# BIBLICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT IN LEVIATHAN

# THE INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT IN LEVIATHAN

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the general question of the relation between the Bible and the rise of modern political thought. It begins from the observation that Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke were simultaneously the founders of liberal thought and interpreters of the Bible. It then attempts to argue that Hobbes's Leviathan is a work which is Biblical in thought and presentation.

In the first chapter, there is a general discussion of Hobbes's explicit interpretation of the Bible, which shows his reading to be plausible at many points but suspect at others. Finally the discussion points to the Old Testament as the key to understanding Hobbes's ambiguous interpretation. The second chapter shows that Hobbes implicitly presents themes from the Five Books of Moses (Torah) -- creation, divine speech, covenant, law -- throughout his work. The third chapter takes up this lead, and in a tentative exploration of the Torah's political teaching finds that Hobbes has adopted the political thought of the Torah while rejecting its theological claims.

The conclusion suggests that the political thought of liberal democracies, following the lead of Hobbes and like thinkers, has turned away from classical and Christian precepts and toward those of the Old Testament.

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS WORK

| Example | Full Reference |
|---|---|
| (L. 131) | Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), page 131. |
| Molesworth, IV, 306 | The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Sir William Molesworth (London, 1839-45; reprinted, Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1966), Volume IV, page 306. |
| RSV | The Revised Standard Version of the Bible (Old Testament: 1952). |
| RV | The Revised Version of the King James Bible (Old Testament: 1885). |
| (Gen. 6.4) | Genesis, Chapter 6, verse 4. |
| (Ex. 19.5, 7, 8) | Exodus, Chapter 19, verses 5, 7 and 8. |
| (Deut. 4.8-12) | Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verses 8 through 12. |
| (see pp. 78-9) | the corresponding pages of this work. |

## NOTES ON HEBREW TRANSLITERATION

In transliterating from the Hebrew into the English, I have followed a modified version of the system employed in Thomas O. Lambdin's Introduction to Biblical Hebrew (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971). The modifications are due to the limitations of ordinary typewriters. They are as follows:

(i) an apostrophe (') represents the letter 'ālēp̄ (א).
a raised 'c' ($^{c}$) represents the letter $^{c}$ayin (ע).

(ii) the combination 'sh' represents the letter šîn (שׁ).

(iii) a raised 'e' ($^{e}$) represents the vowel sh$^{e}$wā ( : ).

(iv) the distinction between the "stops" (b, g, d, k, p, t) and the "spirants" (b̲, ḡ, d̲, k̲, p̄, t̲) is ignored.

The transliterated Hebrew words which appear in my text, e.g., mālak, are always vocalized root forms and never inflected forms. Also, the verbal root is preferred where it exits. Thus, yimlok ("he will rule"), mamlākāh ("kingdom"), and melek ("king") would all be represented in my text by mālak ("to rule"). This simplified representation is sufficient for my purposes here.

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# INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis, Hobbes's use of the Bible, is not a usual subject of discussion in either political science or Biblical studies, and may strike readers trained in either discipline as being of only marginal significance. The purpose of my introduction is to alter this impression. To this end, I will first attempt to show that there is an issue of general importance, that is, the connection of the Bible with the foundations of modern political thought. I will then discuss the case of Hobbes as one aspect of the greater issue. This procedure should establish the worth of investigating the problems surrounding Hobbes's use of the Bible.

In the seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza and John Locke wrote political treatises which have had an immense influence upon Western political thought and practice. Taken as a whole, their writings constitute a rejection of the political traditions previously dominant and form the theoretical basis for new ones. In particular, the rise of liberal capitalist democracies in the English-speaking world is indebted to the fundamental assertions of these thinkers.

For example, the separation of Church and State, a principle fundamental to the constitution of the United States of America (and operative in practice everywhere in the English-speaking world), is theoretically established in the writings of Spinoza and Locke;[1] the rise of capitalist economies, based upon interactions between competitive individuals, is first justified by the definition of man given by Hobbes and Locke.[2]

There is a fact not often enough noted about these founders of liberal thought. All of them, within their political writings, devote lengthy passages to the interpretation of the Bible. Each of them claims some significance of his Biblical conclusions for political thought. Hobbes claims that the Bible, properly understood, contains the same doctrines of sovereignty and obedience as he gives on theoretical grounds.[3] Spinoza claims that Biblical revelation by its nature cannot conflict with the conclusions of reason, because the two operate in different spheres, and inasmuch as the Bible deals with the problems of politics

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[1]Spinoza, A Theologico-Political Treatise, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), ch. XX; John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration (Library of Liberal Arts; Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), pp. 17-20 et passim.

[2]C. B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (London: Oxford, 1962).

[3]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 257-60, 378, 414, 626.

it supports his own rational conclusions.[4] Locke, in his First Treatise, does detailed interpretive work on Genesis to disprove Filmer's claim that the Bible teaches "Men are not naturally free"; in his Second Treatise he argues the reverse of Filmer's position, with a considerable number of Scriptural references amidst his arguments.[5]

From the modern point of view, it may seem that the study of the Bible is irrelevant to the task of political philosophy. Why, then, do these thinkers turn to the Bible as they write their major political works?

There are a few possible answers. First, these thinkers may have believed that the Bible's statements on politics, like its statements on religion, were to be taken with the utmost seriousness, and therefore incorporated what they could learn from the Bible into their political thought. Second, they may have been indifferent to the Bible as a political text, but were forced to employ it as such because they were writing against other men who misused Scripture to support erroneous political thought. A third answer, given by many who have studied these philosophers,

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[4]Spinoza, A Theologico-Political Treatise, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), preface, pp. 9-10, ch. XVIII, pp. 237-244.

[5]John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (Revised edition; Cambridge: University Press, 1963), First Tr. II, 6; Second Tr. passim.

is that they were positively hostile to the Bible, that they held religious, scientific and political convictions which contradicted Biblical teachings, and that this was so dangerous (given the reality of persecution in the seventeenth century) that they had to cover up the extent of their heresies by clothing them in Biblical garb.

The second and third answers, which imply degrees of insincerity in the writings of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke, are found in many variations in the literature of political science.[6] The first answer, however, is strangely under-represented in the literature; there seems to be a mysterious consensus that the Bible could not have played a central rôle in the rise of modern political philosophy. Yet this possibility seems too significant to be passed over in such a way; it demands investigation.

The present essay is just such an investigation. It is devoted to expositing the interpretation of the Bible bequeathed to us by Thomas Hobbes, and assessing the degree to which that interpretation should be taken seriously.

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[6]On Hobbes, see Leo Strauss, "On the Basis of Hobbes's Political Philosophy", in What is Political Philosophy? (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), and Richard Peters, Hobbes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), last chapter. On Spinoza, see Leo Strauss, "How to Study Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise", in Persecution and the Art of Writing (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973). On Locke, see Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), and R. H. Cox, Locke on War and Peace (London: Oxford, 1960), pp. 34-56.

It is hoped that such a study will contribute to a general understanding of the importance of the Bible in the birth of the political thought of the modern West. In what follows, I will speak only of Hobbes, but the importance of the broader issue is implied throughout.

Hobbes exposits the Bible in all three of the systematic presentations of his political thought (Elements of Law, 1640; De Cive, 1642; Leviathan, 1651). In Leviathan the presence of the Bible dominates the work. The title recalls the great sea-monster of Job 41 and the themes of power and rule found in that passage. The frontispiece of the original edition (for which see the Macpherson edition) contains a quotation from the Job chapter relevant to the theme of power. The first and second parts of the book are sprinkled liberally with Biblical quotations and allusions which support Hobbes's various points. The third and fourth parts of the book are occupied exclusively by concerns relating to the Bible. They contain extensive discussion of how to read Scripture, of the authority of the Bible, of definitions of Biblical words, of the Biblical teaching about politics, of the proper relation between ecclesiastical officers and those of the civil state, of the misuses of Scripture in both theology and politics, and related issues. Parts Three and Four occupy half of the pages in the book.

Given this situation, one would think that the understanding of Hobbes's Biblical interpretation would occupy

a sizeable portion of Hobbes scholarship. This is not the case. Hobbes's exposition of the Bible has been virtually overlooked.[7]

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[7]This statement is meant in the most narrow sense: Hobbes's exposition of the text of the Bible. I distinguish between this and Hobbes's independent comments about God, religion, church and state, and other topics, concerning which there has been more discussion. The reason for this distinction will become clearer in my text below.

There appear to be no books on Hobbes and the Bible, and precious few articles and chapters of books. Scholars in Biblical studies apparently do not regard Hobbes as a serious interpreter of the Bible: their major journal index, Internationale Zeitschriftenschau fur Bibelwissenschaft (1951-pres.), has a section on the history of Biblical interpretation, but it lists no articles on Hobbes. Scholars of religion and political thought apparently share this view, as I learned when I finished consulting several major journal indices: The International-Humanities and Social Sciences-Humanities Index (1907-pres.), The British Humanities Index (1961-pres.), and the Index to Religious Periodical Literature (1949-pres.). There is almost nothing on Hobbes's use of the Bible. There are a few articles on related matters, which have proven of some use. One school of thought is concerned with showing that Hobbes must have believed in God, or else his "system" has no "ground" for its "theory of obligation" (see articles by Warrender and Brown in Bibliography). This logical approach avoids close reading of Hobbes on the Bible and therefore misses much. More fruitful have been attempts by scholars to show affinities between Hobbes's thought and that of the Reformers (see articles by Damrosch, Glover and Letwin in Bibliography) -- these efforts touch on the difference between a 'Biblical' worldview and a classical-medieval one, the latter being opposed by Hobbes. The only writings I have seen which attempt to grapple with Hobbes's direct appropriation of the Bible are those of Alexander and Warner (see Bibliography).

