiting for the coming againe of our blessed Sauour, and in the mean time a resolution to obey the Kings Laws (which also are Gods Laws) to iniure no man, to be in charity with all men, to cherish the poor and sick, and to liue soberly and free from scandal.” See Hobbes, *Behemoth, or the Long Parliament*, ed. Paul Seaward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), 1, pp. 182–3. Already in *Six Lessons* (1656) he had stated that he wished his “doctrine” to be taught, not necessarily his “*Leviathan* [...] For wiser men may so digest the same Doctrine as to fit it better for a publique teaching.” See Thomas Hobbes, *Six Lessons to the Professors of the Mathematicques* (London, 1656), p. 57.

89 Parkin, “Thomas Hobbes and the Problem of Self-Censorship,” 300.

90 Abizadeh, “Leviathan as Mythology,” 117.

91 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 46, p. 1095 [322] (italics added).

92 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 17, p. 260 [87].

“Power and Strength” of this mortal God is “conferre[d]” upon him by his subjects, and “by terror thereof, he is inabled to conforme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutuall ayd against their Enemies abroad.” Terror alone – if that means no more than fear of coercive punishment – is, however, insufficient. Citing Matt. 10.28 with evident approval, Hobbes makes this point with great economy: “*Fear not those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soule.*”⁹³ If obedience is to be constant and lasting – “without stint” – more-than-human “Power and Strength” is required: an object of reverence as well as fear; a “Common Power, to keep them in *awe*, and to direct their actions to the Common Benefit.” The “Artificiall Man” is, and of necessity must be, of “greater *stature*” as well as “strength than the Naturall.”⁹⁴

The “stature” of Christian sovereigns, and the “reverence” accorded by their subjects to them, ought to be great indeed, for they are “*Prophets*” as well as “*judges*.” From Moses’s time “right up to today [...] the Authority to *interpret God’s Word* was also in the hands of the Kings.”⁹⁵ Christian sovereigns who have “submitted themselves to Gods government were,” as they remain, “also his chief Prophets”; it is through him alone that the Holy Spirit works, because as “supreme Prophet” he alone “speaks according to Gods will.”⁹⁶ An appeal to heaven on the part of subjects, it follows, could mean nothing more than an appeal to their sovereign, because “they to whom God hath not spoken immediately, are to receive the positive commandements of God, from their sovereign.”⁹⁷ “Christian Sovereignes” are “therefore the Supreme Pastors, and the onely Persons, whom Christians now hear speak from God; except such as God speaketh to, in these days supernaturally” (and it is the sovereign who determines whether any such claim to supernatural visitation is to be accepted by other subjects or not).⁹⁸ If Locke would have his readers understand that “Princes are born superior in power, but in nature equal to other mortals,”⁹⁹ for Hobbes “an earthly Sovereign,” personating the three figures of the Trinity, may truly “be called the Image of God.”¹⁰⁰

These considerations complicate the distinction between “Civill” and “Divine Worship”: a distinction which, Hobbes declares, can only relate to “the intention of the Worshipper.” Hobbes observes that “to fall prostrate

93 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 930 [321].

94 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 16, p. 250 [82]; ch. 17, p. 260 [87–8] (italics added).

95 Hobbes, *De Cive*, XVI.16.

96 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, pp. 666–70 [227–9].

97 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 40, p. 738 [249].

98 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 934 [323].

99 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 95.

100 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 45, p. 1032 [359].

before a King, in him *that thinks him but a Man*, is but Civill Worship." The case is different for the subject who recognizes that "Christian Kings [...] are the living Representants of God."¹⁰¹ He might, quite legitimately, think that God can be honoured through acts of homage, submission, and thanksgiving to his sovereign, who, indeed, ought to encourage just such a thought; just as long as subjects do not commit the grievous error of supposing that the Christian sovereign is *himself* a God (i.e. Christ), rather than being merely His representative.¹⁰² A central purpose of Hobbes's insistence that the essentials of Christian belief reduce to the *unum necessarium* that Jesus is the Christ¹⁰³ is to emphasize that the Incarnation and its consequences are soteriological matters not political ones.¹⁰⁴ After the "generall Resurrection" Christ himself will reign as a sovereign and he will provide "Protection and life everlasting" to the subjects of his kingdom¹⁰⁵ – but his time is not yet come.¹⁰⁶ In the meantime, the belief that he is "Christ, (that is to say, King), and risen from the dead" in no wise requires "that men are bound after they beleieve it, to obey those that tell them so, against the laws, and commands of their Sovereigns; but that they shall doe wisely, to expect the coming of Christ hereafter, in Patience, and Faith, with Obedience to their present Magistrates."¹⁰⁷

Here we see the full importance of the direction provided to and by those present magistrates who embrace the Christian religion. They place themselves under an obligation – one which Christian princes hitherto had dismally failed to observe – to enlighten their subjects about "Consequences" which, on the account Hobbes provides in Part III of *Leviathan*, are "deducible from the Principles of Christian Politiques, (which are the holy Scriptures)."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 45, p. 1028 [357]; p. 1044 [364] (italics added).

¹⁰² Here if anywhere is the place to mention Hobbes's argument that the Pope is not the "Antichrist," because he has never claimed to *be* Christ, merely to represent and speak for Him. This is a claim that every Christian sovereign is equally free to make. It follows that the Pope can only, and rightly, be condemned for attempting to usurp a power that is rightfully his only within his own dominions and to extend it beyond them to those of other "Christian Kings, and Nations" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 876 [303–4]).

¹⁰³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 948 [328–9].

¹⁰⁴ See Stanton, "Natural Law and Jesus Christ," 84–7. For broader reflections on this theme, see Jon Parkin, "Hobbes and the Future of Religion," in *Thomas Hobbes on Politics and Religion*, ed. Laurens van Apeldoorn and Robin Douglass (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 184–201; though note (*pace* 194) that Hobbes reduces Christian belief to this single article, not Christianity *per se*.

¹⁰⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 822 [285].

¹⁰⁶ See John 7: 6; Pocock, "Time, History, and Eschatology," 148–201; and Mitchell, *Not by Reason Alone*, 46–72.

¹⁰⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 790 [273–4].

¹⁰⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 954 [331].

The Christian sovereign, so subjects should be taught, is “Gods Viceregent on Earth; and hath next under God, the Authority of Governing Christian men.”¹⁰⁹ This way of teaching the essential “grounds, and reasons” of sovereignty was unavailable to heathen magistrates – and, one might add, to sovereigns who sought to justify their right only in the terms outlined in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*.

The Roman emperors, from Augustus to Constantine (prior to his conversion), had attempted – with good reason – to portray their power as more than merely human; but they were forced to rely on “false, or uncertain Traditions, and fained, or uncertain History,” including the absurd “Daemonology of the Heathen Poets.”¹¹⁰ Conversely, the Christian scriptures taught that in the Christian sovereign alone might it properly be said that the Holy Spirit dwells; and because, in the Scriptures, there are many things “above Reason” but “nothing contrary to it,”¹¹¹ so its teaching is fully in line with Hobbes’s “program of rational enlightenment” – if that is what we wish to call it.¹¹² Holy “is a word, which in Gods Kingdome answereth to that, which men in their Kingdomes use to call *Publique*, or *Kings*”; and when “a Prophet is said to speak in the Spirit, or by the Spirit of God, we are to understand no more, but that he speaks according to Gods will, declared by the supreme Prophet.”¹¹³ In every Christian commonwealth, as Hobbes never tires of saying in Part III, this “Prophet is the Civill Sovereign, or by the Civill Sovereign Authorized.”¹¹⁴

By a like token what Hobbes says of the Seventy Elders selected by Moses on God’s instruction also applies to all those who are chosen by Christian sovereigns (“whom God hath set in the place of Moses”) to act as their public ministers and teachers. When the Scriptures declare that the Elders partook of the Holy Spirit conferred on Moses, “the sense of the place is no other than this, that God endued them with a mind conformable, and subordinate to that of Moses, that they might Prophecy, that is to say, speak to the people in Gods name, in such manner, as to set forward (as Ministers of Moses, and by his authority) such doctrine as was agreeable to Moses his doctrine.”¹¹⁵ Neither is it only those chosen *Dei gratia Rex* to serve as his minsters and prophets (or teachers) that partake of the Spirit, as evidenced by their willingness to

109 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, p. 678 [232].

110 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 45, p. 1046 [365]; ch. 44, p. 958 [334].

111 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 576 [195].

112 Abizadeh, “Leviathan as Mythology,” 117; cp. Chandran, “Transubstantiation, Absurdity and the Religious Imagination.”

113 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 35, p. 644 [220]; ch. 36, p. 670 [229].

114 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, p. 674 [230].

115 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 40, p. 746 [252].

