

HOBBS, *BEHEMOTH*, CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS, AND POLITICAL OBLIGATION

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This essay is about Hobbes' ideas on church-state relations and political obligation, especially as they are expressed in *Behemoth*. It has been said that *Behemoth* "appears to sit oddly with the rest of the Hobbes canon."¹ A leading purpose of this essay is to compare what Hobbes says there with the views he propounded in *Leviathan*, and, indeed, in his other writings. Many of the issues that Hobbes addresses in *Behemoth* also feature in other works which he wrote during the last two decades of his life. For example, he discusses the nature of heresy in *Behemoth* and also at length in the Appendix to the Latin *Leviathan*, in his *Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws*, in *An Historical Narration concerning Heresy*, and in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.²

The latter book is especially close to *Behemoth*, though it is in Latin verse, not English prose. In some ways, *Behemoth* can be seen as a continuation of, or a sequel to the *Historia*. In the *Historia*, Hobbes chronicles the cheats of power-hungry priests from the earliest times to the Lutheran Reformation.

¹ Fritz Levy, "The background of Hobbes's *Behemoth*," in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks, eds., *The historical imagination in early modern Britain. History, rhetoric, and fiction, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1997), 243-66, at 243.

² Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament*, ed. Ferdinand Tönnies, with an introduction by Stephen Holmes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8-10; *Leviathan, sive de materia, forma, et potestate civitatis ecclesiasticae et civilis*, in *Opera Philosophica quae latine scripsit omnia*, ed. Sir William Molesworth, 5 vols., (London: John Bohn, 1839-45), vol. 3, Appendix, chapter 2; *A Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, ed. Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 122-32; *An Historical Narration concerning Heresy*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Sir William Molesworth, 11 vols. (London: John Bohn, 1839-45), vol. 4, 385-408; *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. 5, 341-408, especially at lines 423-4, 451-2, 511-12, 613-16, 647-71, 1129-40.

There, and again in *Behemoth*, he goes well back before the Christian era, arguing that "in most ancient kingdoms of the world" "philosophy, together with divinity, have very much conduced to the advancement of the professors thereof to places of greatest authority, next to the authority of kings themselves." Indeed, in some places they effectively took power from their monarchs, as in ancient Egypt. In Ethiopia the priests had long exploited popular superstition to establish a custom that the king would take his own life when they sent him an order to do so. But King Ergamenes executed the priests and took back authority. Much bloodshed would have been prevented, Hobbes suggests in a strikingly Machiavellian passage of *Behemoth*, if Charles I had similarly killed the seditious Presbyterian ministers. In both books, he drew heavily on the ancient Greek historian Diodorus Siculus – "the greatest antiquary perhaps that ever was." In *Behemoth* Hobbes recapitulates some of the ancient and medieval material covered in the *Historia*, but his main concern is to analyze what happened in England after the point where the *Historia* rather abruptly stops – the Reformation.³

Behemoth lays the blame for the English Civil War on the continued deceptions and plots of clerics, and especially of Presbyterian ministers.⁴ These

³ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 90 (professors of philosophy and divinity); 91-2 (Egypt); 93-5 (Ethiopians, Ergamenes and Presbyterians); 91 (greatest antiquary); *Historia*, lines 191-212 (Ethiopians and Ergamenes); 219-70 (Egypt). Hobbes also tells the story of Ergamenes in *Ten Dialogues of Natural Philosophy*, in *English Works*, vol. 7, 74. A contemporary English version of Diodorus Siculus' work is *The History of Diodorus Siculus*, translated by Henry Cogan (London: John Macock for Giles Calvert, 1653); in *Behemoth*, 91-94, Hobbes includes a number of quotations from Diodorus in a translation that seems to be his own; it differs from the renditions of the same passages in *The History of Diodorus Siculus*, 240, 50-52, 90, 97, 115-16. The passage from Diodorus on how the Egyptians decided law cases by using a jeweled necklace or collar which they pretended had magical properties (*Behemoth*, 92; *Historia*, lines 226-70) is also discussed in Hugo Grotius, *De Imperio Summarum Potestatum circa Sacra* (Paris, 1647), 124. Grotius argues that the Egyptians derived their customs from the Jews; Hobbes in *Behemoth*, 92 n. 1, is noncommittal on whether the Jews influenced the Egyptians or vice versa; but in *Historia*, lines 149-88, he vigorously asserts the Africanist thesis that the arts began in Ethiopia and then spread to Egypt, Greece and Rome. David Wootton argues that *Behemoth* is a Machiavellian work in "Thomas Hobbes's Machiavellian moments," in Kelley and Sacks, eds., *The historical imagination*, 210-42, especially 227, 238. But it is worth noting that at *Behemoth*, 58, Hobbes insists that the sovereign should "put none to death without actual committing such crimes as are already made capital by the laws," and decries extralegal political assassination as "horrible, unchristian, and inhuman." Presumably the Presbyterians would have been tried for plotting treason, and only then executed.

⁴ Deborah Baumgold, "Hobbes's Political Sensibility: The Menace of Political Ambition," in Mary G. Dietz, ed., *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1990), 74-90, at 82-84, argues that Hobbes explains the Civil war in terms of self-interest, as do modern "revisionist" scholars, and not of ideas. This is true of the hyp-

men, together with their equally grasping allies the democratical gentlemen of the House of Commons, seduced people from their allegiance to the king so that they could gain power for themselves. Having gained it, they fell out with each other. The gentlemen outwitted the Presbyterian ministers, and were in turn outwitted by Oliver Cromwell and his Independent supporters, who used his army to seize power. They purged parliament, executed Charles I, and established the republican rule of the Rump. But soon Cromwell used force to oust the Rump, and later take power for himself. After his death, another general – George Monck – performed “the greatest stratagem that is extant in history”⁵ by marching his army from Scotland to London, restoring the excluded members to parliament, and bringing back the King Charles II.