The indifference to the Biblical question is most clearly seen in abridged editions of Leviathan, in which all or parts of the last half are omitted, the assumption being that the Bible is irrelevant to Hobbes's political theory. Macpherson, in the Penguin edition, reproduces the entire text, but ignores the Biblical content for the entire span of his fifty-five page Introduction.

Why do scholars ignore that which Hobbes himself deems so worthy of attention? The reasons are those referred to above (pp. 3-4). Hobbes's exegesis of the Bible is not trusted. It is thought that Hobbes merely uses the Bible, either as a "proof-text", or to conceal his heresy, or both.

Neither of these suggestions is fully convincing. Hobbes certainly does some "proof-texting" (see ch. 1), but his overall use of the Bible cannot be accounted for in this way. The length of his Biblical exposition, the depth of his textual discussion, and the clarity of his presentation all bespeak a commitment to the Bible greater than one would expect from a man interested only in ornamenting his arguments. As for the other suggestion, that Hobbes uses the Bible to cover up dangerous views, it does not hold water. Hobbes is generally considered to be a good writer and a master of argumentative tactics. It is hard to believe that he would have done a poor job if he wished to conceal certain views. Yet on this hypothesis, Leviathan was a poor job. This is shown by the number of attacks launched against Leviathan's religious standpoint in Hobbes's own century, by the people he was supposedly trying to deceive.[8] Did Hobbes underestimate the detective power of his opponents? Perhaps. But the concealment hypothesis is inadequate on a more basic level. Hobbes's method of writing does not lend

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[8]Samuel Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan (London: Cambridge, 1969).

itself to concealing unpalatable views. In fact, Hobbes likes to trumpet totally unacceptable views all over the land. With great confidence, he denies the natural immortality of the soul; he transforms the doctrine of the Trinity; he takes interpretive power over Scripture from the clergymen and gives it to the Sovereign; he allows men in danger of death to deny Christ openly. All of this, and much more in Leviathan, is unorthodox in the extreme. It is difficult to picture Hobbes as a heretic in hiding.

What, then, is an inadequate explanation of Hobbes's interest in the Bible? Can it be as Hobbes says it is -- that he has learned about politics from Scripture?

I have conducted my investigation of this question within a distinction made by Hobbes himself: the distinction between 'Christian' and 'Biblical'. Hobbes does not acknowledge the 'Christianity' of his day to be a true expression of Biblical teaching. He sees the contemporary Christian faith as a corrupt and incoherent mixture, containing little of the Bible and a great deal of Greek and Roman philosophy, paganism, fuzzy Scholastic book-learning, and vested interest (L. chs. 44-47 passim). He thinks that the Christian Churches teach gross errors in fundamental points of theology, natural science, and politics, and in this teaching contradict not only reason but the Bible. Therefore he is not ashamed to be a 'heretic', to be 'un-Christian' according to the Church; he is content to be

'Biblical'. Hobbes may or may not be sincere in playing "the Bible" against orthodox Christianity, but this is the line he takes. Therefore, in order to understand what he claims to learn from the Bible, it seems necessary to suspend judgment about whether he was 'orthodox' and to read what he says about the Bible, attempting to ascertain if his interpretation is plausible. Only after such a study could one responsibly comment on Hobbes's use of the Bible.

Even this is only the first step, because there are hints that Hobbes draws from the Bible more than he says he draws. There are hints that there is an unspoken or implicit reading of the Bible running parallel to his direct or explicit reading. For example, Leviathan opens with an account of 'creation' (L. 81), as does the Bible. It follows, then, that a student of Hobbes and the Bible must read on two levels, and take both into account, if he is to fully understand what Hobbes is doing.

After studying Leviathan with this approach, I have concluded: (i) Hobbes's political thought is shaped by his reading of the Bible; (ii) The most important part of Hobbes's Biblical interpretation is his implicit adoption of the view of human nature and government found in the Five Books of Moses, or Torah; (iii) Inasmuch as modern political thought has been driven by the thought of Hobbes (and like minds), it has turned away from the classical and medieval traditions and taken on a Biblical orientation.

I present my thesis in the following manner. In Chapter One, I argue that Hobbes's explicit interpretation of the Bible 'de-spiritualizes' both nature and politics, and that this reading is sound for parts of the Bible. However, Hobbes's criticism of a God-centred politics seems to contradict the explicit teaching of the Books of Moses, in which a particular political order is divinized.

In Chapter Two, I argue that Leviathan presents politics in terms of "creation", "divine speech", "covenant", and "law". This conceptual framework points to the Torah, implying that Hobbes is influenced by that section of the Bible, though he cannot explicitly sanction it.

In Chapter Three, I argue that the Torah presents a political teaching which bears a substantial resemblance to that of Hobbes. Passion and covenant, power and sovereignty, fear and obedience, stand in the same relations in both teachings. I argue that Hobbes has implicitly adopted the political thought of the Torah, but cannot openly champion it because he rejects its theological claims.

In the Conclusion, I suggest that the impact of Hobbesian thought upon our society should be regarded as the influence of a distinctively Biblical politics, one which decisively enters onto the world stage in the seventeenth century.

# CHAPTER ONE

## HOBBES'S EXPLICIT USE OF THE BIBLE

In this chapter I will consider Hobbes's explicit use of the Bible. I will concentrate on his exposition of the Bible as a political teaching, and on the strengths and weaknesses of that exposition. I will also remark on the possible relationship between Hobbes's explicit account of the Bible and the implicit use of Scripture which I hope to reveal in the following chapters.

The explicit use of the Bible in Leviathan can be divided into two categories. The first category is the 'incidental use'. Incidental use of the Bible occurs in:

(i) references or allusions to Biblical passages taken out of context and used as 'proof-texts' to give additional validation to a particular claim of Hobbes's scientific or political theory. These are sometimes plausible uses of Scripture, but sometimes strained interpretations, deliberate misrepresentations, or errors.[1]

(ii) references or allusions to Biblical passages for purposes of ornament: style, wit, or the representation of Hobbes as a pious man.[2]

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[1] pro Hobbes: his description of Acts 19.40 (L. 288) seems accurate. contra Hobbes: quoting Jesus as supporting Caesar unequivocally (L. 259) misses the wonderful ambiguity of Jesus' remark in context (Matt. 22); David did not say "to thee only I have I sinned" (L. 265), but "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12.13) -- a gross error or deliberate amendment on Hobbes's part.

[2] "God hath ordained to man a helper" (L. 253) -- a purely ornamental allusion to Gen. 2. Note also the pietry of Hobbes (L. 95); the first 'betrayed king' to come to his mind is Christ.

This category is not the subject of this chapter. Nothing can be clearly demonstrated from the fact that Hobbes is willing to use Scripture in a less than scholarly way. The pious, as much as the heretics and the atheists, have done this throughout the history of Christianity. Since such incidental use is not peculiar to Hobbes, it cannot, for the most part, inform us as to Hobbes's designs.

What is more significant for understanding Hobbes is the second category. The second category is the coherent exposition of the Bible. This can take the form of:

(i) definitions of certain important Biblical words, such as "spirit", "prophet", or "church". The meaning of these words is derived by a careful study of the various instances of them throughout the entire Bible. This is done in such a way as to (apparently) exclude 'non-Biblical' theological implications which are seen in these words.

(ii) an account of the Biblical teaching on certain issues, e.g., the rights of sovereignty. The account follows the particular issue through the Bible. This is often intertwined with (i), where the issue necessitates a discussion of relevant vocabulary, e.g., "Kingdom of God".

It is the coherent or systematic exposition of the Bible which I will deal with in this chapter. Indeed, it is only the fact that Hobbes has a systematic exposition that makes his discussion of the Bible worthy of study. If he had employed the Bible only as a 'proof-text' or for other trivial use, it would indeed be justifiable, as most Hobbes scholarship has done, to ignore his comments.

Hobbes's lengthy systematic exposition of the Bible is concentrated in Part III of Leviathan. For the purpose of introduction, it can be reduced to two fundamental assertions:

(i) The Bible denies the existence of "spirit" as "incorporeal substance". Traditional notions of heaven, hell, angels, demons, and the immortal soul of man must be abandoned once this is acknowledged.

(ii) The Bible is to be understood primarily as a history of the Kingdom of God, that is, as an account of God's direct rule over certain men through his chosen priesthood. This Kingdom is in suspension until the Second Coming of Christ, after which Christ will rule directly over the world. During this suspension men are to obey their earthly sovereigns in all matters civil and ecclesiastical. The notion that Christian ecclesiastics are to provide a 'spiritual' corrective to the civil or ecclesiastical policy of earthly sovereigns is therefore false.