“obey, and assist” their sovereign “in the administration of the Government.”¹¹⁶ It is, rather, each and every subject, who, on account of the “gift, and graces” administered by the Spirit through the office and teachings of Christ’s minister on earth – the sovereign – finds himself disposed “to Piety, Justice, Mercy, Truth, Faith, and all other manner of Vertue, both Morall, and Intellectuall.”¹¹⁷

That is to say, the Spirit dwells in every subject “to whom God hath given a part of the *Spirit of their Sovereigne*” by disposing them, at all times, to recognise “their Christian Sovereign, for Gods Prophet.” A subject so disposed by the Spirit, ministered to them by their sovereign, will scarcely “suffer themselves to bee lead by some strange Prince; or by some of their fellow subjects, that can bewitch them, by slaunder of the government, into rebellion [...] and [who,] by this means destroying all laws, both divine, and humane, reduce all Order, Government, and Society, to the first Chaos of Violence, and Civill Warre.”¹¹⁸ They will abide by the Ten Commandments delivered by God himself to Moses, and by Moses (and afterwards by all dutiful Christian Kings) to their people, and “written in two Tables of Stone.” The first Table “containeth the law of Sovereignty” for which the Scriptures, in turn, provide “grounds, and reasons” that cannot be derived “from the Principles of Nature onely.”¹¹⁹

Exponents of the view that Hobbes consistently pursued a relentlessly secular logic of politics find humankind’s predilection for pursuing values other than or higher than the preservation of their bodies and limbs in this life problematical, and perhaps even fatal to Hobbes’s theory. That problem led Strauss to surmise that, for Hobbes, “a-religious or atheistic society [was] the solution of the social and political problem”; and that in reaching this conclusion, Hobbes had announced himself as the “father” and “founder of modern political philosophy.”¹²⁰ There can be no authority higher than the human and no fate worse than death. This is a curious position to attribute to someone who took pains to emphasize just how frequently the expression “eternal life” appeared in the scriptures.¹²¹

Hobbes acknowledges – indeed he emphasizes as strongly as any theorist of politics ever did before or since – that people do crave certain goods, whether honour, glory, or eternal life, that lead them *in extremis* to prefer death to

116 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, p. 672 [230].

117 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, p. 668 [228].

118 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, pp. 678–80 [232] (italics added).

119 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 812 [281–2]; ch. 32, p. 576 [195].

120 Strauss, *Natural Right*, 198; Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 156–7.

121 Unlike the “expression ‘immortal soul’” which, according to Hobbes, “is found nowhere in Holy Scripture”: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 38, p. 707 [211].

shame or to the loss of eternity.¹²² As Michael Oakeshott observed long ago, on Hobbes's account it is not even death *per se* that men fear, but rather a *shameful* death – that is, death at the hands of another man.¹²³ Hobbes suggests that sovereigns are not exempt from these fears and cravings. As natural persons (whether one, or many) they are susceptible to all the human vices: prone to prosecute costly foreign wars from a ceaseless desire for honour and glory, and yet willing to submit to the humiliation of the Pope's foot upon their necks if they imagine their eternal salvation to be at stake.¹²⁴ The next question is whether human beings as Hobbes construes them, be they sovereigns or subjects, could conceivably be swayed sufficiently by the account Hobbes provided of their respective rights and duties “from the Principles of Nature only” in Parts I and II of *Leviathan* to captivate their understandings to it.¹²⁵

At least one human being was not convinced that they could be: Hobbes himself. His “Science of Naturall Justice” was, to be sure, “the only *Science* necessary for Sovereigns” because it demonstrated their (limitless) right over their subjects from the “Principles of Nature only.” Yet it was not sufficient, and this for two reasons. The first reason is that it does not provide adequate direction about how the “grounds, and reasons” on which those rights rest might be explicated by sovereigns (and authorized public ministers) in ways that cultivate in *subjects* a settled disposition to obey, especially in instances when they are minded to think disobedience the more profitable course of action. The second reason is that it provides insufficient “grounds, and reasons” to *sovereigns* as to why they ought to consider themselves obliged jealously to hold “the Reins of Government wholly in their own hands,” especially in instances when they are minded to consider compromise (“appeasing the discontent of him he thinks more potent than himselfe” at times of political

122 Lloyd, *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's Leviathan*; Gabriella Slomp, *Thomas Hobbes and the Political Philosophy of Glory* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Alexandra Chadwick, “Hobbes on the Motives of Martyrs,” in *Hobbes on Politics and Religion*, ed. Laurens van Apeldoorn and Robin Douglass (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 79–94.

123 For the observation, see Michael Oakeshott to John Watkins, 24 May 1963, printed as Oakeshott, “Letter on Hobbes,” *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): 834–6; for its perceived implications for Hobbes's theory, see Oakeshott, “The Moral Life in the Writings of Thomas Hobbes” (1960), in *Hobbes on Civil Association*, 75–131.

124 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 44, p. 984 [342].

125 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 576 [195].

instability) or to abandon scientific principle in favour of the seemingly prudent course of action.¹²⁶

Many commentators have been struck by Hobbes's remark, in the final paragraph of Part II of *Leviathan*, that "I am at the point of believing this my labour, as uselesse, as the Common-wealth of *Plato*; For he also is of opinion that it is impossible for the disorders of State, and change of Governments by Civill Warre, ever to be taken away, till Sovereigns be Philosophers."¹²⁷ Far less attention has been paid to his intimation, in Part III, that sovereigns would never be brought to understand or exercise their rights rightly, nor subjects to acknowledge those rights and to obey without demur, "till Kings were Pastors, and Pastors Kings."¹²⁸

The composite figure that results is the Christian sovereign – the sovereign of a Christian commonwealth. It is "called a *Common-wealth*, because it consisteth of men united in one person, their Sovereign; and a *Church*, because it consisteth in Christian men, united in one Christian Sovereign."¹²⁹ The Christian sovereign's obligation to exercise his rights to the utmost – to be Pope in his dominions – is imposed upon him by baptism; and he will be held accountable, at Christ's second coming, for the souls of his subjects. So long as the natural person of the sovereign is a believing Christian – meaning for Hobbes that he takes Christ to be the Messiah – so he grasps that his own prospects of eternal life hang in the balance. Has he fulfilled his obligation to teach the true Christian doctrine, and spoken as Christ unto his people? If he has failed to exercise his rights of sovereignty, as by negligently turning a blind eye whilst unauthorized teachers, by their "*dark, and erroneous Doctrines*," extinguished the "*Light, both of Nature, and of the Gospell*" in his subjects, so as "*to dis-prepare them for the Kingdome of God to come*," then the answer would be a resounding (and extremely disconcerting) 'no'.¹³⁰

126 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 912 [315]; ch. 28, p. 496 [166]. For the disastrous consequences of Charles I's compromises, not least in his *Answer to the Nineteen Propositions*, see Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 3, pp. 259–73. Hobbes's concern to offer counsel to the sovereign in this regard is discussed by Noel Malcolm in the editor's introduction to *Leviathan*, pp. 51–60.

127 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 31, p. 574 [193]. See esp. Leon Harold Craig, *The Platonian Leviathan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

128 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 812 [281]. For an important exception see Chandran, "Hobbes in France."

129 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 33, p. 606 [206].

130 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 44, p. 956 [333].

All of this suggests that Hobbes was of the view that his philosophical labours stood the greatest chance of success under a Christian sovereign, acting in a dual capacity, willing and able to exercise his “entire sovereignty.” Only by this means would Hobbes’s ideas be converted from the truth of speculation into the utility of practice.

Philosophy was not for everyone. It was hard. It required patient “study and industry,” a zeal for truth rather than triumph, and a magnanimous disposition that, Hobbes suggested, were “gifts of God” (and, as the history of philosophy indicated, gifts bestowed only rarely).¹³¹ The desire for honour and the concern for immortality – whether the immortal fame craved by the “Heathen Politicians” and poets or the desire of Christians for entry into Christ’s kingdom – on the other hand were more or less ubiquitous. They vitalized every human being who ever achieved anything worthwhile in this life. As Hobbes noted, “few except those who love praise do anything to deserve it.”¹³² What prospect could be more enticing for a Christian sovereign, however unfit for the rigours of philosophy, than the reverence and gratitude of subjects in this life and the future promise of an “*Everlasting life*” of “glory and power”? This pleasure would be raised to an exquisite pitch, given the glory-seeker’s desire for pre-eminence, by witnessing the refractory and disobedient subjected to “*shame, and everlasting contempt*.”¹³³

Amongst those shamed for eternity would surely be Christian sovereigns who, ignoring Hobbes’s truths of speculation, had failed to exercise their rights entire by neglecting to teach to their subjects the true “Consequences” of “Christian Politiques,” including the truth that obedience to the sovereign in all things *is* obedience to God. As for their Christian subjects, Hobbes was keen to remind them (and the sovereign) that they ought to both feel and exhibit gratitude to their earthly prince for all the benefits (and blessings) that he conferred upon them.

The central place of gratitude in *Leviathan*’s account of political obligation has been obscured by the prior claim on our attention laid by the widespread belief that Hobbes’s theory is grounded, as all modern secular political theory must be, on “some thoroughgoing theory of justice, liberty, rights or law.”¹³⁴ Thus Peter J. Leithart opines that gratitude, including gratitude to God, “does not appear to loom large in Hobbes’s thought,” for reasons that will be

¹³¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 34, p. 632 [215].

¹³² Hobbes, *De Cive*, ‘Preface to the Readers’ [1647], §20.

¹³³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 38, p. 716 [244].