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes has a great deal to say against Roman Catholics and their ideas on church-state relations. This is true also, of course, of *Leviathan*, where the forty-second chapter, which is directed largely at the theories of Cardinal Bellarmine, takes up more than an eighth of the entire book. There is something of a puzzle about why Hobbes spent so much ink on popish ideas in *Behemoth*, however, for the English Catholics did not in fact lead the rebellion against the king, and most parliamentarians were their enemies, not their friends.⁶ The first section below discusses Hobbes’ arguments on Catholics, arguing that they have much in common with standard seventeenth-century Anglican views. The Anglicans, who defended the established church against the criticisms of Protestant dissenters as well as Catholics, commonly argued that the dissenters’ political ideas were essentially popish. In *Behemoth*, as in *Leviathan*, Hobbes likewise assimilates the theories of the Catholics to those of the Presbyterians and other nonconforming Protestant groups. His rhetorical strategy is to begin by attacking the principles of the widely disliked Catholics, and then to show that the others shared their fundamental principles.

The second section below discusses Hobbes’ attitudes to the Presbyterians, Independents, and other sects, and also to Oliver Cromwell. It was the Independents, together with Cromwell and the army, who were responsible for cutting off the king’s head in 1649. But in *Behemoth* Hobbes lays the blame for the regicide on the Presbyterians as well as the Independents. Some modern commentators have claimed that by the early 1650s Hobbes had moved close to Independency on the question of church-state relations. Perhaps his

ocratical leaders of rebellion in Hobbes’ account, but not of their deluded followers, who are deceived by false ideas. Robert P. Kraynak, *History and Modernity in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), interestingly argues that intellectual vanity was the fundamental cause of the war.

⁵ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 204.

⁶ Catholicism did cause problems in Ireland, however, as Hobbes notes in *Behemoth*, 163.

affection for the Independents is reflected in the relative leniency with which they, and Oliver Cromwell, are treated in *Behemoth*. The material below will cast doubt on these suggestions, and show that Hobbes was never particularly close to the Independents except in his dislike for Presbyterianism – a dislike which he also shared with Anglicans and others. Nor does he depict Cromwell very favorably in *Behemoth*.

Hobbes argues that the Protestant dissenters held political ideas that were just as dangerous as those of the Catholics. His position on this point is not all that far from traditional royalist and Anglican views. Indeed, on many questions he took much the same broad line as such hawkish royalists as Sir Robert Filmer, Peter Heylyn, and Roger Maynwaring. But he broke decisively with Anglican and royalist thinking in what he had to say about two tenets dear to many royalists, namely passive obedience and divine right episcopacy. On both these questions, his teaching remained unchanged in *Behemoth*. As in *Leviathan*, he extended his critique of Catholic and Presbyterian ideas on church-state relations to undermine the views of Anglicans as well. The Anglican theory of divine right episcopacy, he claimed, was close to the Catholic theory of the papal deposing power. Hobbes' own views on church-state relations, expressed in *Leviathan*, *Behemoth* and elsewhere, were broadly Erastian in sympathy. Erastians advocated state control of ecclesiastical affairs. But such control could be exercised in very different ways – loosely and tolerantly, for example, or alternatively in a rigorous and intolerant fashion. Modern commentators are more or less agreed on Hobbes' Erastianism, but divided on whether he was a supporter or an opponent of toleration. The third section of this paper is about Hobbes' attitudes to Anglicanism and to toleration.

I have claimed above that Hobbes shared many key views with royalist writers like Filmer. But a well-known interpretation of *Leviathan* holds that it was written to defend “the so-called Oath of Engagement.” On 11 October 1649, so this interpretation runs, the Rump Parliament “called on virtually the entire literate population to swear” the Oath, “requiring them to be ‘true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now established, without a King or House of Lords.’” In response to this, the account proceeds, Hobbes rapidly penned *Leviathan*, which was “a uniquely important contribution to the lay defence of engagement.” By 1651, there was “nothing specifically royalist” about Hobbes' political theory, and he felt – correctly, as it turned out – that “the eirenic message of *Leviathan* was likely to be warmly received by supporters of the Rump.”⁷ If this account holds water, then there is at least one ex-

⁷ Quentin Skinner, “Conquest and consent: Hobbes and the engagement controversy,” in *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), vol. 3, 19, 306, 20.

tremely stark difference between *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, for by no stretch of the imagination can the latter work be construed as a defense of the “Oath of Engagement,” or as anything other than a blistering attack on the Rump and the Long Parliament in general. The fourth and final section below discusses the question of whether the two books do indeed adopt radically divergent positions on the Rump. It concludes that they do not, for Hobbes did little to defend the Rumpers in *Leviathan*. Nor are there compelling reasons to believe that Hobbes abandoned royalist principles when he wrote *Leviathan*, only to take them up again when he wrote *Behemoth*. The Hobbes who wrote *Behemoth* was an older and perhaps more disillusioned man than the author of *Leviathan*, but both maintained the same fundamental principles.