In reflecting upon these assertions, the reader should consider the following connections. First, assertion (i) is a frontal attack on Medieval metaphysics in the name of the Bible and at the same time a confirmation of the materialistic metaphysics enunciated by Hobbes in Leviathan. Second, assertion (ii) is a frontal attack on Medieval political thought in the name of the Bible and at the same time a confirmation of the political doctrines proclaimed by Hobbes in Leviathan. Third, assertion (ii) about Biblical politics is grouned in assertion (i) about

Biblical metaphysics, much in the same way as Hobbes's political thought appears to be grounded in his materialistic metaphysics in Parts I and II of Leviathan.[3]

These three considerations supply the structure for my discussion in this chapter. First, I will discuss Hobbes's Biblical attack on "spirit", and criticize it. Second, I will discuss Hobbes's political interpretation of the Bible, and criticize it. Finally, I will discuss the relation between Hobbes's two fundamental Biblical assertions in the light of his overall understanding of natural and political science.

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[3]The movement from sense (ch. 1) through passion (ch. 6) to the state of nature (ch. 13) establishes the nature of man entirely on the basis of a materialistic, mechanistic view of the world. From this understanding of human nature Hobbes then derives the necessary rules for the construction of commonwealths (ch. 14 ff.). This common view of Hobbes is well-articulated by George Sabine, in A History of Political Theory, Third Ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), pp. 457-69. But Leo Strauss and C. B. Macpherson have argued (each from his own perspective) that Hobbes's political thought is logically independent of his metaphysical system: Strauss, The Political Philosophy of Hobbes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (London: Oxford, 1962). I will not go into the arguments here. Clearly in Leviathan Hobbes at least associates his metaphysics with his politics, and wants his readers to see how bad metaphysics leads to bad politics. I assume a close relation between the two at the end of this chapter; it is necessary for understanding Hobbes's Biblical account. For a closer look at this issue, the reader should consult the Hobbes literature.

To deal with Hobbes's first assertion (p. 13), it is best to discuss first what Hobbes says about "spirit" and "body" in a non-Biblical, theoretical discussion. Hobbes supplies such a discussion at the beginning of Chapter 34 (L. 428-430).[4]

All real things must be bodies.[5] "Body" and "substance" are different names for the same thing. "Body" refers to a thing's ability to fill space; "substance" refers to a thing's ability to undergo change. All substances have body, that is, they occupy space. All bodies have substance, that is, they are subject to change (of motion, colour, temperature, etc.). All real things can therefore be called bodily or "corporeal" substances.

The proper signification of "spirit" within this framework of thought (if by "spirit" is meant something real and not a figment of the imagination) is "a subtile, fluid, and invisible Body", such as air, or breath. Air has substance, and therefore body; it just happens to be invisible. It is the same with all vaporous substances: they are

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[4]But note how Hobbes blurs the distinction between Scripture and his own principles by presenting the latter within the context of the Biblical dicsussion of the topic.

[5]Hobbes does not attempt to demonstrate this in Leviathan. It is apparently a basic axiom of his materialistic view of nature.

all, despite their elusive character, bodies of a rarefied sort, and therefore real. In metaphysical terms, "spirit" is just one kind of "corporeal substance".

The Medieval Christian Scholastic writers and their disciples of later centuries (such as Suarez and Bellarmine) held a different doctrine. Everything real was, for them as for Hobbes, a "substance" of some kind. But not all "substance" had "body". There were non-bodily, or "incorporeal" substances, which really existed but were not, like bodies, subject to change. These incorporeal or "spiritual" substances did not occupy space or have mass and thus were not detectible to the senses under normal circumstances. Thus, the Medievals divided the beings of the world into two classes. Rocks, plants, the bodies of men, and in general what we would call "matter" were corporeal substance, or body. Angels, demons, and the immortal souls of humans were incorporeal substance or spirit.

Hobbes claims that his theological opponents, in speaking of "incorporeal substance" are using self-contradictory language (L. 429), but in fact, as can be seen from the preceding account, their language is quite consistent with their own definitions. What is really at stake here is not, as Hobbes insists, an issue of improper language, but an issue of which metaphysical system is

correct. Hobbes admits only matter to be real; the Christian tradition up to his time admits both matter and spirit to be real.

It is clear from the foregoing that if Hobbes hopes to win a Scriptural victory over his theological opponents, he must demonstrate that the Bible, carefully read, teaches Hobbesian rather than Medieval metaphysics. This is exactly what Hobbes does in Part III of Leviathan. He shows (or claims to show) that the Bible simply does not bear the sense which traditional theology places on such words as "spirit", "angel", or "soul". And he shows that a 'Biblical' definition of such words has ramifications hostile to traditional theology.

According to the Bible, Hobbes says, "spirit" means primarily a wind or breath sent from God. It metaphorically refers to certain gifts which God seems to "breathe" into people, such as wisdom (in phrases like "the spirit of wisdom", Isa. 11.2-3), courage (like Samson's, Judg. 14.6,19), prophecy. lifebreath, and other things (L. 430-434). It never actually refers to any kind of permanent insubstantial being; that notion, says Hobbes, has been foisted upon the Bible by the Schoolmen.

Similarly, Hobbes disposes of the term "angel". "Angel" in the Bible does not mean some kind of ghostly being from some imagined "spiritual" realm, but simply means

"messenger of God". An angel is that which brings a revelation from God to men. An angel can be something audible, such as a voice, or something visible. If visible, it can be unreal, that is, "an image raised (supernaturally) in the fancy" (L. 436), or real, that is, a subtle spiritual (airy) body formed like a man (L. 434; 435). Examples of angels are the voice heard by Hagar in Genesis 16, the men seen by Lot in Genesis 19, and the pillar of fire which led the Israelites through the wilderness after Exodus 14 (L. 436-7). Angel in the Old Testament is thus not a being, but rather a mode of divine communication. Hobbes concedes that the New Testament seems to enjoin belief in angels as beings of some kind, but he insists that nothing is said about their being incorporeal (L. 440) -- they are material like everything else.

The counterpart of the angels, emissaries of the good God, are of course the demons, emissaries of the evil Satan. Demons are accepted as real 'spiritual' entities in traditional Christianity because of the New Testament accounts of them. But Hobbes shows that the word "demon" is misunderstood as well. Someone being 'possessed' by a demon means nothing more than being struck by some disease or disability, such as Fever, Epilepsy, or Madness (L. 145; 660-1); for a demon to confess Christ means the stricken person confesses him (L. 145). Possession metaphorically means a turn toward evil intent (L. 662). Similarly, "Satan"

and "Devil" are not, as commonly understood, proper names of a particular spiritual being, but are titles meaning "enemy" and "accuser", and are thus meant to be applied metaphorically to all the worldly enemies of God and the Church (L. 488-9).

The reader who follows Hobbes's conclusions so far might logically ask: How can God exist, according to the Bible? For the Bible calls God a "spirit" (L. 430), yet denies the existence of spirit as an incorporeal substance. In what sense, then, can God exist? Surely he cannot be an airy "spirit" and hence a corporeal substance; no Christian would hold God to be base matter! Hobbes vacillates on this point in Leviathan. He avoids calling God a material spirit, because all material is restricted by place and motion, and it would be contrary to God's honour so to restrict him (L. 402; 430). Yet he will not call God an immaterial spirit, because there cannot be such a thing (above, pp. 15-17); such a contradiction would leave God to be nothing (L. 170-1). Finally Hobbes avoids the issue by treating God as real, yet being incomprehensible in nature.[6]

The immortality of the human soul also falls before the scythe of Hobbes's Biblical exegesis. Human souls are

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[6]Later, in defending Leviathan against the charges of atheism levelled by Bishop Bramhall, Hobbes argues that God must be an infinite, corporeal spirit; thus he holds tenaciously to his materialism. Cf. Molesworth, IV, pp. 300-314, esp. 306, 310.

not to be thought of as spiritual or incorporeal substances. "Soul" in Scripture means life, breath of life, or living being. Hobbes presents an impressive array of Biblical passages to establish this claim. The existence of a 'ghostly' counterpart to the body is inconceivable, says Hobbes, in the light of passages like Ecclesiastes 9.5: ". . . the dead know not any thing" (L. 645). Man is a unity; the "eternal life" spoken of in Scripture refers to the resurrection of the whole man, body and soul, that is, body and life (L. 644-659; 482-483). The notion that soul is a spiritual being which flits around in heaven, or haunts graveyards, or does anything, is not Scriptural but a pagan notion transmitted through the Scholastics (L. chs. 44-45).

The use of the Bible by Hobbes to deny the existence of the metaphysical category of "spirit" is now fairly clear. The new understanding of the Bible has two fairly clear applications. It affects the understanding of the sacraments and rites of the Church, and it affects the notion of after life.

With regard to sacraments and rites, many of them employ language suggesting belief in demons and spirits. The notion of transubstantiation is a prime example. Speaking about the "substance" of Christ mingling with the "accidents" of bread and wine is a disguised way of speaking of possession by an immaterial spirit. Baptism uses the language of driving out demons (L. 147, 633-35; 635-36). Other sacraments and rites are steeped in pagan notions of charms and conjura-

tions (L. 636). Against all of this, Hobbes insists that the Bible only speaks of two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, and that these are understood without any reference to supernatural powers or spirits. Baptism signifies admission into the Kingdom of God, and the Lord's Supper is a mere commemoration of the self-sacrifice of Jesus for man. Nothing "spiritual" happens on either occasion (L. 450-1).