¹³⁴ Alexander, “Three Arguments,” 8.

familiar. “Where Hobbes departs most radically [from medieval writers] is in his detachment of political order from God. Scientific politics has no place for royal power descending from heaven [...]. God has no essential role in political science, and so gratitude to God has no place either.”¹³⁵ A. John Simmons reminds us that on a contractual model of government there is no room for gratitude, because we are entitled to the benefits we receive. Social contract theory “maintains that governments have a duty or a responsibility to provide the benefits which they give to their citizens, and that citizens have a right to these benefits.”¹³⁶ Indeed Hobbes tells us as much himself, distinguishing categorically between covenant and free gift: “[a]s Justice dependeth on Antecedent Covenant; so does GRATITUDE depend on Antecedent Grace; that is to say, Free-Gift.”¹³⁷

Yet if we look more closely at Hobbes’s model of the origins of government matters become less straightforward. The most distinctive feature of Hobbes’s account of commonwealths by institution is that it is a covenant between each and every one of the members that brings it into existence. One to another subjects place themselves under a duty of justice to fulfil the terms of that covenant (to obey the sovereign who bears their wills) when they can trust others to do similarly (under the conditions generated by the covenant, which produces a “Common Power” with “Power and Strength” sufficient “to conforme the wills of them all, to Peace at home, and mutuall ayd against their Enemies abroad”).¹³⁸ In relation to the sovereign, however, their submission is presented as a “Free-Gift,” without any surety that the benefits they hope to secure thereby (and “no man giveth, but with intention of Good to himself”) will be delivered.¹³⁹

Bernard Gert is one of the few scholars to explore the implications of this model for the place of gratitude in Hobbes’s theory. Gert argues that the duty of

¹³⁵ Peter J. Leithart, *Gratitude: An Intellectual History* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 121–9. Notice, however, that a similar destination can be reached by a very different route. Hobbes tells us that by natural theology alone we can acquire knowledge of God’s omnipotence, but not of His attributes, “Ends” for His creatures, or promise (through Christ) of everlasting life to the obedient (*Leviathan*, ch. 31, p. 564 [190]). “The Right of Nature, whereby God reigneth over men, and punisheth those that break his Lawes, is to be derived, not from his Creating them, as if he required obedience, *as of Gratitude for his benefits*; but from his Irresistable Power” (*Leviathan*, ch. 31, p. 558 [187]; italics added).

¹³⁶ A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 184–5.

¹³⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 15, p. 230 [75].

¹³⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 17, p. 260 [87–8].

¹³⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 15, p. 230 [75].

gratitude falls primarily upon the sovereign, thereby constraining him to rule in the collective benefit of his subjects.¹⁴⁰ As each and every subject offers their submission as a free gift, with no strings attached, so Hobbes's fourth law of nature requires that any "*man*" – in this case an "Artificiall Man," the sovereign – "*which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, Endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will.*"¹⁴¹ On Gert's account, this limits the Leviathan, requiring the sovereign to "*deale Equally*" with his subjects (equity being the eleventh law of nature), ensure the equal use of things in common (the twelfth), and constraining him to exercise his power with a view to benefiting all his subjects impartially, without arbitrarily favouring some over others.¹⁴²

This is true as far as it goes; but two points are worth noting. First, the sovereign is answerable for his actions (or inactions) to God alone, not to his subjects; and second, the reason that the sovereign is bound by the other laws of nature (such as equity) does not, and cannot, derive from the duty of gratitude. No matter how flagrantly he appears to violate the laws of nature (including the fourth), his subjects remain bound to obey without stint. For Christian subjects this is true even if the sovereign is not merely a heathen, but a Nero or a Caligula. "The Holy Scriptures teach," Hobbes emphasises, "that Christian subjects should obey their kings and sovereigns, and their ministers, even if they are heathen, not only for fear, but for conscience's sake, as they are ordained by God for our benefit."¹⁴³ Gratitude is due to sovereigns even if they exhibit none to their subjects and refuse to acknowledge their own duties under God.

The emphasis on gratitude in Hobbes's theory, then, is ancillary to a conception of covenanting that is surely designed to *remove* all limits on sovereign power. As their submission is a free gift, so any and all benefits that subjects receive from their sovereign are blessings that they cannot expect, and most certainly cannot demand, as a matter of right. Perhaps it will be countered that gratitude has less place in commonwealths by acquisition, in which the structure of the covenant is different. Not so, says Hobbes: subjects exchange liberty for protection, but all other benefits they receive are the free gift of the sovereign, just as in commonwealths by institution. In any case,

140 Bernard Gert, *Hobbes: Prince of Peace* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).

141 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 15, p. 230 [75].

142 Gert's interpretation of gratitude chimes nicely with the significance attached to equity by Larry May, *Limiting the Leviathan: Hobbes on Law and International Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

143 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 46, p. 1095 [322].

Hobbes informs us, “the Kingdome of Heaven” will be the “glorious Reign of our King, *by Conquest*”; and who can doubt that Christ is the rightful object of love and reverence – as well as fear to the disobedient and refractory – and of gratitude, as well as obedience?¹⁴⁴

This brings us to a second point of note. For subjects of a Christian commonwealth, the benefits conferred upon them by their sovereign are (or ought to be) understood to flow from Christ, even as they are ministered (or distributed) by His representative. With the Christian sovereign, who teaches “Christian doctrine” to his subjects and converts its counsels into commands (i.e. civil law), subjects are enabled to do what they could not before: conceive an “Image” of God and learn of His will (and thereby His attributes).¹⁴⁵ Mark the point. It significantly deepens the sense in which Hobbes’s Christian sovereign may “be called the Image of God”¹⁴⁶ – for his is the only image we can conjure.¹⁴⁷ As His “Supreme Pastors” and “Prophets,” sovereigns are “the onely Persons, whom Christians now hear speak from God.”¹⁴⁸ The effect once again is to elide any categorical distinction between “Civill” and “Divine Worship”: the Christian sovereign represents the image and will of God to Christian subjects, who are enabled to understand that gratitude for the benefits they receive is due unto *both* their sovereign *and* God. They learn of God’s promise, through Christ, of everlasting life in a Kingdom of Glory to those who endeavour to follow Him with a disposition of modesty and obedience; they grasp that “obedience to supreme powers, that is, to the laws of those in supreme command” is mandated by “divine” law, not merely by natural or civil law;¹⁴⁹ and they acknowledge their sovereign as their shepherd, ordained by

¹⁴⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 38, p. 722 [246] (italics added).

¹⁴⁵ Compare Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 12, p. 168 [53]; and ch. 31, p. 568 [191].

¹⁴⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 45, p. 1032 [359].

¹⁴⁷ Robin Douglass, “The Body Politic ‘is a fictitious body,’” *Hobbes Studies* 27, no. 2 (2014): 126–47.

¹⁴⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 43, p. 934 [323].

¹⁴⁹ To put this point differently: sovereigns who are not Christians can convert the precepts of natural law into law proper, by promulgating its precepts as civil law; but only Christian sovereigns are able – by teaching Hobbes’s “Christian doctrine” – to imbue those laws with divine authority and sanction. Cp. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 15, p. 242 [80]: “These dictates of Reason, men use to call by the name of Lawes; but improperly: for they are but Conclusions, or Theoremes concerning what conduceth to the conservation and defence of themselves; whereas Law, properly is the word of him, that by right hath command over others. But yet if we consider the same Theoremes, as delivered in the word of God, that by right commandeth all things; then are they properly called Lawes.” For a discussion that gestures in this direction, see Oakeshott, “Moral Life,” 104–13.

God, who (by means of his law) secures both the bodies and the souls of his “Flock” from harm.¹⁵⁰

So understood, Part III of *Leviathan* recasts the savage imagery of the state of nature deployed in Part I as a stripped-back secular vision of life in want of the Lord’s protection intended to move readers to exclaim before their sovereign, in an act of civil worship, “*Thou art my Saviour; thou savest me from violence.*”¹⁵¹ Parts III and IV invite expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving in which civil and divine worship combine, because the “violence” from which subjects are saved threatens both their bodies and their souls, that is to say their prospects of eternal life. Wielding both the sword of justice and the crozier – or pastoral staff – the Christian sovereign who represents God to his subjects and his subjects before God is a shepherd who protects his flock from false prophets, guiding them in the way marked out by “*the Light, both of Nature, and of the Gospel.*”¹⁵² It may be unnecessary to add that this is the figure that stares out at readers of *Leviathan* from its justly famous frontispiece.

There is a further reason why Part III is indispensable to Hobbes’s overall project in *Leviathan*. He recognized that unless there is an authority higher than man, and unless subjects recognise that higher authority to be vested *in* their sovereign, the economy of gift and gratitude will inevitably malfunction.¹⁵³ In earlier recensions of his political theory, gratitude had been numbered among

150 Hobbes, *De Homine*, 14-5, in *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), and cp. 15-3: “all kings and supreme governors of any kind of states whatsoever bear the person of God, if they acknowledge God as ruler. [...] For, since the will of God is not known save through the state, and since, moreover, it is required that the will of Him that is represented be the author of the actions performed by those who represent Him, it needs be that God’s person be created by the will of the state.”

151 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 38, p. 720 [245], citing 2 Sam. 22:3. Compare 2 Sam. 22: 4–7: “I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me; In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears.”

152 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 44, p. 956 [333].