I. Catholics

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes tells us that in order to make the people hostile to the king, parliament encouraged them to believe that he intended “to introduce and authorize the Roman religion in this kingdom: than which nothing was more hateful to the people.”⁸ Perhaps mindful of the popularity of anti-popery, Hobbes began his account of the seditious doctrines that had led to the Civil War by discussing the papists. In keeping with Protestant tradition, he argued that the history of Catholicism was a story of clerical fraud and ambition. By deluding the ignorant, the pope and his allies had striven to gain power for themselves. To ensure the success of their plan, they needed to keep people in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Hobbes declared that “there was never such another cheat in the world” as the Roman church.⁹ The detection of popish cheats is a common theme in the writings of Hobbes’ contemporaries. For example, Samuel Harsnett – an Anglican and bishop and archbishop whose high views on royal power resembled

⁸ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 60. Discussing bishops, *ibid.*, 89, Hobbes argues that the House of Commons was so hostile to them because it hoped “to make the King and his party odious to the people.” A strikingly similar viewpoint is expressed in John Selden, *Table Talk of John Selden*, ed. Sir Frederick Pollock (London: Quaritch, 1927), 99: “Wee charge the prelaticall Clergie with popery to make them odious though wee know they are guilty of no such thing.” According to Thomas Tenison, *The creed of Mr. Hobbes examined* (London: Francis Tyton, 1670), 188, Hobbes seemed to have “swallow’d down” Selden’s Erastian doctrines “along with the good provisions of his Table.” The Erastian principles of Hobbes and Selden are compared and contrasted in Johann P. Sommerville, “Hobbes, Selden, Erastianism, and the history of the Jews,” in G. A. J. Rogers and Tom Sorell, eds., *Hobbes and History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 160-88.

⁹ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 21. The fourth part of *Leviathan* of course contains a great deal of material on the papists’ pious and not-so-pious frauds.

Hobbes' - decried "egregious popish impostures" and called Catholicism a "mimic superstition" intended to "catch fools, children, and women" by pretended magic.¹⁰ Hobbes argued that the Catholic church tolerated and Christianized pagan practices in order to make converts.¹¹ Harsnett asserted that "papism" was "naught else but a perfect apism and imitation of Gentilism and heathenish superstition," constructed "to gull, terrify, and amaze the simple ignorant people, and by bringing them into an admiration of the power of their priesthood, the sanctity of their attire, and the divine potency of their Romish Catholic church, by this means to enchant and bewitch their innocent simple souls, and so to offer them up for a prey to their great idol at Rome."¹² Amongst many others who shared Hobbes' objective of exposing the forgeries and falsifications perpetrated by papists were the churchman William Crashaw, and Bodley's first librarian, Thomas James.¹³

Hobbes insisted that early church councils had been convoked by the emperors, who confirmed their decrees.¹⁴ This was the standard Anglican position, repeatedly expressed in anti-papal and anti-Presbyterian polemics.¹⁵ Many Catholics argued that the pope does not have direct temporal power over Christian sovereigns, but that his spiritual primacy confers upon him *indirect* temporal power, which he can use to promote the spiritual good. So popes could depose kings if they thought such action would advance the spiritual interests of Christians, but not otherwise. Hobbes held that this theory of the indirect deposing power effectively deprived kings of all their authority, since it granted the pope alone the right to decide what constituted the spiritual good.¹⁶ Again, this was a commonplace of anti-papal literature.¹⁷

¹⁰ Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of egregious popish impostures* (1603), in F.W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett and the devils of Denham* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 184-413, at 219. There is material of Harsnett's political ideas in Johann P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), 124, 150.

¹¹ Hobbes, *Historia*, lines 1327-54.

¹² Harsnett, *Declaration*, 271.

¹³ William Crashaw, *Falsificationum Romanarum: et catholicarum restitutionum* (London: Richard Field for Matthew Lownes, 1606); Thomas James, *Bellum Gregorianum sive Corruptionis Romanae in operibus D. Gregorii M.* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1610).

¹⁴ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 10; *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 326 (1651 ed., 286-7).

¹⁵ E.g. Lancelot Andrewes, *A sermon preached before the Kings Maiestie at Hampton Court, concerning the Right and Power of calling Assemblies* (London: Robert Barker, 1606), especially 37-38, 51; Richard Harris, *The English Concord, in Answer to Becane's English Jarre* (London: H. Lownes for Matthew Lownes, 1614), 97, 165, 158.

¹⁶ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 6, 41; *Leviathan*, 396 (1651 ed. 315).

¹⁷ Johann P. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992), 116.

Protestants were of course agreed that the Roman church had become corrupt, and that the Reformation had therefore been necessary. They differed on the date at which the corruption had begun. Hobbes set the date rather early, arguing that already in Constantine the Great's time the pope claimed supremacy over emperors, though he prudently failed to inform Constantine about this.¹⁸ Hobbes also gives an atypically early date for the first use of the papal deposing power. Most English Protestants claimed that it was only in the eleventh century that the pope first attempted to depose a secular ruler, but Hobbes – like such Catholics as Cardinal Bellarmine and Francisco Suárez – claimed that the practice had begun much earlier, for in the eighth century Pope Zachary (or Zacharias) had deposed Chilperic (or Childeric), the last Merovingian King of France.¹⁹ Hobbes was also unusual in the rigor with which he decoded Catholic doctrines to show that their purpose was to increase the power and wealth of the clergy. And finally, Hobbes diverged from practically all Protestant (and, of course, Catholic) writers in claiming that kings have all the powers of bishops.²⁰ For the most part, however, what Hobbes said in *Behemoth* about Catholic theory was perfectly compatible with standard Anglican teaching. The same goes for *Behemoth's* treatment of the Presbyterians and Independents.