At least as significant is the effect on the notion of afterlife. Since there is no "soul" independent of body in Scripture, traditional notions of heaven, hell and purgatory are ruled out. Purgatory was never in Scripture and is pagan nonsense (L. 639). Heaven and hell are truly in Scripture, but have to be correctly defined. "Heaven" might appear to refer to that other realm where God dwells, that is, to some place up in the sky, but it does not. Men who are saved will go not to the literal heavens, but to the Kingdom of the King who dwells in heaven; that Kingdom is on earth, and is the restored Kingdom of Israel, as in Psalm 133.3 and Revelation 21.2. This is in keeping with the original plan for the immortal life of man, which was not the immortal life of a spirit, but a life on earth, as Adam had in Genesis 2-3 (L. 480-2). Salvation means living an eternal, corporeal life on earth, freed from the evils of want, sickness, and death (L. 490). It follows that damnation is exclusion from this worldly kingdom to come. Hell is the state

of those who, deemed unbelievers by God at the Second Coming, will be resurrected only to suffer and die again, this time forever. The torment of Hell is not a literal fire; fire is but a metaphor for the "grief, and discontent of mind, from the sight of that Eternall felicity in others, which they themselves . . . have lost" (L. 489).

From the above discussion of Hobbes's interpretation, it seems that he has made a clean sweep of Medieval theology. Almost everything is gone, or else radically redefined, and this is accomplished by an appeal to the Bible! Is this reading of the Bible plausible?

There is much to be attacked in Hobbes's reading. Perhaps the greatest weakness in his discussion is his handling of the New Testament. The New Testament abounds in references to Satan, demons, life after death, hell, and other notions which seem to support Medieval theology rather than Hobbes's. Hobbes silently omits discussion of many such passages. Others, as shown above, he treats metaphorically. The fact that Hobbes resorts so much to metaphor in his interpretation of the New Testament (as opposed to the Old) suggests that he may be forcing the text to fit into the mold of Hobbesian metaphysics.[7]

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[7]It may be quite legitimate to lean more on metaphor in the interpretation of the New Testament, if the New is fundamentally a different kind of literature than the Old. But Hobbes's overall scheme (ch. 33) for reading the Bible commits him to regarding both Gospels and O. T. as histories.

Even in the Old Testament he sometimes has to skirt issues. He does not properly deal with the (apparently real) ghost of Samuel (I Sam. 28) or with the fact that Elijah is taken up to dwell in heaven (II Kings 2.11), though both stories provide stumbling-blocks to his views.

Again, one might find fault with his view of hell (a second earthly life, of normal human privation and suffering, looking forward to a second death). Such a hell seems so mild that one wonders why Jesus took it so seriously! Indeed, one wonders if Hobbes takes it seriously. According to Hobbes's presentation, an atheist (who normally would look forward to nothing beyond death) can look forward to gaining a second turn around by disbelieving in the Christian god!

These and other objections[8] might cause one to completely reject Hobbes as a serious reader of the Bible. Yet Hobbes's exposition cannot be simply ignored. It has strong affinities with various Protestant ideas and matches some of the results of modern Old Testament scholarship.

For example, Hobbes rejects purgatory, reduces the seven sacraments to the two accepted by Luther (and de-spiritualizes them, in the vein of the radical reformers), and viciously attacks the overlay of paganism and Scholastic philosophy upon Christian doctrine. In his substitution

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[8]Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 185-189.

of the resurrection of the dead for the immortality of the soul he is joined by such auspicious company as Milton.[9]

In addition, Hobbes's Old Testament attack on the view of soul as a spiritual substance receives confirmation from current scholarship. The notion that soul in the Old Testament is best translated as "the whole man", or "life", or "breathing man", or some similar idea, is quite common in the literature.[10] New Testament scholars and Christian theologians of various shades have claimed that the New Testament has conformable views.[11] Quite a number of sects today see in the Bible the same views of soul, resurrection, and the earthly kingdom to come.[12]

It is fair to say, then, that Hobbes does not do badly with the Bible on the issue of "spirit", from the point of view of a Bible-centred Protestantism. There are other aspects

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[9]Norman T. Burns, Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[10]H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology", in The People and the Book, ed. Arthur S. Peake (Oxford, 1925), pp. 353-82; Hans Walter Wolff, Anthropology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), ch. on nepes.

[11]Burns, op. cit., pp. 192-96.

[12]Burns, op. cit., pp. 3, 186-7. Burns names the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh-day Adventists, and the Christadelphians. A glance at other "evangelical" or "fundamentalist" literature will reveal others.

of his thought, not directly relevant to this chapter, which link him with Protestantism.[13]

At the beginning of this discussion (p. 13), it was suggested that Hobbes's Bible yields a view of nature reached independently by Hobbes's philosophy. This is now readily seen. By insisting that all theoretical discussion about religion be limited by the conceptual bounds of the Bible (and perhaps finally the Old Testament, see p. 22 above), Hobbes establishes a metaphysical position close to his own materialism. Of all the traditional "spiritual" entities, only God remains. Thus, God alone is above the category of everyday material substance; everything else in the world is explicable in terms of matter in motion. The world operates regularly; in dealing with it men do not have to deal with the incursion of supernatural entities (L. 92-3; 166-170).

According to Hobbes, the only gateway through which the supernatural could enter the world is a direct and extra-ordinary revelation of God, such as he has given in prophecy and miracle. But Hobbes says that prophecy and miracle no longer occur (L. 414); even should they occur, it would be impossible to verify them. Prophecies are often about events too far in the future (L. 414), and purported miracles often

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[13]Hobbes seems to reject any natural knowledge of God other than of his existence (L. 403, 430). In this he is more a Reformer than a traditionalist, but he is extreme compared to either. For other points of contact, see articles by Damrosch, Glover, and Letwin in bibliography.

turn on people's ignorance of nature or vulnerability to deception (L. 470-1, 475-6). But Hobbes does not lament this loss of contact with God, because believing in the miracles and prophecies in Scripture, along with believing in Christ, is all that is necessary for our salvation (L. 414, 615-22).

The world Hobbes describes is thus stripped of all supernaturalism, pagan or Biblical. There is no spirit, no miracle, no prophecy. The old Medieval cosmos, with its differentiated yet subtly interwoven grades of being, with its structure of heaven, earth, and hell, is gone. In its place there is Hobbes's universe, governed uniformly throughout by the properties of matter and the principles of motion. This, says Hobbes, is the Biblical teaching about nature.

I turn now to Hobbes's discussion of the political teaching of the Bible. The easiest way to introduce this is to start with Hobbes's own words, some of which I have emphasized:

> And although these Books were written by divers men, . . . they conspire to one and the same end, which is the setting forth of the Rights of the Kingdome of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For the Book of Genesis, deriveth the Genealogy of Gods people, from the creation of the World, to the going into Egypt: the other four Books of Moses, contain the Election of God for their King, and the Laws which hee prescribed for their Government: The Books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and Samuel, to the time of Saul, describe the acts of Gods people, till the time they cast off Gods yoke, and called for a King, after the manner of their neighbour nations: The rest of the History of the Old Testament, derives

> the succession of the line of David, to the Captivity, out of which line was to spring the restorer of the Kingdome of God, even our blessed Saviour God the Son, whose coming was foretold in the Bookes of the Prophets, after whom the Evangelists writt his life, and actions, and his claim to the Kingdome, whilst he lived on earth: and lastly, the Acts, and Epistles of the Apostles, declare the coming of God, the Holy Ghost, and the Authority he left with them, and their successors, for the direction of the Jews, and for the invitation of the Gentiles. In summe, the Histories and the Prophecies of the old Testament, have had one and the same scope, to convert men to the obedience of God; I. in Moses, and the Priests; 2. in the man Christ; and 3. in the Apostles and the successors to Apostolicall power. For these three at several times did represent the person of God. . . .

The above excerpt shows that for Hobbes it is an understatement to say the Bible has a political teaching. The Bible fundamentally is a political teaching. It is really concerned with problems of right, law, obedience, authority, and representation -- all crucial terms in the Hobbesian vocabulary found in Parts I and II of Leviathan. Other matters traditionally assumed to be important Biblical teachings, such as the goodness of Creation, charity, love of God, and humility, are absent in Hobbes's summary statement. There does not seem to be anything wrong or unorthodox in Hobbes's account, but his emphasis is strange. He shifts the focus of Biblical interpretation away from theological, devotional, and ethical concerns, and places it on political ones. In this section I will examine how he does this, and what end it serves.

God exercises a natural rule over all of creation because of his power (L. 395, 443). Human rights are limited by human power (L. 189-91; 397), but God has irresistible power and therefore absolute right over everything. He can dispense pleasure and pain to mortals without any justification other than his power. Hobbes derives this out of the Bible from two places. First, he claims that God had the right to afflict Job, not out of Job's sin (for Job was indeed innocent), but because of his might, as in Job 38.4: "Where wast thou when I layd the foundations of the earth" (L. 398). Second, in the New Testament Jesus says of the man who was born blind, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his fathers; but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (L. 398), which means that God victimized the blind man purely for the future demonstration of his healing power. Because of God's irresistible and unrestricted power, he is in fact ruler of the whole universe whether men acknowledge him or not (L. 395).