153 A point missed by Dietz, “Hobbes’s Subject as Citizen,” which nonetheless observes that gratitude is “the linchpin that secures the contract” (105), by infusing citizens with a desire, rather than merely a sense of obligation, to fulfil their promises (notably, the promise to obey). Yet Dietz’s interpretation of how, according to Hobbes, this might be achieved – and what the sovereign ought to teach subjects to inculcate this desire – focuses almost exclusively on Ch. 30 (towards the end of Part II). As a result, the distinction between gratitude, here understood as a narrowly “civic virtue,” and magnanimity is very hard to draw; and, on Hobbes’s account, magnanimity is not something that *can* be cultivated (such noble spirits are few and far between).

the laws of nature; but nowhere do we find a passage that links *ingratitude* to equality, and gratitude to superiority, in the way that Hobbes connects them in chapter 11 of *Leviathan*:¹⁵⁴

To have received from one, to whom we think our selves equall, greater benefits than there is hope to Requite, disposeth to counterfeit love; but really secret hatred; and puts a man into the estate of a desperate debtor, that in declining the sight of his creditor, tacitely wishes him there, where he might never see him more. For benefits oblige; and obligation is thralldome; and unrequitable obligation, perpetuall thralldome; which is to one's equall, hatefull. But to have received benefits from one, whom we acknowledge for superior, enclines to love; because the obligation is no new depression: and cheerfull acceptation, (which men call *Gratitude*,) is such an honour done to the obliger, as is taken generally for retribution.¹⁵⁵

In the Christian era, the poisonous doctrines peddled by the Papacy and spewed out of universities throughout Christendom had brought Christian sovereigns low in the eyes of their subjects. The flagrant hypocrisy of the Pope's ministers had deprived those who professed to teach Christ's doctrine of "almost all the true reverence that was due to them and their pastoral office"; and the teaching of Roman and Greek philosophy had injected "the Venime of Heathen Politicians" into the veins of Christian subjects.¹⁵⁶ As a result, subjects were moved to view their sovereigns as human, all too human; and, as Hobbes had observed, every human naturally thinks of himself as at least the equal of every other human.¹⁵⁷

This explained why "ambitious or desperate men" felt emboldened to accuse their sovereigns – typically those who actually attempted to exercise their sovereign rights – of tyranny.¹⁵⁸ As Hobbes's discussion of gratitude and equality makes clear, such men merited the epithet "desperate" not because their need was desperate, having been deprived or unaware of the benefits conferred on them by their sovereign – peace, and a comfortable life – but rather because whilst already enjoying them they are reckless enough to

154 Cf. Hobbes, *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies, 2nd edn (London: Frank Cass, 1969), 1.16.6–7, 1.17.14; and *De Cive*, III.4–8.

155 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 11, p. 154 [48].

156 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, [1668] ch. 47, p. 113 [325]; 'Review and Conclusion', p. 1140 [395].

157 Kinch Hoekstra, "Hobbesian Equality," in *Hobbes Today: Insights for the 21st Century*, ed. S.A. Lloyd (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 76–112.

158 Hobbes, *De Cive*, 'Preface to the Readers' [1647], §6.

risk the ruin of all for additional private gain.¹⁵⁹ To receive benefits from one considered to be one's equal, and benefits of a kind that one cannot hope to requite, is experienced as a kind of thralldom; it generates not gratitude, but "secret hatred."¹⁶⁰ The charge of tyranny, and complaints about arbitrary government, of course, signified nothing more than the belief of those who levelled them that they were better fitted by nature and their own talents to govern than the current occupant(s) of the office of sovereign.¹⁶¹

Such subjects might be constrained to acknowledge the superior "Power and Strength" of their sovereign; but this consideration would hold them in obedience only so long as they lacked any realistic hope that they could succeed in the enterprise of "overturn[ing] the order of the commonwealth."¹⁶² In an age in which a sufficiently large number of subjects – or a concentrated coterie of highly "potent" subjects – saw their Christian sovereigns as their equals in nature, superior only in power, their hopes of success were not simply well-founded but strong incentives to increase whatever power they already possessed and to weaken the sovereign power concomitantly.

¹⁵⁹ See *OED* desperate, *adj.*, II. 4 b. Hobbes frequently observes that times of peace and prosperity are the most dangerous for commonwealths, because the conditions of possibility for both – the right and exercise of sovereign power and unstinting obedience to it – feel looser, so to speak, to subjects. The more potent, ambitious, or prideful subjects lose sight of the fact that the benefits they enjoy are provided for them by their sovereign. This is not a necessary feature of every polity. A sovereign might very well teach the "Science of Naturall Justice" provided by Hobbes in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*, which reminds subjects that it is the sovereign who saved (and continues to save) them from the "violence" and anarchy of the natural condition. The rub is that if these subjects regard their sovereign as merely one (or many) of them – their equal by nature, albeit their superior in power – then such teaching is likely to backfire spectacularly. Forced to acknowledge their sovereign as their benefactor, and his benefits as of such a kind that they cannot possibly hope to requite in kind, they will experience their obligation to obey the sovereign as "thralldome." In Parts I and II, subjects had not been given compelling "grounds, and reasons" to think of their sovereign as the "mortal God" that they must think him to be if this problem is to be overcome. Hobbes, we contend, not only grasped this point, but emphasized it: hence the new discussion of (in)gratitude and equality in Ch. II of *Leviathan*, and the necessary role played by Part III of that work.

¹⁶⁰ Hobbes's interpretation of the functioning of the economy of gift and gratitude in non-Christian commonwealths is strikingly Aristotelian: the magnanimous man avoids incurring debts to benefactors and, to the extent that they cannot be avoided, endeavours to repay them as promptly as possible with a view to reclaiming his liberty. For insightful discussion, see Marin Terpstra, "Social Gifts and the Gift of Sociality: Some Thoughts on Mauss's *The Gift* and Hobbes's *Leviathan*," in *Gifts and Interests*, ed. Antoon Vandavelde (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 191–208.

¹⁶¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 46, p. 1094 [377].

¹⁶² Hobbes, *De Cive*, 'Preface to the Readers' [1647], §6.

The consequences of speaking irreverently of the sovereign were all too predictable: “they give evill names to their Superiors; never knowing (till perhaps a little after a Civill warre) that without such Arbitrary government, such Warre must be perpetuall; and that it is Men, and Arms, not Words, and Promises, that make the Force and Power of Law.”¹⁶³ Teaching such men the “Science of Naturall Justice,” and alerting them to the inevitable consequences of their irreverent speech and seditious intentions (the nerve of Parts I and II of *Leviathan*), does nothing, in itself, to address the fundamental cause of their irreverence and desperation: their “erroneous” belief that “sovereign Kings are not masters but servants of society,” and the equal of every one of their subjects in nature if not in power.¹⁶⁴ One might even think it aggravates it. Only if subjects could be brought to “acknowledge” their sovereign as *not* like them – to “acknowledge [them] for superior” as a “mortall God” – might the benefits that he provided for them be met with “love [...] and cheerful acceptation (which men call *Gratitude*).”¹⁶⁵

Here again Christian doctrine provided sovereigns with helpful guidance on how to direct their teaching with greatest profit. Only if subjects are taught to acknowledge their sovereign as “Gods Viceregent on Earth; [who] hath next under God, the Authority of Governing Christian men” – which, as a matter of definition, requires there to be an authority that is higher than the human – can this issue be addressed adequately.¹⁶⁶ Then, and then only, might the hatred of potent subjects (those who have received the greatest benefits) be converted into love; their resentment into gratitude; and their disposition towards injustice and ill-will into steadfast obedience and a pious reverence that leads them to protect their sovereign in his rights *even when* he is no longer in a position to protect their bodies through the exercise of those same rights.¹⁶⁷

163 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 46, p. 1094 [377]. Hobbes held this line to the last. His late fragment on Hereditary Right responded to a question put to him by the fourth Earl of Devonshire, namely what should be done if government should devolve to a notoriously weak king. Hobbes replies that “I will speake of that subject no more till we have such a weak King.” See “Questions Relative to Hereditary Right,” in Thomas Hobbes, *A Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student, of the Common Laws of England; Questions Relative to Hereditary Right*, ed. Alan Cromartie and Quentin Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 178.

164 Hobbes, *De Cive*, ‘Preface to the Readers’ [1647], §5.

165 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 11, p. 154 [48].

166 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 36, p. 678 [232].