II. Presbyterians, Independents, the sects, and Oliver Cromwell

Hobbes blames the Civil War most of all on the Presbyterians, whose seditious preaching moved many to join in the rebellion against the king. Presbyterians claimed that by divine right the church ought to be governed

¹⁸ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12; *Leviathan*, 396 (1651 ed., 315). Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, *Tractatus De Potestate Summi Pontificis in Rebus Temporalibus*, in *Opera Omnia*, 6 vols. (Naples: G. Giuliano, 1856-62), vol. 4, part 2, 257-344, at 274; Francisco Suárez, *Defensio Fidei Catholicae*, III, 23, 15, in *Opera Omnia*, 28 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1856-78), vol. 24, 319. The standard English Protestant view that popes deposed kings only from the time of Gregory VII is expressed in e.g. William Goodwin, *A Sermon preached before the Kings most excellent Maiestie at Woodstocke* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1614), 26; Francis White, *A Replie to Iesuit Fishers Answer* (London: Adam Islip, 1624), 572. English Protestants, and some French Catholics, held that Childeric was deposed by the French people and not by the pope. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lines 1727-38, Hobbes relates how the pope deposed Childeric for stupidity; at lines 1823-46 he argued that popes later extinguished true learning by introducing scholasticism and that then kings in general became stupider than Childeric.

²⁰ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 14; in *Leviathan*, 374 (ed. 1651, 297), Hobbes similarly argues against the conventional idea that there are some powers which only churchmen, and not the sovereign, can exercise.

by elected ministers, elders, and councils, and not by the civil magistrate. Kings ought to obey the church in religious affairs. Presbyterian ministers, said Hobbes, aimed to establish equality in the church and to overthrow the power of the bishops; they also "endeavoured to bring the same form of Government into the civil state." Ambitious gentlemen allied with them to further this objective, aiming to win sovereignty for the House of Commons.²¹ The Presbyterians, like the friars in the Middle Ages, used preaching to spread their message, and skillfully deployed voice and gesture to act "the part of a right godly man," persuading the people of their zeal and holiness.²² Catholics controlled opinion by punishing heterodox views as heresy, and dominating the universities. Presbyterians similarly used the universities to spread their ideas, and tried to suppress true learning.²³ The ministers hoped that once the king was defeated, they would dominate the Commons, "wherein they were deceived, and found themselves outgone by their own disciples, though not in malice, yet in wit."²⁴ But though they had been defeated, their seditious principles lived on.²⁵

The idea that Presbyterianism in the church led to democracy in the state was an Anglican commonplace. Once "an equalitie ... among the Clergie" had been introduced, said the Elizabethan John Whitgift (who became Archbishop of Canterbury), it would "not be long" before the Presbyterians tried to introduce "the same among the laytie."²⁶ Whitgift's successor as Archbishop of Canterbury was Richard Bancroft, who in 1593 convicted the Presbyterians of sedition and rebellion against secular governments in *Daungerous Positions and Proceedings, published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine, under pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall Discipline*, and of greed, hypocrisy, and fraud in his *Survey of the pretended Holy Discipline*.²⁷ Charles I's chaplain Peter Heylyn penned a history of the Presbyterians in which he inveighed against their "pious frauds" and "godly pretences." Heylyn argued that the Civil War resulted from a plot to destroy the monarchy and raise a "new commonwealth" on its ruins. The plotters used the Presbyterian ministers "as the fittest instruments for drawing the people to their

²¹ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 75, 23, 119.

²² *Ibid.*, 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 57-58, 96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁶ John Whitgift, *An answer to a certain Libel intituled, An admonition to the Parliament* (London: Henrie Binneman for Humfrey Toy, 1572), 77; cf. 133.

²⁷ Richard Bancroft, *Daungerous Positions and Proceedings, published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine, under pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall Discipline* (London: John Wolfe, 1593); *A Survey of the pretended Holy Discipline* (London: John Wolfe, 1593).

side, and preaching up the piety of their intentions." The war that resulted led to the loss of "more than one hundred thousand lives" but did not achieve the Presbyterians' objectives, for they were driven out of power by the army and the Independents.²⁸

Hobbes' idea that the Civil War was the result of a plot hatched by ambitious politicians and Presbyterian ministers accorded well with royalist and Anglican tradition, which had long stressed that Presbyterians were seditious, hypocritical and self-seeking. Some modern commentators have argued that Hobbes was much more lenient towards the Independents in *Behemoth*. It has been suggested that Hobbes in fact endorsed Independency – the theory that each congregation should be autonomous in church affairs – in *Leviathan*, and that although he dropped his explicit defense of Independent ideas after the Restoration, he continued to have some affection for them, and therefore in *Behemoth* suggestively "played down" "the triumph of Independency" and treated Oliver Cromwell "with considerable respect."²⁹ There are two main problems with this thesis. The first is that it is difficult to see *Leviathan* as particularly supportive of Independent ideas. It is true that Hobbes, like the Independents, rejected the claims of Presbyterians and other ecclesiastics to have jurisdiction over the whole populace, and in that sense he did endorse Independency.³⁰ But on most other key questions he strongly opposed it. For example, Independents held that we must always follow our consciences even if this involves us in breaking the law, and they argued that a government which intrudes on our rights of conscience, or takes our property without consent, is tyrannical and may be actively resisted by its subjects. Hobbes, on the other hand, repeatedly declared that we have no right to follow our consciences against the law, that we have no right of property against our sovereign, and that subjects act criminally if they resist their sovereign.³¹

The second problem is that *Behemoth* is not in fact very sympathetic to the

²⁸ Peter Heylyn, *Aerius Redivivus, or, the History of the Presbyterians* (Oxford: John Crosley, 1670), 278, 481-82.

²⁹ Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 35. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 343. Jeffery R. Collins, "Christian Ecclesiology and the composition of *Leviathan*: a newly discovered letter to Thomas Hobbes," in *Historical Journal* 43 (2000), 217-31, at 227-28. Royce MacGillivray, *Restoration Historians and the English Civil War* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 73, 80. Julius Lips, *Die Stellung des Thomas Hobbes zu den politischen Parteien der grossen Englischen Revolution: Mit erstmaliger Übersetzung des Behemoth oder das Lang Parlament* (Leipzig: Ernst Wiegandt), 1927, 96.

³⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 479-80 (ed. 1651 385).

³¹ These points are discussed in greater detail in Johann P. Sommerville, "Hobbes and Independency," in *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* (2003, forthcoming).

Independents, nor to Cromwell and the sects. Near the beginning of the book, Hobbes listed the “divers sorts” of “seducers” who “corrupted” the people into rebelling against their king. The first two were Presbyterians and papists, while the third included Independents, Baptists, Quakers and others.³² He claimed that all these groups were offshoots of the Presbyterians, styling them “this brood of their own hatching,” and asserting that they were “commonly called by the name of fanatics.”³³ Hobbes insisted that “the Presbyterian ministers, throughout the whole war, instigated the people against the King,” but immediately added “so did also independent and other fanatic ministers.”³⁴ Discussing the books of the Independent John Milton, who defended the trial and execution of Charles I on behalf of the Rump, and of the Presbyterian Claude de Saumaise (or Salmasius), who condemned the king’s murder and wrote in the Stuart cause, Hobbes commented that “They are very good Latin both, and hardly to be judged which is better; and both very ill reasoning, hardly to be judged which is worse; like two declamations, *pro* and *con*, made for exercise only in a rhetoric school by one and the same man. So like is a Presbyterian to an Independent.”³⁵ Hobbes did, indeed, reject the idea that “the Independents were worse than the Presbyterians,” arguing that they were equally bad: “both the one and the other were resolved to destroy whatsoever should stand in the way to their ambition.”³⁶ A saying that circulated after the king’s death was “that presbiterians held him by the hayr, till independents cut off his head.”³⁷ Hobbes made a similar point when he declared that the Presbyterians “sought only the subjection of the King, not his destruction directly,” while the Independents “sought directly his destruction.” Folly, treason, vice, hypocrisy, and crime characterized both parties.³⁸

Hobbes relates how Cromwell was largely responsible for the parliamentary victory at Marston Moor, and how the parliament “had very great confidence” in his “conduct and valour” – “which they would not have done, if they had known him as well then as they did afterwards.”³⁹ Oliver turned his sword against them, and took the defeated king from their custody into his own. “Here,” commented Hobbes, “is perfidy upon perfidy: first, the perfidy of the Parliament against the King, and then the perfidy of the army against the Par-

³² Hobbes, *Behemoth* 2-3.

³³ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 163-64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

³⁷ Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, 7 vols. (London: for the executor of F. Gyles, 1742), vol. 1, 764.

³⁸ Hobbes, *Behemoth* 195.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

liament."⁴⁰ Cromwell disguised from parliament his ambition to be their master, and so the Presbyterian members foolishly trusted him and betrayed and sold the king to him and the other murderers.⁴¹ Though in reputation as a general Cromwell was "so much magnified for conduct," at Dunbar "all his glories had ended in shame and punishment, if fortune and the faults of his enemies had not relieved him." A few years later, Hobbes noted with some glee, six coach horses "being as rebellious as himself" threw Cromwell out of his coach and almost killed him.⁴² So Cromwell was a perfidious rebel and murderer. Elsewhere, he added that Oliver was mad. Vindicating his own reputation against Wallis's charges in 1662, Hobbes argued that it was Wallis and his Presbyterian allies who were to blame for the Civil War – not because Cromwell was somehow innocent of the king's murder, but because he had acted on principles which Presbyterian ministers had taught him: "you were guilty of all the Treasons, Murders and Spoil committed by *Oliver*, or by any upon *Oliver's* or the *Parliaments* Authority: For during the late trouble, who made both *Oliver* and the people mad, but the Preachers of your Principles?" It was the Presbyterians who put the army into Cromwell's hands, "who before, as mad as he was, was too weak, and too obscure to do any great mischief."⁴³

It is true that in the early pages of *Behemoth* there is much about Catholicism and Presbyterianism, and relatively little about Independency and Oliver Cromwell. This does not at all indicate that Hobbes had any great sympathy for Cromwell and his Independent allies. Three points are in order here. Firstly, Cromwell and the Independents were not in fact very important in the period leading up to the Civil War, nor in the first stages of the war itself. It is therefore not surprising that Oliver and the Independents do not feature much in Hobbes' explanation of why the war broke out. As Hobbes records, the Independents and the sects "in the beginning of the troubles were not discovered." Nor, as Hobbes noted, was Cromwell of any significance until he began to serve in the army of the Eastern Association in 1643.⁴⁴ Secondly, the main political principles on which Cromwell and the Independents acted had in fact earlier been lucidly expressed by Presbyterians. For example, Samuel Rutherford in his *Lex, Rex, or the Law and the Prince* (1644) argued that kings are bound by the covenants which they made with their subjects when they were first granted power, that they are under the law, and that if they abuse

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 143, 155.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 167, 185.

⁴³ Hobbes, *Mr. Hobbes considered in his Loyalty, Reputation, and Manners* (London: for Andrew Crooke, 1662), 15; *English Works*, vol. 4, 419.

⁴⁴ Hobbes, *Behemoth* 3, 122.

their power their subjects are perfectly entitled to wage war against them. Rutherford did indeed say that it was unlawful to kill a king, but he added that this was true only "so long as he remaineth a king," and argued that it was open to subjects to dethrone a monarch for "such tyranny as is inconsistent with his royal office."⁴⁵ Hobbes was right to think that when the Independents cut off Charles I's head they were acting on principles which Presbyterians had frequently voiced. Thirdly, when Hobbes wrote *Behemoth* in the 1660s, the Presbyterians were a far larger and more important group than the defeated Independents. The Restoration was engineered by royalists allied with Presbyterians against the Independents and the sects. After the Restoration, the question of what share in power should be given to the Presbyterians was very much alive, for they had helped to bring the king back. But the Independents had come to be politically irrelevant. For this reason too, it made sense for Hobbes to say more about the Presbyterians than the Independents. What he said about these groups, and about Cromwell, and about the Catholics was largely compatible with what he had already said in *Leviathan* and elsewhere, and also with royalist and Anglican thinking. What he said about Anglicanism, however, diverged emphatically from the thinking of most royalists, though it was predictable enough from the author of *Leviathan*.