It is important to note here that Hobbes defines ruling, divine or human, without any reference to principles of "justice", "goodness", or "wisdom":

> For he onely is properly said to Raigne, that governs his Subjects, by his Word, and by promise of Rewards to those that obey it, and by threatening them with Punishment that obey it not. (L. 396)

According to this definition, the only criterion relevant to establishing rule is power. A king rules because he can

punish everyone at will. God cannot be limited in his action by "justice" or "goodness"; just and unjust, good and evil, are determined by law, and law is finally nothing but the will of the Sovereign. In mortal kingdoms, there is no higher justice above the sovereign (L. 234, 259-60, 365, 367). In the universe, there is no higher justice or goodness than the will of God. As for God's wisdom, God's love, etc., they are things incidental and have no bearing on his right to rule.

God's essence, then, is his power. This understanding enables Hobbes in his Biblical exegesis to treat God as an office -- the office of Supreme Sovereign of Creation. With God reduced to a political concept, the way is clear for a political exegesis of the Bible.

God's interaction with man begins with Adam. Hobbes treats the story of the Fall as a paradigm for good political theory (L. 259-60). He reads God as the Sovereign, Adam as the subject, "do not eat" as the law, eternal life as the reward for obeying the law, and death as the punishment for breaking it. The tree of knowledge is the Judicature of Good and Evil. In eating of it, Adam not only broke a particular law but, by usurping the Sovereign office of declaring good and evil, called law itself into question. He was thus rightly punished, and the historical consequence was introduction of death into the world (L. 479). The Fall is this linked with the Biblical history without losing its metaphorical value.

The next significant event in Hobbes's reading of the Bible is the covenant God makes with Abraham. This covenant is the beginning of the "Kingdom of God". By "Kingdom of God", Hobbes means a literal, earthly Kingdom established by a pact between God and Israel. This Kingship is to be distinguished from God's ordinary kingship over all the world. It involves a voluntary exchange unique in human history, whereby the Israelites agree to obey God's very specific commandments in return for possession of the land of Canaan (L. 442-4).

Abraham is the beginning of the Kingdom of God because he is God's first subject by special convenant. Hobbes refers to Genesis 17.7-8, which seems to indicate clearly that Abraham and God are in a relationship of voluntary exchange. Abraham promises obedience on behalf of himself and his offspring; God promises the land of Canaan to Abraham and his offspring forever. This agreement is witnessed by the sign of circumcision (L. 443). The requirements of Hobbes's definition of the covenant are met in this agreement: a mutual transferring of right, immediate performance on one part (Abraham's) and promise of future performance on the other (God's), and a binding sign (L. 192-3).

The next significant episode in the Bible for Hobbes is the covenant made between Israel and God at Mt. Sinai. There the covenant with Abraham is renewed by the entire people of Israel (Abraham's descendants). There Israel be-

comes a special people and a holy nation, that is, a nation set apart as specially God's. The covenant is defined more specifically at this point. Abraham was to be obedient to God in general; Israel is to obey a set of very specific laws given to them by God through Moses (L. 444-8, 547-8). Since the people consent with one voice to the authority of Moses as God's Lieutenant (Ex. 20.18), they in fact elect God as their King (L. 442, 502). On God's side, the promise of Canaan still holds good.

Because Israel is a "priestly" kingdom, the succession of power passes from Moses to the High Priest: first Aaron, then Eleazar, then his successors (L. 445; 506). The proof of this is that the priesthood has the powers vital to sovereignty, such as control of property rights (L. 296), decision over war or peace (L. 506), and the right to revenue (L. 564). The sovereign in this Mosaic-Priestly system of rule in fact has power over all things civil and ecclesiastical (L. 504).

Hobbes is not short of Biblical passages to defend his claim that the High Priest had sovereignty over Israel. Nor does he fail to mention that the concentration of civil and religious power in one place is one of the major tenets of his own political thought (L. 233, 405-6, 370-1). It is this similarity which gives his comparison of the Ten Commandments with his own principles of Government (L. 383) its force; but I will deal with Hobbes's theory in the

next chapter. For now it is enough to note that Hobbes sees the Mosaic-Priestly system as a theocracy, that is, as a rule of God over all affairs through the religious establishment of the priesthood.

The theocratic system ends, according to Hobbes, with the event described in I Samuel 8. This Biblical reference is extremely important for Hobbes; he calls the reader's attention to it at least twelve times (L. 181, 258, 368, 424, 446, 462, 507-8, 515, 541, 597, 629, 639). The priestly system had continued from the time of Joshua to the Judges period, in theory if not in fact (L. 506-7). Government in Israel, however, had been propped up by men of special calling like the Judges, and Samuel (L. 507). The decadence of even this system (L. 181) caused the people of Israel to reject their own unique form of government, and call for a king, after the manner of the other nations (L. 508).

With this act, the Israelites ruptured the covenant made with God at Mt. Sinai, and brought the theocratic rule, the rule of the priesthood, to an end (L. 508). God consents to this dissolution of the covenant (I Sam. 8.7): "Hearken unto the voice of the people . . . they have rejected mee, that I should not reign over them" (L. 508). In the place of the covenant the Israelites place their hopes in a merely human kingship. This does not imply a rejection of the content of the Mosaic law, but only of the priestly supervision over the state (L. 510).

The rights of the Kings of Israel are exactly as found in any properly established kingdom: control over revenue, command of the army, judgment of good and evil, authority over the public religion, and all the other rights set out in the Second Part of Leviathan (chs. 18-20). Hobbes shows this by Scriptural quotations from I Sam 8 and I Kings 3 (L. 258) and I Kings 8 (L. 508). The latter reference is crucial for Hobbes's argument since it seems to show Solomon's authority in matters of religion.

The conclusion Hobbes draws from the passage in Samuel is that, with the passing of the theocracy in Israel, there is no longer any nation in the world which can claim to be ruled directly by God, either in its civil or ecclesiastical policies. In particular, all ecclesiastical organizations exist only because of the will of the temporal sovereign, and can therefore at will be dissolved by that same sovereign. No ecclesiastical person can claim any higher "spiritual" authority from God to interfere with the policy of the sovereign. This is unjustified from Scripture and can only cause division and disaster in states (L. 366-7, 370-1, 629).

But is the unquestioned right of the Kings of Israel and Judah not called into question by the prophets? Not so, says Hobbes. The Kings, as did Moses, have the right to declare who is, and who is not, a true prophet, and thus it is impossible to attack a King's rule on the

basis of the words of a prophet (L. 466-69, 477-8, 510-11). Hobbes does not say that the Kings were always good in the eyes of God; he only insists that the errors of the Kings did not take away their sovereign rights. The prophets might reprove the Kings, but they had no power over them (L. 511).

By looking at the rôle of the Old Testament prophets solely in terms of legal right, Hobbes minimizes the significance of prophecy in the Bible. He admits its importance when it is understood as prediction of future events, especially prediction of Jesus Christ; but the immense rôle of prophecy as political criticism is dealt with by Hobbes in a very cursory way: he moves almost immediately from the rights of the Kings to the Office of Jesus Christ (L. 510-12).

The Old Testament, for Hobbes, represents the Kingdom of God the Father under Moses and the High Priests. The New Testament teaches of the Kingdom of God the Son (Jesus) and of the Kingdom of God the Holy Ghost (in the Apostles and their successors, the ecclesiastics). By interesting exposition of the New Testament, Hobbes shows that neither of these Kingdoms has any contemporary political relevance.

The Kingdom of Jesus, says Hobbes, is not of this world (John 18.36), but of the world to come after the General Resurrection and Last Judgment (L. 514). Christ disavowed any political power in this world: he told the Jews to obey their temporal leaders, the Pharisees (Matt.

23.2) and he told them to pay taxes to Caesar their sovereign (L. 514-5, 516). He said (John 12.47) that he came not to "judge" the world, that is, exercise power in it, but to save it (L. 515). But though he had no political power, his coming served the important function of reestablishing the covenant dissolved back in the days of Samuel. His Kingdom, the glorious renewal of that earlier one of God the Father, is thus only of promise -- but all believers are assured of being a part of it whenever it should come (L. 515-6).

In apparent contrast to the future Kingdom of God the Son, the Kingdom of God the Holy Ghost is a present kingdom. It begins with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles (described in the book of Acts) and continues in the present heirs of the Apostles, the preachers and teachers of Christianity. The rôle of preachers and teachers is to convert people to belief in the future kingdom of God the Son (L. 521-24). But in converting men to Christianity, these ministers and priests have no coercive power, either over belief or behaviour. They cannot have coercive power over the beliefs of others, because inward belief is never subject to external circumstances (L. 410, 500). They cannot have coercive power over the words and actions of others, because in these post-Samuel days only the sovereign has power to make people conform externally to religious practice (L. 525-27). The Apostles themselves supported this

separation of belief from civil obedience in passages such as "Wee have no Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy" (2 Cor. 1.24), and "Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man, for the Lord's sake . . ." (1 Peter 2.13-15) (L. 526, 527).

Of course, if the sovereign is Christian he may choose to enforce Christian profession of faith and religious practice; in that case the commonwealth is said to be a Christian commonwealth. In a Christian commonwealth Scriptures are not just optional teachings but Laws (L. 545-54). In a Christian commonwealth the sovereign will exercise his control over public worship to render it Christian (L. 405-6). But wherever Christianity has not been made law by sovereigns, the Kingdom of God the Holy Ghost is a Kingdom of persuasion only (L. 525-6). The present Kingdom of God is thus, by Hobbes's own definition, not properly a kingdom, for there is no literal reign, that is, governance by reward and punishment (L. 396).