167 On reviewing *Leviathan*, Hobbes expressed regret at not saying more about the subjects’ duty to exert themselves on behalf of their sovereign even when the latter can no longer protect them. It might seem that Hobbes is constrained here to appeal to subjects’

In short, with due deference to Strauss and other commentators who press Hobbes's credentials as the inventor of modern political philosophy, an "a-religious or atheistic society" could not possibly represent "the solution of the social and political problem" that Hobbes himself brings into view.¹⁶⁸ If we insist on interpreting Hobbes in these terms, mark what follows:

Hobbes argues that (i) an essential precondition for our entry into civil society is that "*every man acknowledge [every] other for his Equall by Nature*";¹⁶⁹ (ii) we are disinclined to do so, because some men, at least, consider themselves superior (by nature) to others ("*Pride*"); (iii) this problem can, at the moment of the original covenant, be overcome temporarily, because all are threatened with existential violence: whether at one another's hands (a commonwealth by institution) or at the point

magnanimity: that is, that "Noblesse or Gallantnesse of Courage, (rarely found,) by which a man scorns to be beholding for the contentment of his life, to fraud, or breach of promise" (*Leviathan*, ch. 15, pp. 226–8 [74]). (Oakeshott, "Moral Life," 120–31, suggests that Hobbes's theory might rely on the magnanimous few for this reason.) Yet Hobbes nowhere resiles from his view that magnanimity cannot be depended upon – "the Passion to be reckoned upon, is [always] Fear" (*Leviathan*, ch. 14, pp. 216 [70]). The problem is that fear, too, is insufficient for Hobbes's purposes: if the sovereign cannot protect you, fear will lead you to submit to another with sufficient power to do the job properly. But for a Christian subject in a Christian commonwealth, the case is different. As individuals, "to make Covenant with God is impossible, but by Mediation of such as God speaketh to" (*Leviathan*, ch. 14, p. 210 [69]), and in the natural condition such a mediator is lacking; but as members of Christian commonwealths, Christ speaks to, and through, the Christian King, and enjoins obedience (as natural law does not) to those whom God has anointed come what may. As a member of the Church, we enter *via the sovereign* (authorized by Christ, recall, to exercise "all Power Sacerdotal") into our covenant with Christ. The cost, it follows, of breach of promise (i.e. disobedience) to our sovereign is, as Christians, expulsion from Christ's kingdom, unless we are supremely confident that we have endeavoured to our utmost to uphold "the Title, Right, and Reverence" of our lawful "King" against "Rebels": Hobbes, *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners, & Religion of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury* (London: William Croke, 1680), pp. 8; 20. It follows that heathen sovereigns have limited reason to expect assistance in times of "distress" (i.e. when they cannot provide protection to their subjects), because they are constrained to rely upon the magnanimity of their leading subjects. Sovereigns of Christian commonwealths, conversely, *should* – at least if they have taught Christ's doctrine diligently and perspicuously – be able to appeal to the duty, not virtue of their subjects, because even if they can no longer protect their bodies, they (alone) remain in a position to protect their souls as "supreme Pastors," "supreme Prophets," and Christ's representatives in their dominions.

168 Leo Strauss, *Natural Right*, 198.

169 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 15, p. 234 [77].

of a conqueror's sword (by acquisition) – and all, as a consequence, are willing to acknowledge their mutual equality in subjection, as servants before a master;¹⁷⁰ (iv) yet the problem is bound to resurface continually within the commonwealth, as pride is rekindled (it can only ever be temporarily suppressed or redirected, not permanently eradicated); (v) Hobbes's solution is for the sovereign to combine terror with education, to constrain (or persuade) potent subjects once again to acknowledge the equality of their fellow subjects, rather than to seek to exercise dominion over them; (vi) but this 'solution' to the problem of human pride cannot possibly work, because, as Strauss himself pointed out, it remained "fundamentally questionable which of the men who are equal and alike is to rule over the others, and under which conditions and within which limits they have a claim to rule."¹⁷¹

Subjects in Hobbes's commonwealth, as described in Parts I and II of *Leviathan*, will find "grounds, and reasons" to view their sovereign as their superior solely on account of his power – which, they will learn from Hobbes, was acquired from them and is no more than the sum of all that once was theirs – and his exercise of this power to secure obedience and demand acts of civil worship (through which subjects are reminded, and necessarily so, of their equality in subjection) is liable to dispose (or compel) them to express counterfeit love, which conceals a more settled disposition of secret hatred that will, in time, destroy the mighty Leviathan from within. The only logical conclusion, if we take these to be Hobbes's final terms and this his manner of arguing, is that his solution to the problem that the Leviathan is intended to overcome is, ultimately, a colossal flop. The same verdict has been reached by numerous scholars, many of whom (we assume) would be surprised, and perhaps slightly discomfited, to discover that they are in this matter Strauss's bedfellows.¹⁷²

170 Joshua Mitchell, "Hobbes and the Equality of the All under the One," *Political Theory* 21, no. 1 (1993): 78–100.

171 Strauss, *Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, 159.

172 See, for example, Sagar, *Opinion of Mankind*; and István Hont, *Politics in Commercial Society: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). For a more extreme instance, compare Adrian Blau, "Anti-Strauss," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (2012): 142–55 and "The Irrelevance of (Straussian) Hermeneutics," in *Reading Between the Lines: Leo Strauss and the History of Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Winfried Schröder (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 29–55 – which set about Strauss's methodology – with "Hobbes's Practical Politics: Political, Sociological and Economic Ways of Avoiding a State of Nature," *Hobbes Studies* 33, no. 2 (2020): 109–34 – which assumes the validity of his conclusions.

The problem with this conclusion is that it is Hobbes *himself* who tells us that ‘his’ solution cannot work – *if* we are willing to take seriously what he has to say in Parts III and IV of *Leviathan*. If we choose to ignore him, on the assumption that he cannot possibly have meant what he said, then “[h]istory [...] indeed becomes a pack of tricks we play on the dead.”¹⁷³ We are inclined to think that it is worth revisiting the question of why Hobbes bothered continuing beyond Part II and looked beyond Plato’s philosopher king. He did so because he did not think that Parts I and II were sufficient – they were literally half the story.¹⁷⁴ It was only with and through a Christian commonwealth that Hobbes believed his purposes could be realised.

Our interpretation, if valid, tells us something interesting about Hobbes, and raises more interesting questions still about his place within the “order of succession” preferred by historians of political thought. It has the additional merit of enabling us to explain why, as opposed to merely insisting that, Locke’s reluctance to engage at length with “the Hobbesian arguments” did not indicate either a lack of interest in them or a secret attachment to them. For why would Locke have bothered to adopt the “tedious lingering method [...] of taking now and then a castle or village on the frontier,” when he felt able “to march up directly to the capital [...] which, once being master of, [he] may every where else hope for an easy victory”?¹⁷⁵

173 Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53 (on 14).

174 The hiatus is noted by A. P. Martinich, *Hobbes’s Political Philosophy: Interpretation and Interpretations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 29, who claims that “the method and the content of the second half of *Leviathan* is substantially different from that of the first. The first half aspires to science; the second does not.” This seems to us to misstate the nature of the transition, which consists in moving from discussion of the abstract compound noun “commonwealth” – the meaning of which Hobbes had established in Parts I and II – to discussion of the same term in relation to the aggregate word “Christian,” whose meaning must be gathered from the “Prophetical” rather than the “Naturall Word of God” (*Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 576 [195]). In each case the purpose of the discussion is to raise images which touch the affections of the listener or reader and in doing so to influence conduct. The question is always, with what arrangements are these words, and therefore pleasurable images, to be connected? See Timothy Stanton, “Hobbes’s Redefinition of the Commonwealth,” in *Causation and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Keith Allen and Tom Stoneham (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 104–22.

175 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), i. ‘Introduction’, §6.

4 Locke: Christian Commonwealths and Round Quadrangles

*Sed sub Evangelio nulla prorsus est respublica Christiana.*¹⁷⁶ This, for Locke, is the capital point; but for Locke, no less than for Hobbes, the “civil power is everywhere the same.” In demonstrating the original, extent, and end both of civil government (in the *Second Treatise*) and ecclesiastical government (in *Epistola*), Locke appealed to the Scriptures merely to confirm a conclusion that could be “derived” from “the Principles of Nature onely.”¹⁷⁷ That conclusion was that “Christian commonwealth” was a combination of words that, like “*round Quadrangle*,” signified nothing.¹⁷⁸ Reason teaches, and Scripture affirms, that:

the church is absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth and civil affairs. The boundaries on both sides are fixed and immovable. He mixes heaven and earth together, things most remote and opposite, who confuses these two societies, which in their origin, their end, and their whole substance are utterly and completely different.¹⁷⁹

Both societies are discussed by Locke in terms of *res*: something that can be conceived as a separate entity; and both were understood in purposive terms, with their (discrete) “ends” providing a “measure” of their legitimate “opera[ti]on[s]” (i.e. as determining the extent of their respective jurisdictions).¹⁸⁰ Church and commonwealth did not form one single integral society as Hobbes (and many others besides, including Richard Hooker) had insisted.¹⁸¹ Nor could the church as an institution, as Hobbes supposed, be understood on the model of the commonwealth or as its alter ego.¹⁸² They had not been instituted in the same way. A church is “*a free and voluntary society*” which one can join or leave *sua sponte* according to one’s judgement as to whether it honours (worships) God

¹⁷⁶ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 116–7.

¹⁷⁷ Timothy Stanton, “Christian Foundations; or some Loose Stones? Toleration and the Philosophy of Locke’s Politics,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (2011): 323–47.

¹⁷⁸ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 4, p. 60 [17].

¹⁷⁹ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 85–7.

¹⁸⁰ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 64; John Locke, journal entry dated 25. Feb. 1676, Bodleian Library, MS Locke f.1, p. 125. For fuller discussion see Harris, “Locke and Natural Law,” 77–82.

¹⁸¹ See Timothy Stanton, “Mischief and Inconvenience in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Locke Studies* 13 (2013): 93–112.

¹⁸² Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 33, p. 606 [206].

in ways that are most likely to please Him, and whether it “serve[s] the ends of order, decency, and edification” more effectively than any other such society.¹⁸³

As the jurisdictions of these societies were entirely independent of one another, Hobbes’s claim that civil sovereignty is “the *Head*, the *Source*, the *Root*, and the *Sun*, from which all Jurisdiction is derived” was ruled out of court.¹⁸⁴ With Locke “Political Power,” no less than ecclesiastical, is a *species* of jurisdiction, not its source: the source is, and can only be God, because, being omnipotent, everything originates with Him. He alone has complete sovereignty over His creatures, who are made to last during His pleasure and sent about His business.