III. Anglicanism and Toleration

In the thirty-first chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes discusses "the Kingdom of God by Nature," and outlines the ways in which God should be worshipped, claiming that "in *Prayers, Thanksgivings, Offerings and Sacrifices*, it is a Dictate of naturall Reason, that they be every one in his kind the best, and the most significant of Honour." So prayers ought to "be made in Words and Phrases, not sudden, nor light, nor Plebeian; but beautifull, and well composed." There ought, he insisted, to be public worship of God: "But seeing a Common-wealth is but one Person, it ought also to exhibite to God but one Worship; which then it doth, when it commandeth it to be exhibited by Private men, Publicquely." The essence of such worship, he remarked, "is to be *Uniforme*," and he proceeded to spell out that "where many sorts of Worship be allowed, proceeding from the different Religions of Private men, it cannot be said there is any Publique Worship, nor that the Commonwealth is of any Religion at all." We ought to honor God in public worship. But it is the

⁴⁵ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or the Law and the Prince; a Dispute for the Just Prerogative of King and People* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 54-62, 125-36, 148, 232.

sovereign who decides what words and actions signify honor: "those Attributes which the Sovereign ordaineth, in the Worship of God, for signes of Honour, ought to be taken and used for such, by private men in their publique Worship." The sovereign could select from "an infinite number of Actions, and Gestures, of an indifferent nature" and by ordering them to be used as signs of honor to God make it obligatory for his subjects to do so.⁴⁶

This account of public worship was multiply incompatible with the ideas of puritans, whether Presbyterian, Independent, or sectarian. Puritans held that the civil magistrate could not add any rites of worship to those prescribed in the bible. Indifferent actions, they claimed, emphatically did not become obligatory if the sovereign commanded them.⁴⁷ Many favored extempore (or sudden, and often light and plebeian) prayer over so-called stunted prayer – Hobbes' well-composed prayers. Independents rejected the idea that the godly should worship uniformly throughout the commonwealth, allowing them to form their own independent congregations. Hobbes' views on worship were close to those of the Anglicans, however, and, indeed, to the Laudians, whom puritans especially disliked.⁴⁸

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes stuck by his old position, and declared that Laud had wanted "the service of God performed, and the house of God adorned, as suitable as was possible to the honour we ought to do to the Divine Majesty." He defended Laud on other points, for instance (wrongly) suggesting that the story that Laud had been offered a cardinal's hat was false.⁴⁹ But he also criticized Laud, and, more generally Anglican ideas on church-state relations. He did not, indeed blame the Anglican clergy for the war. It was, he said, the Presbyterians, Independents and other fanatics who had instigated the people against the king, while the rest of the clergy stayed in their parishes and preached "points of controversy, to religion impertinent, but to the breach of charity amongst themselves very effectual; or else elegant things, which the people either understood not, or thought themselves not concerned in." Unlike the Presbyterians, these Anglican preachers were not particularly harmful: "as they did little good, so they did little

⁴⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 252-53 (ed. 1651 191-92).

⁴⁷ Johann P. Sommerville, "Conscience, Law, and Things Indifferent: Arguments on Toleration from the Vestiarian Controversy to Hobbes and Locke," in Edward Vallance, ed., *Conscience in Early Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, forthcoming).

⁴⁸ Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes*, 155-56.

⁴⁹ Hobbes, *Behemoth* 73, 62. In fact, Laud *was* offered a cardinal's hat: Laud's diary, in William Laud, *Works*, ed. W. Scott and J. Bliss, 7 vols. (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847-60), vol. 3, 131-255, at 219 (August 4 and August 17, 1633). At *Behemoth*, 72, Laud's death is misdated 1643 instead of 1645. This is probably an error of transcription, as is the printing of "Calais" for "Cadiz," *ibid.*, 83, 111.

hurt."⁵⁰ Laud, however, did cause problems by his authoritarianism, for he stood "upon punctilios concerning the service-book and its rubrics." Moreover, he acted unwisely in bringing into the state his "former squabbings in the University about free-will," which was foolish because such "unnecessary disputes" have nothing to do with religion, and because Laud's stance on the question allowed his enemies to portray him as popish.⁵¹

But the main objections that *Behemoth* voices to Anglican theories were concerned with divine right episcopacy, passive obedience, and censorship. As in *Leviathan*, Hobbes held that clerics derive their power only from the sovereign, and not directly from God, though he seems to have intended to tone down his assault on divine right episcopacy for publication. He argued that all power to govern in church or state is derived from the sovereign. The bishops claimed that their authority to govern the church stemmed from God alone. In Hobbes' view, this was a false and seditious idea, not all that far removed from the theory of the indirect papal deposing power.⁵² Anglicans denied this, arguing that although the bishops receive their power directly from God, they cannot exercise it in any Christian state except with the permission of the sovereign. So *jure divino* episcopacy is compatible with the King of England's supremacy over the church, for bishops derive their right to exercise their powers, but not the powers themselves, from the sovereign.⁵³ Hobbes was well aware of this distinction between a right or power on the one hand, and its exercise on the other, but thought it absurd. Writing against Bishop Bramhall, he noted that Anglicans said bishops derive their power to ordain ministers from God, but can exercise it only with royal license, "as if the right to ordain, and the right to exercise ordination, were not the same thing." This was like saying that King David "had a power to kill Uriah, but not to exercise it upon Uriah, that is to say, he had a power to kill him, but not to kill him, which is absurd."⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 159.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 73, 61-62. Hobbes gives no hint here that he thought these "unnecessary disputes" were in fact of central importance to establishing religious truth, but A. P. Martinich argues that that was nevertheless so, and that Hobbes sided strongly and to his personal cost with one side in the debate, namely the Calvinists: *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), especially 334-35.