The foregoing discussion (pp. 26-36) is adequate as a broad outline of the Bible's political teaching as seen by Hobbes. What follows is a brief commentary upon, and evaluation of, Hobbes's interpretation.

First, it is clear that the "Kingdom of God" is politically irrelevant for modern man. The Kingdom of God as Father ended with the event described in I Samuel 8, and is thus a kingdom of the past only. The Kingdom of God as

Son is not to come until the Day of Judgment and is thus a kingdom of the future only. The Kingdom of God as Holy Ghost alone is a present kingdom, but a kingdom without temporal authority. This means that all present political authority has been established by purely human means and is legitimate by human consent. God has not interferred in, and even approves of the current temporal arrangements, which are grounded in the "Laws of Nature" (L. 215, 331, 379-383, 397). The fact that God allows exclusively human rule to exist means that there is no divine sanction for rebellion against worldly rule in the name of religion.

It is this conclusion Hobbes has in mind throughout Parts III and IV of Leviathan:

> The greatest, and main abuse of Scripture, and to which almost all the rest are either consequent, or subservient, is the wresting of it, to prove that the Kingdome of God, mentioned so often in Scripture, is the present Church, or multitude of Christian men now living. . . . Consequent to this Errour . . . there ought to be some one Man, or Assembly, by whose mouth our Saviour . . . speaketh, giveth law, and which representeth his Person to all Christians. . . . This power Regal under Christ, being challenged, universally by the Pope, and in particular Commonwealths by Assemblies of the Pastors of the place, (when the Scripture gives it to none but to Civill Soveraigns,) comes to be so passionately disputed, that it putteth out the Light of Nature, and causeth so great a Darkness in mens understanding, that they see not who it is to whom they have engaged their obedience. (L. 629-30)

Hobbes's reading of the Bible thus demolishes the claim of the ecclesiastical writers that they have special rights in the political sphere. At the same time it reinforces

the conclusions of his own political theory, in particular the conclusion that the sovereign has right over all affairs civil and ecclesiastical.

Second, in apparent contradiction to Hobbes's insistence that the Kingdom of God is not politically relevant, Hobbes freely borrows passages from the Mosaic texts (which represent for him an extinct political system) to defend the kind of secular sovereignty which he champions (L. 258, 296, 319, 333, 378-383, 411-414, 504-505). In light of his doctrine that only the principles of secular sovereignty are relevant, he should limit himself to the Biblical texts following I Samuel 8 for such purposes. But he rejects Mosaic politics theoretically while using it in practice, which suggests that he is employing the Bible mainly as a proof-text.

Third, one gets a strong impression from Hobbes that Christianity itself is irrelevant. The impact of Christ's coming upon the affairs of men seems negligible. There is no substantial difference between Hobbes's "Commonwealth" and his "Christian Commonwealth". The principles of both conform wholly to Hobbes's "Laws of Nature". As for the additional factor in the Christian commonwealth, revelation, it is subordinated to the sovereign in exactly the same way as are the fictional religious claims of pagan commonwealths. Nothing is challenged and nothing is transformed by the entrance of Christianity into the political realm.

In fact, at points Hobbes's exposition seems to conceal an undercurrent of mockery. The Bible is made ridiculous when Hobbes's earnest tone conceals perverse readings. His carefully argued political understanding of the Trinity takes the great metaphysical assertion of Christianity and turns it into a prosaic account of the history of Israel.[14] His argument from Scripture that Christians are to obey their sovereigns in all things undergoes reductio ad absurdum when it allows Christians to openly deny Christ if their lives depend on it.[15] The theoretical claims of Christian dogma and the practical demands of Christ are nullified, and a Christian, as one just critic of Hobbes remarked, is reduced to "a man who intends to obey Crhist after the Second Coming".[16]

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[14]This response, from a contemporary of Hobbes, is pertinent: "The emblime of a little boy attempting to lade all the water out of the sea with a Coccleshel, doth fit T. H. as exactly as if it had been shaped for him, who thinketh to measure the profound and inscrutable mysteries of religion, by his own, silly, shallow conceits. What is now become of the great adorable mysterie of the blessed and undivided Trinity? It is shrunk into nothing." John Bramhall, The Catching of Leviathan (London, 1658; reprinted by Garland: New York, 1977), pp. 472-3.

[15]Hobbes derives this from II Kings 5 (L. 527-8). It seems that he is simply being perverse, in light of these words of Christ: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles" (Matthew: 10.16-18, RSV).

[16]Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), p. 185.

To summarize the above remarks (pp. 36-39): Hobbes's political exposition of the Bible seems to be motivated by his objections to the political views upheld in ecclesiastical writings; Hobbes uses the Bible inconsistently even according to his own overall interpretation; Hobbes's version of Christianity seems but a pale shadow of the New Testament presentation, so pale as to be disrespectful. In light of these observations, is it not fair to say that Hobbes cares very little for the real teaching of the Bible, and that it is a mere tool for him?

Hobbes's political use of the Bible is certainly unorthodox at points, but I want to insist that there is a central point to his overall exegesis which <u>is</u> plausibly derivable from the Bible. The Bible seems to teach that political authority is not to be divinized; the earthly rights of sovereigns and the earthly duties of subjects are derived from human arrangements alone. I will attempt to justify this statement in the following discussion.

Hobbes sees in the Bible two accounts of how men have been ruled. They have been ruled directly by God, and they have been ruled directly by human sovereigns. The direct rule of God is found in the Mosaic system, while rule by man is described in all of the books of the Old and New Testament after I Samuel.

Hobbes seems basically correct in asserting this contrast, despite certain omissions and errors in matters of

detail. His account of the Mosaic system as a theocracy (pp. 31-2 above) is confirmed by the analysis of Spinoza and is generally in harmony with modern writing on the subject.[17] On the other hand, his interpretation of the Kings-Prophets period as one of purely secular rule leaves much to be desired.[18] Yet this latter point does not destroy his reading of the Bible as a whole, because the New Testament brings to an end Israel's claim to be the earthly kingdom of God, no matter how the kingly period is interpreted. Thus, the two models Hobbes sets forth from the Bible are valid. Moses commands an obedience to God which is indistinguishable from civil obedience; Jesus commands an obedience to God which is so distinguishable and thus can coexist[19] with submission to Caesar, that is, with earthly rule in general.

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[17] Spinoza, A Theologico-Political Treatise, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), ch. XVII, esp. 219-220. For a typical modern statement, see M. H. Segal, The Pentateuch (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 78-79.

[18] Lyle Eslinger, in "Thomas Hobbes, Biblical Exegete?" (a paper delivered at the CSSR Annual Meeting at Halifax, Nova Scotia, May 25-27, 1981), points out the major weaknesses in Hobbes's treatment of I Sam 8 ff. He notes: (i) God, not Israel, chooses Saul as King (ii) Both Saul and Israel remain in covenantal obligation to God (iii) Saul is rejected as king for disobeying God's command (I Sam 15). On Hobbes's general omission of the later Old Testament prophets, see L. ch. 36 and p. 34 above.

[19] Admittedly not without tension; see above pp. 38-39 and p. 11, n. 1. Jesus does not advocate the radical separation of belief from action found in Hobbes. Nonetheless the broad distinction between Jesus and Moses stands.

What is this human rule which Jesus condones? It is nothing but that right which is achieved by power. On this Hobbes is perfectly consonant with the Biblical view. For Hobbes, outside of the Kingdom of God men establish rule by paternal authority, conquest, or voluntary contract (L. 251, 253, 227-28). It is quite clear to Hobbes which means is the most common:

> . . . they will all of them justifie the War, by which their Power was at first gotten, and whereon (as they think) their Right dependeth. . . . As if, for example, the Right of the Kings of England did depend on the goodnesse of the cause of William the Conqueror, and upon their lineall, and directest Descent from him; by which means, there would perhaps be no tie of the Subjects obedience to their Soveraign at this day in all the world: wherein whilest they needlessly think to justify themselves, they justifie all the successefull Rebellions that Ambition shall at any time raise against them, and their Successors. Therefore I put down for one of the most effectuall seeds of the Death of any State, that the Conquerors require not only a Submission of mens actions to them for the future, but also an Approbation of all their actions past; when there is scarce a Common-wealth in the world, whose beginnings can in conscience be justified. (L. 721-22)

Men are generally ruled by the results of force, but this does not change the moral and legal requirement of obedience, for covenants extracted out of fear are valid (L. 198, 252). The Old Testament concurs that the primary means of rule (excluding divine intervention) is force. The first man to establish kingdoms in the Bible is Nimrod (Gen. 10.8-12). Nimrod is "mighty" and he is a "hunter", that is, one who deals with animals by force and fear (see Gen. 9.2). He

also founds the great cities and empires of the East, such as Babel. Nothing is mentioned about Nimrod's moral character or his religious beliefs. Nothing therefore stands between the association of violence and fear with the rise of high civilization. The Nimrod story is a paradigm for understanding civilization as not supernaturally grounded. Hobbes understands this well enough to allude to Nimrod (L. 525-6) in contrast with the Apostles. The heirs of Nimrod rule men by laws rooted in power alone. The heirs of the Apostles persuade men of the benefits of the Kingdom of God. It is the difference between command and counsel (L. 302-306). Pharaoh, Caesar, William the Conqueror -- all are owed obedience by their subjects but are not to be thought of as divinely ordained to rule. Jesus, the Apostles, the clergymen of the various Churches -- none are owed obedience by any, yet their message is divine. The obedience necessary to sustain a civilization (except that of Moses) cannot be derived from Christianizing the brutality which originated it. It can only be derived by acknowledging the control of the world as Nimrod's. Jesus knows that this fact never changes. He responds with the wisdom of indifference; he will neither challenge nor sanctify the reality of Power. It is Hobbes's grasp of this last point which enables him to defeat his Scholastic opponents.