His requirements for them are intelligible to every rational agent, having been promulgated in the natural law their sense, reason and will enable them to grasp and to follow. Beneath God, it follows, every competent human being has jurisdiction over their own actions; and, by nature, there is “no superiority or jurisdiction of one, over another.”¹⁸⁵ Such individuals nevertheless “make use of their Reason to unite together” into societies, the better to discharge their duties under natural law.¹⁸⁶ They form civil societies to preserve themselves and one another, and to subdue the earth and “improve it for the benefit of Life.”¹⁸⁷ They form religious societies to express their gratitude and reverence to God, who made and sustains them, and to discharge the care for their immortal souls that they owe to Him by cultivating (in themselves and their brethren) a disposition of “charity, meekness, and goodwill in general to all mankind.”¹⁸⁸ Power is entrusted to authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, on condition that it is exercised to the end that it is conferred: namely, to enable us, as individuals who remain accountable for our own actions and choices, to fulfil our duties to God, our neighbours, and ourselves.

Locke made it very clear that he judged the elision of the jurisdictional boundaries between these two societies to be principally responsible for the tumult and civil discord that had so long plagued commonwealths which had embraced the Christian faith.¹⁸⁹ This was why he declared, in the *Epistola*, that:

183 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 71; 109.

184 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 904 [312].

185 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §7.

186 Locke, *Two Treatises*, I, §6.

187 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §32.

188 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 59.

189 For Locke’s explanation of how this confusion had occurred see Tim Stuart-Buttle, *From Moral Theology to Moral Philosophy: Cicero and the Science of Man from Locke to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 67–81.

I regard it as necessary above all to distinguish between the business of civil government and that of religion, and to mark the true bounds between the church and the commonwealth. If this is not done, no end can be put to the controversies between those who truly have or pretend to have at heart a concern on the one hand for the salvation of souls, and on the other for the safety of the commonwealth.¹⁹⁰

If, conversely, “the Limits of each government be rightly considered, it will *easily* remove all difficulty in this matter.”¹⁹¹ Those “Limits,” Locke argued, had largely been respected in heathen societies, most notably in pre-Christian Rome. He observed that “heathen politics” – an activity that depended on natural reason operating only on the evidence that the senses afforded – revealed in its practice the true business (and hence the limits) of civil government: it showed that “there can be no other end assigned” to government “but the preservation of members of that society in peace & saf[e]ty together.” This end, duly considered, will “give us the rule of civil obedience.”¹⁹² Indeed, in the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Locke declared that it was due to “the wonderful Providence of God” that Christ was made flesh in an age, and a place, where the legitimate scope and jurisdiction of civil government was properly observed (even if its grounds were not fully understood). This had allowed Christ to preach his message without incurring the wrath of the civil magistrate, because “for a Kingdom in another World, *Pilate* knew that his Master at *Rome* concerned not himself.”¹⁹³

It is well known that Christ too – to the great chagrin of his wily enemies – acknowledged the jurisdictional boundaries between civil and ecclesiastical government.¹⁹⁴ According to Locke, he had “instituted no commonwealth,”

190 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 65.

191 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 123 (italics added).

192 John Locke, journal entry dated 25 Feb. 1676, in Bodleian Library, MS Locke f.1, pp. 124–5.

193 John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures*, ed. John C. Higgins-Biddle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): page references are provided to this edition (here, p. 46).

194 Mark 12: 13–17: “And they sen[t] unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they sa[id] unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar’s. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s. And they marvelled at him.”

and his law had not meddled with the “ancient form of government,” which was (or ought to have been) retained by those “kingdoms and cities which have been converted to the Christian faith.” Hence his claim that there was no such thing under the Gospel as a Christian commonwealth.¹⁹⁵ The “Eternal Law of Right” that Christ taught merely provided the true grounds, and reasons that enabled every individual who heard the Word to understand why the law of nature, the fundamental precepts of which they had already derived from the principles of nature, obliged all humankind: it expressed God’s will for His creatures, before whom He stood as a Lord to His servants.¹⁹⁶

Locke conceded that there was one commonwealth, and only one, in which “the ecclesiastical laws” had been “merged with the civil,” and where “all its subjects” were legitimately “barred from alien forms of worship or foreign rites by the magistrate’s sword.” This was the Jewish commonwealth of the Old Testament. Hobbes treated this as paradigmatic precisely because, on his theory of sovereignty, no distinction could be made between civil and ecclesiastical laws: both issued from the same sovereign source.¹⁹⁷ For Locke, however, the Jewish commonwealth was a lone exception that proved the rule:

For the commonwealth of the Jews was very different from all others in that it was founded as a theocracy; nor, as is the case after the birth of Christ, was there, or could there be, any distinction between the church and the commonwealth. The laws established in that people regarding the worship of one invisible Deity were civil laws and part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator.¹⁹⁸

As God himself was the legislator, it mattered very much that subjects be diligently and truly taught to conceive, and to worship, God as He instructed. There, too, no meaningful distinction could be drawn between acts of civil and divine worship. In every commonwealth besides the Jewish commonwealth of the Old Testament, magistrates lacked any right or commission to instruct their people in this way. In all other commonwealths, civil “laws are not concerned with the truth of opinions, but with the security and safety of the commonwealth and of each man’s goods.” This, Locke continued, was no “cause for regret,” because “truth [...] does not need force to find an entrance

¹⁹⁵ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 117.

¹⁹⁶ Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, pp. 140–1.

¹⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Not by Reason Alone*, 46–72; Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 122–30.

¹⁹⁸ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 117.

into men's minds, nor is she taught by the mouthpiece of laws."¹⁹⁹ The civil magistrate is legitimately authorised (by his people) to issue commands to ensure that the "civil rights of his subjects" are respected by each and every one. What he is emphatically not authorised to do is to guide them, either by coercion or persuasion, into or along the paths of virtue and piety:

[I]t is one thing to persuade, another to command; one thing to press with arguments, another with decrees. The latter is the business of the civil power; the former human good will can do. Every man is entitled to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and lead him by reasoning to accept his own opinion; but it is the magistrate's province to give orders by decree and compel with the sword.²⁰⁰

Locke developed this point further in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689):

For though Men uniting into politick Societies, have resigned up to the publick the disposing of all their Force, so that they cannot employ it against any Fellow-Citizen, any farther than the Law of the Country directs; yet they retain still the power of Thinking well or ill; approving or disapproving of the actions of those whom they live amongst, and converse with: And by this approbation and dislike they establish amongst themselves, what they will call *Vertue* and *Vice*.²⁰¹

On Locke's account, there are several respects in which the power that we "retain" is at least as important as the power that we "resign." First, the civil magistrate is entrusted with the "*Executive*" power to punish those who have *already* transgressed against natural law, "and thereby [to] preserve the innocent and restrain offenders."²⁰² We all, severally and collectively, have the power to *prevent* such violations before they occur: "Every man being a watch upon his neighbour, faults will be prevented, which is better than that they should be punish[e]d."²⁰³ Second, we are empowered to enforce the duties

199 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 123.

200 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 69.

201 John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975): references are provided to book, chapter, and section number (here, 2.28.10).

202 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §7.

203 John Locke, journal entry dated 14 Oct. 1677, in Bodleian Library, MS Locke f.2, pp. 297–8.

that we owe to one another under natural law in their entirety – duties that, taken together, are defined by our “Obligation to mutual Love” and encompass “the great Maxims” of both “*Justice and Charity*.” The scope of political power is limited to justice alone.²⁰⁴ Executive power can legitimately be exercised only upon individuals who have violated justice by harming others in their life, liberty, and possessions (their “civil goods”). Finally, and most importantly, we retain – and have a duty to exercise – our right to “employ [...] exhortations and arguments,” “charitable admonitions, and endeavours” with a view to encouraging our brethren to care for their souls in ways that, so we think, are most likely to secure their eternal felicity. Every human being possesses this right, but it is “a Christian’s greatest duty.” Yet those we exhort and admonish are not obliged to “obey” us: “Regarding his salvation every man has the supreme and final power of judging for himself, because he alone is concerned, and nobody else can take any harm from his conduct.”²⁰⁵

Locke reflected that his readers might find this unequivocal denial that the magistrate has any pastoral right or duty rather “strange,” yet he insisted firmly upon it, across all his major writings (including *Two Treatises*, which simply says nothing about any such right):

Yet give me leave to say, *however strange it may seeme*, that the Lawmaker hath noe thing to do with morall virtues & vices, nor ought to enjoin the duties of the 2nd table any otherwise, then barely as they are subservient to the good & preservation of mankind under government. [...] The magistrate hath noe thing to do with the good of mens soules or their concernments in an other life but is ordeind, & intrusted with his power, only for the quiet & comfortable liveing of men in society one with an other, as has beene already sufficiently proved. [/] And it is yet further evident, that the magistrate commands not the practice of vertues, because they are vertues, & obleige the conscience, or are the dutys of man to god & the way to his mercy & favour but because they are the strong ties & bonds of society; which cannot be loosend, without shattering the whole frame.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §5. This explains why Locke, in *Two Treatises*, has so little to say about charity – a reticence that has perplexed commentators: see Robert Lamb and Benjamin Thompson, “The Meaning of Charity in Locke’s Political Thought,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 2 (2009): 229–52.

²⁰⁵ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 125.