⁵² Hobbes attacks divine right episcopacy in *Behemoth*, 6 and 95. The first of these two passages was erased in the manuscript, but nevertheless was printed, though in somewhat muted form; the second passage was excised and not printed. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes*, 120-21.

⁵³ Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots*, 196-99.

⁵⁴ Hobbes, *The questions concerning liberty, necessity, and chance*, in *English Works*, vol. 5, 143. Nevertheless, in *Behemoth*, 135, Hobbes himself somewhat anomalously distinguishes between the right to sovereignty and the exercise of sovereignty. Also rather anomalous

While Presbyterians and Independents had allowed active resistance to the king, Anglicans permitted only passive obedience. That is to say, they held that if the king commands us to perform actions which are contrary to God's decrees, we must obey God and not the king, but we must also passively accept whatever punishment the king inflicts on us for our disobedience. In *Behemoth*, Hobbes went out of his way to challenge Anglican teaching on this point at some length, arguing that we cannot know what God commands except "by the sentence of him or them that are constituted by the King to determine the sense of Scripture." So we ought to obey actively, and passive obedience was in any case no kind of obedience.⁵⁵ He had also rejected the distinction between active and passive obedience in *De Cive*, but did not mention it in *Leviathan*.⁵⁶

Hobbes opposed all efforts by clerics to assert power independent from the state. He resented and feared their attempts to control ideas, for he held that "all true philosophy, especially civil and moral" would suffer. Both the Presbyterians and the Anglicans had used power to suppress all opinions that militated against their interests, and that included many that were true and useful. Hobbes records the formation of the Royal Society, but expresses skepticism about how much it was likely to achieve, given that "the authority of licensing the books that are to be written of the subject, is not in them, but in some divines, who have little knowledge in physics, and none at all in mathematics."⁵⁷ This sounds like a plea against censorship, but *Leviathan* is often seen as a manifesto of intolerance, and *Behemoth* has been portrayed in a similar light: in *Behemoth*, Hobbes wanted to impose religious uniformity upon a country where "there was a measure of toleration, and to impose a state ideology on universities in which a certain amount of intellectual diversity was permitted."⁵⁸ Some scholars, however, have persuasively argued that Hobbes was an advocate of free speech and toleration.⁵⁹ Both views are partially true, for Hobbes thought that people's beliefs are easily and almost infinitely malleable, and that there are many self-seeking individuals ready to

are references in *Behemoth* to tyranny, for example of the major generals, *ibid.*, 186-87. In *Leviathan* 130 (1651 ed. 95) tyranny is only monarchy disliked.

⁵⁵ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 49-52.

⁵⁶ Hobbes, *De Cive*, chapter XIV, section xxiii; in *De Cive: The Latin Version*, ed. Howard Warrender (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 217-18.

⁵⁷ Hobbes, *Behemoth* 95-96.

⁵⁸ Wootton, "Thomas Hobbes's Machiavellian moments," 240.

⁵⁹ Alan Ryan, "Hobbes, Toleration, and the Inner Life," in David Miller and Larry Siedentop, eds., *The Nature of Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 197-218; Frank Lessay, "Hobbes and Sacred History," in Rogers and Sorell, eds., *Hobbes and History*, 147-59, especially 153-54.

indoctrinate them with pernicious opinions. To prevent such indoctrination, the sovereign must take control of the means of persuasion, and most of all of the universities – the “core of rebellion.” The universities, he argued, should teach the true and proven principles of politics, which he himself had demonstrated. The sovereign would also enforce a vague and undogmatic religion, though without standing upon punctilios. But on all matters that did not conflict with the subject’s political duties, Hobbes advocated free speech and inquiry.⁶⁰ Hobbes famously saw the liberty of the subject as nothing more than freedom to do what the law allows. We tend to think of this as a narrow and slavish concept of liberty. But it is one for which Hobbes’ generation had to struggle, for clerics were all too eager to impose restrictions on speech and action, though the state had imposed none.⁶¹

Though Hobbes rejected Anglican claims for divine right episcopacy, the political creed of *Behemoth* is far closer to that of royalists and Anglicans than it is to Catholicism, Independency, or Presbyterianism. *Behemoth* attacks parliamentarians throughout, but rarely criticizes royalists, except for being insufficiently hawkish. Yet *Leviathan* is often portrayed as book which betrayed royalism and defended the Rump parliament, and in particular the Engagement oath. If that is so, then there is a fundamental incompatibility between the two books. The final section of this essay assesses the evidence for this.

IV. Hobbes, the Rump and the Engagement

One highly influential interpretation of *Leviathan* contends that it was a defense of the Rump’s “Oath of Engagement” which was imposed upon “virtually the entire literate population” on 11 October 1649. Hobbes, the argument runs, rapidly wrote *Leviathan* in defense of the oath. By this time, we are told, there was “nothing specifically royalist” about Hobbes’ political theory, and he calculated that *Leviathan*’s message was likely to be warmly received by supporters of the Rump, as indeed it was.⁶² Not surprisingly, we are informed, “royalists widely read” *Leviathan* “as an apologia for the Commonwealth’s bitterly detested Engagement oath.”⁶³

There are a number of difficulties with this approach. Chronology is a problem. On 13 May 1650, Hobbes’ friend Robert Payne recorded that

⁶⁰ Hobbes, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lines 1129-40, 1173, 1177-82; Lessay, “Hobbes and Sacred History,” 153-54.