Hobbes's clerical foes are handicapped by their misunderstanding of the relation between Nimrod and Jesus. They are still thinking theocratically, that is, they think that the present Church has divinely ordained worldly authority, as Moses had (L. 427, 629-30). They do not see that their rôle is not that of Moses, but of Jesus. They do not see that Moses' rôle as sovereign has been relinquished to the princes of Europe, the heirs of Nimrod. The descending view of government which sees the Pope as Lord of the World and Emperors and Kings as his anointed agents is based upon a faulty view of the Bible's political teaching, not to add the consideration of vested interest (L. 182, 704-15). The true political teaching of the Bible is that people ought not to look for divine sanction for governments, or divine excuses to disobey governments (L. 468-9). Rather, it is that they should honour their obligations to their worldly rulers while keeping faith in Christ (L. ch. 43).

As stated above (p. 40), Hobbes's political exegesis of the Bible has problems, but on this point he makes a good argument. And if those who side with the medieval political tradition still feel that his exposition is contrived, they need only look at the (at least equally) contrived use of the Bible which established their own position.[20]

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[20]For details, see Walter Ullmann, A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

The above discussion only emphasizes the contradiction already noted (p. 38) between Hobbes's rejection of Mosaic theocracy (or its equivalent) and his persistent references to the Books of Moses as texts confirming his own political thought. If Hobbes's political interpretation of the Bible as a whole requires a rejection of the supernatural from politics, it seems to follow that his use of the Five Books of Moses (which accept a supernatural claim) cannot be sincere. His appeal to Moses must then be a sham, and his concern for the Torah (if not the entire Bible) extends only as far as it is a useful proof-text for him.

But this need not be the case. It is possible that Hobbes's attack on Moses and Hobbes's appeal to Moses are not conducted with respect to the same end. It is possible that Hobbes rejects the supernatural origin and justification claimed for the existence of Israel, yet accepts a substantial amount of the political thought (inasmuch as it is separable from the supernatural claim) contained in the Mosaic books.

To divide the Torah into two teachings in this way, the one about God, the other about politics, may seem illegitimate to readers of the Bible. Yet Hobbes himself admits to principles which suggest that he operates under such divisions. Throughout Leviathan he points out the

difference between metaphysical or scientific questions, which have to do with Truth, and political questions, which have to do with Obedience (L. 172-3, 233, 410, 425, 426-7, 500-1, 533-4, 704). He is keenly insistent that believing nonsense is totally separable from obeying the orders of the king who is speaking the nonsense. Why then might not Hobbes have seen such a division in the Torah? Why might he not have thought that the writer of the Torah clothed a coherent political doctrine in a supernatural garment?

The subsequent chapters of this essay will show that there are certain resemblances between Leviathan and the Books of Moses, resemblances strong enough to suggest that Hobbes was indeed a serious student of the political thought of the Torah.

In the final section of this chapter, I wish to bring together the first two sections with the question: What is the relation of the attack on "spirit" as an un-Biblical notion to the exposition of the Bible as a political narrative about the "Kingdom of God"? I suggested at the beginning of the chapter (pp. 13-14) that the first is related to the second as Hobbes's materialist natural science is related to his political science. It is now possible to elaborate this statement.

Spirits are seen as non-material, independent, willful beings who can act upon the corporeal, material world in unpredictable and uncontrollable ways. If there are spirits, the 'laws' of body and motion can never be reliable, because the chains of cause and effect found in material nature can be incomprehensibly ruptured by supernatural intervention. If men believe in spirits, they will not expect natural science (the study of matter in motion) to explain what happens in the world; natural science depends upon the world being reasonable, which the doctrine of willful, unpredictable spirits renders uncertain. And if men do not think they can explain the world, they will hardly come to the conclusion that such explanation could improve their lot. Thus men will not strive to learn about nature in a way which could vastly benefit them. The belief in spirits is thus a cause of human impotence and suffering.[21]

Something similar is at stake in politics. Men who believe in spirits or demons or gods or God often believe that such beings have a direct interest in the political affairs of men. It follows that they will attribute the rise and fall of political fortunes to the supernatural distur-

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[21]My paragraph makes explicit what I think is implied in Leviathan. For allusions to the relation of science to the increase of human power and well-being, see L. 115, 116, 186, 682. For general lament of ignorance and approval of new knowledge of nature, contrast L. ch. 12 with L. 703.

bances of these beings, and will look to them for guidance in establishing human commonwealths. But supernatural revelations are so uncertain, and the claims of those who pretend to know the supernatural will so tainted with vested interest, that such guidance is more often subversive to peace and order than helpful to it. On the other hand, if the political world can be understood without reference to the supernatural, that is, if men can be understood purely as creatures of sense, thought, passion and language, and government purely as an ordering of such men, then there can be a true political science. Just as nature can be understood and mastered for human benefit, so can man be understood and ordered for his own benefit. Such a political science can be as reliable as natural science, for it, too, is freed from the uncertainties introduced by the belief in spirits. It seems, then, that spirits must be purged from both nature and human society so that science can proceed with the betterment of human existence. Hobbes's metaphysical claim is thus prior to, and apparently necessary for, his political science.[22]

Hobbes's interpretation of the Bible follows the same line of reasoning. Hobbes notes that the Old Testament is inclined to downplay the existence of spiritual beings (other than God). He knows the Christian requirement that

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[22]See note on p. 14 for the alternate view.

the two Testaments not contradict each other, and has the facility with words to 'despiritualize' the New Testament as well. He thus establishes a Biblical view of nature which is akin to his own view (see pp. 25-6).

The Biblical view of politics does not follow automatically from the Biblical view of nature in the way Hobbes would like it. This is because the Bible postulates an active, interfering God. Hobbes cannot get rid of God and expect his exposition to be taken seriously by Christians. But God can be removed from the political scene by treating him historically, that is, by treating his interference in human affairs as occurring only at certain points, not continually. The Bible's narrative character lends itself to this treatment. Hobbes can thus argue that God was active in the past, and will be active in the future, but has left the present to man. From this, it follows that men are free to institute commonwealths without regard to supernatural intervention. The political teaching of the Bible thus invites men to discover the principles of political science, by which they can rule themselves in the best possible way.

It seems from the above that Hobbes is using the Bible in a purely negative way. It seem as though Hobbes's reading of the politics of the Bible has the sole function of preventing others from reading it badly. The correct

reading of the Bible appears, ironically, to remove the Bible from consideration in discussions of politics.

This is not to say that Hobbes does not fire some damaging shots from his Scriptural weapon while he holds it (see pp. 23-24 and 40-44 above). However, his principle aim is to empty it altogether, rendering it useless for future battles. That strategm returns the field to the 'bare hands' combat of natural reason, in which Hobbes knows none is his equal.

To conclude this chapter: Hobbes's explicit use of the Bible is too good to be ignored, yet too inconsistent and externally motivated to be trusted completely. This apparent stalement in the investigation of Hobbes and the Bible suggests that another approach is needed. That approach is provided by the suggestion (pp. 45-46) that Hobbes's rejection of the Torah's politics is ambiguous and demands further inquiry.

The rest of this essay will be an examination of the political theory of Hobbes in comparison with the political teaching of the Torah. I will contend that Hobbes's Leviathan implicitly presents Mosaic political themes, and that Hobbes may therefore be counted as a political thinker indebted to the Biblical tradition.

## CHAPTER TWO

## HOBBES'S POLITICAL THOUGHT IN LEVIATHAN

In this chapter I want to explain the central political ideas of Leviathan: passion, state of nature, covenant, and commonwealth. My aim is to bring out certain relationships between these ideas which are not usually noticed in discussions of Hobbes. To accomplish this, I have written the chapter in such a way as to bring out Hobbes's own contrast between "man the matter" and "man the maker" (L. 82, 863). I will argue that Hobbes's political philosophy depicts "man the maker" establishing order and law out of "man the matter" by a creative act involving reasoning, willful language.

### Hobbes's View of Human Nature

As far as political science is concerned, man can be understood by grasping two fundamental facts. Man is a creature of sense, and man is a creature who possesses speech. As a creature of sense, man is subject to the consequences of sense, thought and passion, and in this respect is not different from the animals. In possessing speech, however, man is capable of reason, science, and law, and is thus sharply distinguishable from the animals. Both man's sensual and man's linguistic nature must be taken

into account in political science, lest either the actuality or the potentiality of human nature be overlooked. In this chapter I will discuss first man's sensual nature, especially passion, and its consequences; this will be entitled "Man the Matter". In the second place I will discuss man's linguistic nature, especially the creative role played by language in establishing government; this will be entitled "Man the Maker".