²⁰⁶ “Essay on Toleration,” pp. 281–2 (*italics added*).

Note the qualification: the magistrate *qua* magistrate has nothing to do with the good of men's souls or their concerns in another life. It is a significant qualification, because when it comes to persuasion, admonition, and teaching, the magistrate's right is the same as that of any private man – neither more nor less. As a member of his chosen church, the Christian magistrate is dutybound to attempt to correct others and steer them in (what he takes to be) the right direction. Insofar as he does so with true charity and love, then – and only then – might it be said that the magistrate (and even here as a private person not *qua* magistrate) partakes of the Holy Spirit, because it is (only) in religious societies that the Spirit dwells. Locke bids us to recall Christ's "promise, *Where two or three of them are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*"²⁰⁷ So with Locke it is in religious societies, that is to say, churches, that the pride of individuals is disciplined with the necessary assistance of the Spirit, as Christians learn (and teach one another) that "[h]e who wishes to enlist under the banner of Christ must first of all declare war upon his own vices, his own pride and lusts," and all are brought to acknowledge their equality (in fallibility, in subjection to God, and in dependence upon one another for assistance and love) to every other human being.²⁰⁸

Here we should recall Hobbes's contrary insistence in *Leviathan* – especially in Part III – upon the right of sovereigns as "supreme Teachers" and "supreme Pastors" in their dominions, and his exhortation to them to exercise that right to the full. False prophets should be disarmed; and it could never be forgotten that "[o]f doctrines that dispose men to sedition, the first, without question is: *that knowledge of good or evil is a matter for individuals.*"²⁰⁹ There is good reason to think that Locke, for one, recalled Hobbes's strictures.

In the opening pages of Part III, Hobbes repeated a point that he had advanced in *De Cive* nine years earlier. The "difference between *faith* and *knowledge*" is that "the latter proceeds by cutting a proposition into small pieces, then chews it over and digests it slowly; the former swallows it whole."²¹⁰ In sum, "it is with the mysteries of our Religion, as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed whole, have the vertue to cure; but chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect."²¹¹ In his own discussion of faith

²⁰⁷ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 73, citing Matt. 18:20.

²⁰⁸ Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 59.

²⁰⁹ Hobbes, *De Cive*, XII.1. It is for readers to determine whether and how far this admonition squares with, or casts doubt upon, the arguments advanced in Collins, *Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes and Shadow of Leviathan*.

²¹⁰ Hobbes, *De Cive*, XVIII.4.

²¹¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 32, p. 578 [195]; cp. *De Cive*, XVIII.4.

and reason in the *Essay*, Locke employed the very same metaphor as part of a sustained assault on the monstrous entity – the “Christian commonwealth” – that Hobbes exalted.²¹²

There Locke asks a question that is surely inspired by Hobbes’s claim that people ought to swallow their religious opinions whole: “What shall we say then? Are the greatest part of mankind, by the necessity of their Condition, subjected to unavoidable Ignorance in those Things, which are of greatest Importance to them? [...] Are the current Opinions, and licensed Guides of every Country sufficient Evidence and Security to every Man, to venture his greatest Concernments on; nay, his everlasting Happiness, or Misery?” Assuredly not: “GOD has furnished Men with Faculties sufficient to direct them in the Way they should take, if they will but seriously employ them that Way.” But in Christian commonwealths, men “are *cooped in close, by the Laws* of their Countries, and the strict guards of those, whose Interest it is to keep them ignorant, lest, knowing more, they should believe the less of them.” Most men, irrespective of the “narrowness” or “largeness” of their “Fortunes,” are “enslaved in that which should be the freest Part of Man, their Understandings.” “This,” Locke continues,

is generally the Case of all those, who live in Places where Care is taken to propagate Truth, without Knowledge; where Men are forced, at a venture, to be of the Religion of the Country; and must therefore swallow down

²¹² We make no claim that the metaphor originated with Hobbes. Something like it had earlier appeared in other texts and to much the same end, viz., to draw a contrast between accepting some authorised version of Christianity entire or subjecting each distinct proposition to the test of individual conscience. See, to name only one, the *Martin Marprelate* tracts, esp. *Theses Martinianae* ([London], 1589), p. 22: “what have you done vnto him? haue you choaked him with a fat prebend or two? What? I trowe my father wil swallow downe no such pilles. And if he doe, I can tell he will soone purge away al the conscience hee hath, and prooue a mad hinde ere he die.” Locke’s recourse to it does not amount to conclusive proof that he had Hobbes in his sights; but it is suggestive of a point of view and throws a significant difference of position sharply into relief. It is also worth noting that Hobbes’s contemporary critics drew attention to Hobbes’s use of the metaphor as particularly revealing; see, for one example, Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *A Brief View and Survey of the Dangerous and Pernicious Errors to Church and State in Mr. Hobbes’s Book, Entitled Leviathan* (Oxford, 1676), pp. 2, 113, 165–6, 202. We thank one of the journal’s anonymous readers for pressing us to clarify this point.

Opinions, as silly People do Empirick Pills, without knowing what they are made of, or how they will work, and have nothing to do, but believe that they will do the Cure: but in this, are much more miserable than they, in that they are not at liberty to refuse swallowing, what perhaps they had rather let alone; or to chose the Physician, to whose Conduct they would trust themselves.²¹³

In the *Epistola*, Locke returned to the same metaphor at a decisive point in his development of the argument that there was no such thing, under the Gospel, as a Christian commonwealth:

But, after all, the chief point, and what absolutely determines this controversy, is this: even if the magistrate's opinion in religion is sound, and the way that he directs truly evangelical, yet, if I am not thoroughly convinced of it in my own mind, it will not bring me salvation. No way that I walk in against my conscience will ever lead me to the mansions of the blessed. I may grow rich by an art that I dislike, I may be cured of a disease by remedies that I distrust; but I cannot be saved by a religion that I distrust, or by a worship that I dislike. It is useless for an unbeliever to assume the outward appearance of morality; to please God needs faith and inward sincerity. However likely and generally approved a medicine may be, it is administered in vain if the stomach rejects it as soon as taken, and it is wrong to force a remedy upon an unwilling patient when his particular constitution will turn it into poison.²¹⁴

213 Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 4.20.3–4. This passage was composed in 1671 at the latest: “Draft A,” in *Drafts for the ‘Essay concerning Human Understanding,’ and Other Philosophical Writings*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), §39.

214 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 100–101. William Popple's original translation of the final words of this passage is even closer to Locke's choice of words in the *Essay*. “And you will in vain cram a Medicine down a sick Mans Throat [Popple's translation runs], which his particular Constitution will be sure to turn into Poison”: Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration and Other Writings*, ed. Mark Goldie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), 32. These passages from the *Essay* and *Epistola* go unmentioned in Collins, *Shadow of Leviathan*, perhaps because they strongly imply that Locke did not buy Hobbes's passing suggestion that in being “reduced [in 1651] to the Independency of the Primitive Christians,” his compatriots had been restored to “the best” form of ecclesiastical government. It *might* be the best, Hobbes said, if “it be without contention” – a rather big if. If Christian pastors were, like “Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos [Peter],” entirely lacking the desire for dominion that drove most men to attempt to exert authority over others – that is, to profess to command, rather than to counsel them (*Leviathan*, ch. 47, p.

A commonwealth in which “Care is taken to propagate Truth,” and men are “cooped in close, by the Laws,” is Locke’s kingdom of darkness, which is “nothing else but a *Confederacy of Deceivers, that to obtain dominion over men in this present world, endeavour by dark, and erroneous Doctrines, to extinguish in them the Light, both of Nature, and of the Gospel; and so to dis-prepare them for the Kingdome of God to come.*”²¹⁵ It is also, *mutatis mutandis*, Hobbes’s Christian commonwealth, a society in which “Christian Kings” are both “the Supreme Teachers” and “the Supreme Pastors of their people, and have power to ordain what Pastors they please, to teach the Church, that is, to teach the People committed to their charge.”²¹⁶ Their subjects, meanwhile, are cooped in close by the laws, because all laws – divine and natural, ecclesiastical and civil – are reduced by Hobbes to the civil: they only acquire the status of laws when promulgated as civil law. The result is that all law represents the will of one (or many) human beings, who, as Locke noted, “are born superior in power, but in nature equal to other mortals,”²¹⁷ because “[a]ll *human law*,” to Hobbes, “is *civil law*.”²¹⁸

To Locke’s mind, Hobbes’s attempt in Part III of *Leviathan* to invest those laws with divine authority was necessarily an exercise in pure sophistry. Deprived of his rights as “Supreme Teacher” and “Supreme Prophet” – rights which, on Locke’s account, were postulated by Hobbes and others of like mind purely with a view to keeping subjects in a permanent state of ovine acquiescence – and the penumbra of invincibility that they generated, the “mortal God” was just a man using “the Force he has under his Command, to compass that

1116 [385]), then people might perhaps safely be left to follow whomsoever they chose. But the Apostles were, as Hobbes emphasised in Part III, sustained in their ministry purely by “good will” and “benevolence,” and this because they were guided by the Spirit (*Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 846 [293]). Hobbes’s (very brief) discussion of the apparent recrudescence of the primitive church in the aftermath of the shameful killing of a sovereign ordained by God for his subjects’ benefit, it is worth noting, appears in Part IV (Of the Kingdome of Darknesse); and Hobbes’s account of the motives of the self-anointed prophets of Christ who had loosed Christian subjects from their obedience to their rightful sovereign in *Behemoth* scarcely encourages the thought that they, too, were animated by the Spirit. The arguments developed in *Leviathan* seem to us fully consistent with Hobbes’s later claim that it had always been “his private opinion, That such an *Episcopacy* as is now in *England*, is the most commodious that a Christian King can use for the governing of Christs Flock, the misgoverning whereof the King is to answer to Christ, as the Bishops are to answer for their mis-government to the King, and to God also”: Hobbes, *Considerations upon the Reputation*, p. 44.