⁶¹ Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 39-40, 58, 70; *Leviathan*, 147-48 (1651 ed. 109).

⁶² Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 3, 19, 22.

⁶³ Collins, “Christian Ecclesiology and the Composition of *Leviathan*,” 222.

Hobbes had written to him from Paris, telling him that he had completed thirty-seven chapters of an English book on politics – obviously *Leviathan*.⁶⁴ We do not know the date of Hobbes' letter to Payne, but it clearly cannot have been written much later than the beginning of May. On 11 October 1649, the Rump voted that its own members should take the Engagement, not that the population at large should do so.⁶⁵ The text of *Leviathan* does not suggest that Hobbes was at all concerned what the Rumpers chose to impose on themselves. In the "Review, and Conclusion" at the end of the book, he declared that people become subject to a conqueror only when they submit to him, and observed that those who submit to "the Enemy" actually help him less than those who do not, for the latter would lose only "part of their estates" while the former would forfeit them all. Hobbes' argument is that since the Rump is now firmly in control in England, royalists may acknowledge it as the sovereign authority in the country, and compound with it for their estates – as Hobbes' patron and friend the Earl of Devonshire did. Alternatively, they could continue the war by living secretly in England and refusing to accept the Rump's protection, or by living abroad (as Charles II did).⁶⁶ Hobbes' key contention is that since the Rump has won the war, royalists can submit to it to regain their property. The Engagement (which was not an oath but a declaration and promise) was first imposed on males aged eighteen or more by an Act of 2 January 1650. That Act provided that the engagement be tendered to various categories of people, including officeholders and plaintiffs in lawsuits. But it was not until 26 February 1650 that the Engagement was imposed upon compounding royalists.⁶⁷ Since it is extremely unlikely that Hobbes could have written thirty-seven chapters between 26 February, or even 2 January, and the beginning of May, we may conclude that the original purpose of *Leviathan* was not to defend the Engagement, and that passages licensing ex-royalists to submit to the Rump are late additions.

It seems that until the Restoration, which brought the bishops back to power, remarkably few royalists connected Hobbes with the Engagement, or criticized *Leviathan* on the grounds that it was a defense of the Rump. There is no hint in the writings of Filmer, for example, that he read Hobbes in that way. Hobbes himself refers to the Engagement just once, in his response to

⁶⁴ Nicholas Pocock, "Illustrations of the State of the Church during the Great Rebellion," in *The Theologian and Ecclesiastic* 6 (1848), 161-75, at 172 (letter 128).

⁶⁵ Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, 1649-1656*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), vol. 1, 176.

⁶⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 485-86 (ed. 1651 390-91).

⁶⁷ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 3 vols. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), vol. 2, 325-29, 348-54.

Wallis of 1662. There he calls its imposition “a very great Crime.” He also remarks that in *Leviathan* there is “scarce a page” “that doth not upbraid” both Cromwell and the Presbyterians with “your abominable hypocrisie and villany.”⁶⁸ *Leviathan* does indeed argue that subjects should obey their sovereigns and not make war upon them. It asserts that by the law of nature we have a duty to protect in war the authority which protects us in peace, and claims that the English were mad to take up arms against their king.⁶⁹ Among the many specifically royalist tenets that Hobbes maintains in *Leviathan* are that “Christian kings have their civil power from God immediately,” and that “the king, and every other sovereign, executeth his office of supreme pastor by immediate authority from God, that is to say, in God’s right, or jure divino.”⁷⁰ The Rumpers thought kings were accountable to the people. In chapter twenty-nine of *Leviathan* Hobbes lists seditious doctrines which undermine government. Most were principles on which the Long Parliament in fact acted, as *Behemoth* was to show.⁷¹ They did not receive *Leviathan* warmly, and apparently ignored it completely. It is true that in *Leviathan* Hobbes denies that hereditary right is indefeasible, but until Charles I’s defeat few royalists claimed that it was, and Hobbes had already spelled out his position on this in his earlier political works. So it is hard to support the idea that Hobbes changed his fundamental political doctrines in *Leviathan* and then changed them back again in *Behemoth*, and hard, too, to show that *Leviathan* was intended as a defense of the Rump. Arguably, when Hobbes called the Engagement “a very great Crime” he was doing no more than spelling out the principles of *Leviathan*. In the body of that book, we learn that “the dispute of sword”⁷² concerning sovereign authority amongst the English has not yet been decided. So the war was still going on. But in war we are bound to side with the power which protects us in peace – the king’s power. And therefore the imposition of the Engagement was an act of treason. Much of *Leviathan* was written against the Rumpers’ ideas. But after they had won the war, Hobbes defended submission to them. There is no serious incompatibility between *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, for Hobbes was always an enemy to the Parliamentarians’ principles.

⁶⁸ Hobbes, *Mr. Hobbes considered*, 13, 8, in *English Works*, vol. 4, 418, 415.

⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 484 (1651 ed. 390), 299-300 (1651 ed. 232), 54-55 (1651 ed. 36). These points are developed in Sommerville, “Lofty Science and Local Politics,” in Tom Sorell, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246-73 at 262-63.

⁷⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 374 (ed. 1651 296), 391 (ed. 1651 311).

⁷¹ Luc Borot, “Hobbes’s *Behemoth*,” in Rogers and Sorell, eds., *Hobbes and History*, 137-46, at 141.

⁷² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 311 (ed. 1651 241).