215 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 44, p. 956 [333].

216 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 42, p. 852 [295].

217 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, p. 95.

218 Hobbes, *De Cive*, XIV.5.

upon the Subject, which the Law allows not." In doing so he ceases "to be a Magistrate, and acting without Authority, may be opposed as any other Man, who by force invades the Right of another."²¹⁹

As Locke went on to observe, being "rightfully possessed of great Power [...] is so far from being an excuse, much less a reason" for subjecting others to your own arbitrary will that it aggravates the offence, indicating as it does the belief that such power gives its bearer a right to all things. To Locke there was something faintly absurd, as well as repellent, about one equal by nature to those over whom he exercised political authority claiming to himself all the rights of a "Father, and Lord, and Civill Sovereign."²²⁰ The natural and appropriate response was not reverence, but resistance. Thus Locke arrived at the conclusion later reached by Strauss and sundry scholars and commentators since: Hobbes's whole scheme collapsed under its own weight as soon as it was remembered that "*Absolute Monarchs* are but Men," and "not masters but servants of society."²²¹

It seems likely that Locke reached this conclusion fairly early in his intellectual career. In the first of his disquisitions on natural law of c.1663–4, he emphasized that natural law cannot be reduced to axioms of reason, as Hobbes had suggested: "reason is not so much the maker of that law as its interpreter, unless, *violating the dignity of the supreme legislator*, we wish to make reason responsible for that received law which it merely investigates." If natural law were deprived of its status as a law – and one "enacted by a superior power," God – any real distinction between "Power" and "Right" disappeared, and with it any possibility of "social intercourse or union" among men:

positive civil laws are not binding by their own nature or force or in any other way than in virtue of the law of nature, which orders obedience to superiors and the keeping of public peace. Thus, without this law, the rulers can perhaps by force and with the aid of arms compel the multitude to obedience, but put them under an obligation they cannot. Without natural law the other basis also of human society is overthrown, i.e. the faithful fulfilment of contracts [...]. Everything would have to depend on human will, and, since there would be nothing to demand dutiful action, it seems that man would not be bound to do anything but what utility or pleasure might recommend. [...] Man would not be able to act

²¹⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §202.

²²⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 40, p. 738 [249].

²²¹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, II, §13; Hobbes, *De Cive*, 'Preface to the Readers' [1647], §5.

wrongfully, since there was no law issuing commands and prohibitions, and he would be the completely free and sovereign arbiter of his actions.²²²

In the final analysis, Hobbes's theory in Part II of *Leviathan* returned men to the (natural) condition from which he professed to rescue them, just as in Part III he mixed heaven and earth together in a way that was guaranteed to produce the "Kingdome of Darknesse" that he had taken it upon himself to destroy. Little wonder, then, that Locke's "Essay concerning the *true* Original, Extent, and End of Civil-Government" was constructed upon "utterly and completely different" foundations,²²³ or that its author preferred to pass by the arguments of *Leviathan* mostly in silence.

5 Conclusion: The Order of Succession

When "customary connection[s]" are "interrupted" as "one or more objects appear in an order quite different from that to which the imagination has been accustomed," we are, according to Smith, displeased and discombobulated. If this essay has produced these or similar effects, there is at least the consolation that comes from Smith's reassurance that when the unpleasantness abates it will be replaced – amongst those of a philosophical disposition at least – by curiosity. We will find ourselves wondering "how it came to occur in *that* place." Those objects "seem to stand at a distance from each other; [the imagination] endeavours to bring them together, but they refuse to unite; and it feels, or imagines it feels, something like a gap or interval betwixt them."²²⁴ This is as good an explanation as any of why Locke's relationship to Hobbes has been, is, and ever will be a source of frustration, fascination, and contention: an emptiness has been dignified as a space because it is defined by a shadow.

For quite some time Locke fitted snugly within the customary "order of succession," the father of the liberal constitutionalism that had flowered in Western democracies on the dunghill of Hobbesian absolutism.²²⁵ Figures like Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss who were for various reasons sceptical of the merits of liberalism (and who doubted the *bona fides* of its proponents) retained the order but altered the rationale for it. It still made sense to read

222 Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, no. 1, pp. 111, 119 (italics added).

223 Locke, *Letter concerning Toleration*, pp. 85–7.

224 Smith, "History of Astronomy," II.8.

225 For the story of how Locke became a liberal, see Duncan Bell, "What is Liberalism?", *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014): 682–715; and Timothy Stanton, "John Locke and the Fable of Liberalism," *Historical Journal* 61, no. 3 (2018): 597–622.

Locke 'after' Hobbes, but this was because, if Locke was a liberal, so was Hobbes. Locke was Hobbes's disciple and not, as it had once seemed, his sparring partner and antagonist. In response, contextualist historians with ties to Cambridge threw out the order of succession entirely. Lining Locke up against Hobbes was a fruitless exercise. His refusal to engage with Hobbes (or with recognizably Hobbesian arguments) supplied ample confirmation of its futility.²²⁶

Dismissive of Strauss's methodology and needled by his contention that Locke was a Hobbiest, they nonetheless accepted the claim that Hobbes's political theory was constructed on impeccably secular foundations. Locke's was not: it was "theocentric" to its core. It was Hobbes who had remembered the future and Locke who had disqualified himself from speaking to or about it. The more desiccated intellectual historian might perhaps find some small diversion in grappling with Locke's idiosyncratic, archaic vision of the world; but political theorists had nothing to learn from it.²²⁷ Even those who did not think that the history of early modern political thought could, or should, be told primarily 'through' Hobbes or Locke nonetheless found that, if Locke were removed from the picture, the story flowed much more smoothly.²²⁸

This essay represents a modest attempt to take Smith's observations seriously. If the order of succession no longer satisfies – if the reasons for considering Locke a disciple of an atheistic Hobbes as little convince as those for considering him oblivious to the challenge Hobbes presented to his own conceptions – then perhaps we need to "exert" ourselves by questioning that order anew. We accept that Hobbes's status as the exemplary political theorist of modernity is, in one respect, unassailable. In arguing that all jurisdiction derives from the civil sovereign, and in collapsing all law into civil law, Hobbes does formally banish any appeal to an authority higher than the human. At the same time, however, he appears to us the exemplary critic of modernity, because he recognizes that, without an appeal to an authority higher than the

226 See e.g. John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), in which Hobbes scarcely features.

227 Dunn, *Political Thought of Locke*, x. It should be added that Dunn has since revised this view. Compare John Dunn, "What is Living and What is Dead in the Political Theory of John Locke," in *Interpreting Political Responsibility: Essays 1981–1989* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 9–25 and Dunn, "Measuring Locke's Shadow," in *John Locke: Two Treatises of Government and A Letter concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 257–85.

228 J.G.A. Pocock, "The Myth of John Locke and the Obsession with Liberalism," in *John Locke: Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, 10 September 1977* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1980).

human, no sovereign can hope to hold his subjects in reverence – and, with it, in grateful and faithful obedience – with any lasting degree of security.

Seen from this perspective, the salient contrast between Hobbes and Locke lies not in the fact that the one – Locke – appeals to a transcendent source of authority to provide compelling grounds, and reasons for the rights of sovereignty and the duty of subjects while the other – Hobbes – does not. It is rather that Locke's arguments are constructed upon, and depart from, the presupposition that such a higher authority exists, and must exist, if any normative account of political obligation and its limits is to be intelligible at all. In constructing his account of the original, extent, and end of both political and ecclesiastical government on that absolute presupposition, Locke built on different foundations than Hobbes, who began with its absence²²⁹ and ended with the recognition of its necessity, even as he placed its nature beyond human understanding.²³⁰

This helps us to see why “lining Hobbes up against Locke and comparing their various dimensions” is such a frustrating exercise: it catches the shadow but loses the substance of a difference that sets them apart by a whole heaven.²³¹ Despite our best “endeavours to bring them together, [...] they refuse to unite”; there remains “something like a gap or interval betwixt them.” Yet further exertion is needed. That “gap or interval” need not mean that Locke was ducking the challenge of Hobbes. The real challenge is ours: to solve the fundamental problems of living together in security and peace, and to ensure that power lies down with law and that rule is ordered to what is right, in a world which begins where Locke ended and ends where Hobbes began.

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229 Dunn, *Political Thought of Locke*, xi.

230 Cp. Hobbes, *De Cive*, xv.14; with *Leviathan*, ch. 12, p. 168 [53], and ch. 34, p. 614 [208]. See further Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore: Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio Prima*, ed. Karl Schuhmann (Paris: Vrin, 1999), pars 1, caput i, paragraph 8, pp. 16–17. For discussion of the wider evidence, see Alan Cromartie, “The God of Thomas Hobbes,” *Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 857–79.

231 Dunn, *Political Thought of Locke*, 78.