## Man the Matter

### I. Sense, Thought, and Passion

Leviathan opens with an account of sense. Sense is the "apparence" or "seeming" of an external body caused when some motion impinges upon our sense-organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin). This "seeming" (whether a sight, sound, odour, taste, or feeling) is caused by an internal motion produced in response to the external contact. Sense is therefore an inevitable natural consequence of motion. Indeed, sense itself is a motion, the motion most fundamental to living things (L. 85-7, 130). Men and animals alike are living beings and therefore by definition sensual.

The "seemings" produced by sense-contact are also called "images" (L. 88). Images can be retained in the mind for a long time after their origin in sense-contact. This capacity for keeping images is called "imagination". A single thing imagined is a thought (L. 85, 90, 94). All

mental discourse is the placing of thoughts, that is, of imaginations, in some kind of order. When the sequence of imagination is not random, it is because it is directed by some human aim and hence some human passion (L. 95-6). All of man's "natural wit" (all the intellectual virtue of man which is not dependent upon speech, L. 134-5), including prudence and memory (L. 96-98), is nothing but sequential thought. Since thought is a natural result of sense, animals too are capable of it (L. 96, 98), although the range of animal thought is limited by the absence of the passion of curiosity (L. 96, 124).

The other natural consequence of sense is passion. Passions are the tiny internal movements which initiate voluntary motion (L. 118-9). These tiny movements have well-known names: hunger, thirst, desire, fear, pride, love, hate, and many others (L. ch. 6). Passions, like thought, inevitably follow from sense. For when an object is sensed, the body undergoes a passionate response of some kind.[1] Sometimes the response comes directly upon sense; passions such as hunger, thirst, and natural lust operate in this way. At other times a passion is only initiated after the mediation of sense through thought. For example, the proper response to the object "mouse" is not immediate

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[1]Except in the case of contempt (L. 120).

but comes from a thought such as "mice carry disease". Only after such a thought does the proper reaction, in this case aversion, set in. But whether immediately from sense, or mediately through thought from sense, passions are a natural product of sense and hence of living bodies in general.

This is not to say that human and animal passions are identical. The dominant passions of animals, such as hunger, thirst, lust, and anger, are related to immediate physical needs (L. 96, 124). Men, however, are more capable of those passions which are detached from physical immediacies and arise from memory of things past, assessment of one's present situation, or projection of future prospects. In particular, men are capable of a joy arising from their conception of their own power or ability; this joy is called glory and its dark side is pride (L. 124-5, 140, 225-6, 362). This pleasure of the mind sets men off sharply from animals. Also, curiosity, while regarded as a kind of desire, is a desire peculiar to man (L. 124). Yet while Hobbes grants these differences some importance, he does not treat them as supernaturally-established differences between man and the animals. They are still passions, grounded in sense and thought, and thus simply part of "man the matter".

From the above discussion, it is evident that thought and passion are interrelated. Thought is sometimes guided by passion (p. 53), and passion is sometimes deter-

mined by thought. In what follows, I will use "man the matter" and the description of man as a passionate creature almost interchangeably. It must be understood that the broadest sense of passion is meant, that is, all the passion incident to sense and thought, including that passion unique to human beings.

## II. The Amorality of Passion

Hobbes makes it clear throughout Leviathan that passion is an amoral phenomenon. Passions are not to be judged in terms of good or evil. The standards of good and evil apply properly to men's actions in a civil society; actions which are enjoined by the law are good, actions forbidden by it evil. These categories are relevant because men's actions are a matter of choice. But passion is not a matter of choice. It is a natural product of sense, inevitable; and it is fruitless to label what is inevitable as good or evil.[2] The following discussion is devoted to elaborating this point.

Passions belong to all men by virtue of their being men:

> . . . whosoever looketh into himself, and considereth what he doth, when he does think, opine, reason, hope, feare, &c . . . he shall thereby read and know what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men upon the like occasions. . . . (L. 82)

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[2]Unless one means merely "pleasant" or "unpleasant". But Hobbes carefully distinguishes good and evil as moral terms, that is, terms referring to obedience and disobedience to law, divine or human (L. 120, 234, 365).

Passion is grounded in sense and is thus coincident with human life:

> . . . there is no such things as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire, nor without Feare, no more than without Sense. (L. 130)

> And therefore a man who has not great Passion for any of these things . . . cannot possibly have either a great Fancy, or much Judgment. . . . For as to have no Desire, is to be Dead: so to have weak Passions, is Dulnesse. . . . (L. 139)

> Nor can a man any more live, whose Desires are at an end, that he, whose Senses and Imaginations are at a stand. (L. 160)

The above fact being the case, passions are outside man's control and therefore cannot be subject to moral judgment:

> The Desires, and other Passions of man, are in themselves no Sin. (L. 187)

> The secret thoughts of a man run over all things, holy, prophane, clean, obscene, grave, and light, without shame, or blame. . . . (L. 137)

> To be delighted in the Imagination onely, of being possessed of another mans goods, servants, or wife, without any intention to take them from him by force, or fraud, is no breach of the Law, that sayth, Thou shalt not covet: nor is the pleasure a man may have in imagining, or dreaming of the death of him, from whose life he expecteth nothing but dammage, and displeasure, a Sinne. . . . For to be pleased in the fiction of that, which would please a man if it were reall, is a Passion so adhaerent to the Nature both of a man, and every other living creature, as to make it a Sinne, were to make Sinne of being a man. (L. 336)

The amorality of passions allows Hobbes to reject the traditional connotations of certain words. For example, he says of the word "sensual":

> Of Pleasures, or Delights, some arise from the sense of an object Present; And those may be called Pleasures of Sense (the word sensuall, as it is used by those onely that condemn them, having no place till there be Lawes). (L. 122)

The word "sensual" would only mean "pertaining to sense", but for the fact that certain "sensual" activities are in certain places unlawful. Convention has imparted the air of evil to "sensuality", and this obscures the fact that nothing about sensation is either good or evil in nature.

Hobbes does something similar with "covetousnesse" and "ambition":

> Desire of Riches, COVETOUSNESSE: a name used alwayes in signification of blame; because men contending for them, are displeased with one anothers attaining them; though the desire in it selfe, be to be blamed, or allowed, according to the means by which those Riches are sought. (L. 123)

> Desire of Office, or precedence, AMBITION; a name used also in the worse sense, for the reason before mentioned. (L. 123)

Hobbes here liberates these words from the negative connotations they have borne. Covetousness and ambition are passions, hence they are amoral and should not be judged. The actions of covetous or ambitious people may be judged, where there is law, as good or evil. But the passions are beyond judgment and men are never responsible for their existence.

Hobbes not only removes negative connotations from words, but noble ones as well. For example, "love" is

nothing but the desire of a particular object (L. 119). Since all objects are bodily, it is impossible to speak of a "Love" directed to something beyond the sphere of sense. A theological assertion about "Love of the Good" is nonsense in Hobbes's terminology; "good" is not an object (L. 114). In fact, Hobbes literally denies the existence of any Highest Good (L. 160). As Hobbes removes the "devilish" overtones of "sensual" and "ambitious", so he removes the "godly" potency from the word "love". Hobbes's passions, like his Nature (see chapter 1), are de-supernaturalized.

The above discussion can be summarized in one sentence: Passion is a neutral fact of life, and carries with it no criteria of moral responsibility.

## III. The Elevation of Passion

Hobbes's argument that the disreputable passions should be regarded as morally neutral (p. 57) is a substantial criticism of Medieval moral theory. But his criticism goes deeper still. He suggests that in the present world, passion must be regarded as the driving force behind human achievement and the standard which measures human happiness. This can be drawn from the following passages:

> Wherein there is no Passionate Thought, to govern and direct those that follow, to itself, as the end and scope of some desire, or other passion: In which case the thoughts are said to wander, and seem impertinent one to another, as in a Dream. Such are Commonly the thoughts of men, that are . . . without care of any thing. . . . (L. 95)

> The causes of this difference of Witts, are in the Passions: and the difference of Passions, proceedeth partly from the different Constitution of the body, and partly from different Education. . . . The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. . . . And therefore, a man who has no great Passion for any of these things; but is as men terme it indifferent; though he may be so farre a good man, as to be free from giving offence; yet he cannot possibly have either a great Fancy, or much Judgement. For the Thoughts, are to the Desires, as Scouts, and Spies, to range abroad, and find the way to the things Desired: All Stedinesse of the minds motion, and all quicknesse of the same, proceeding from thence. For as to have no Desire, is to be Dead; so to have weak Passions, is Dulnesse. (L. 138-9)

In passages like these Hobbes elevates the status of passion. He inverts the traditional precedence of reason over passion (established so clearly in Plato's Republic), and turns reason into the instrument of passion. Passion takes the leading rôle in human affairs. Passion makes things move; it brings about great thinking, great invention, and great deeds. It is not something to be despised or beaten down. Passion is quite properly the driving force behind human life.

Something further is implied. If passion determines the goals or ends of human activity, it also determines which goals or ends have priority over others. That is, passion determines what shall be called the good life or the happy life. But passion knows no goodness or happiness except its own fulfillment. It follows that the good life

is the one in which passions are constantly satisfied, not the one in which the passions are frustrated or abolished. There is a passage in Plato's Gorgias which brings out the antithesis between the Hobbesian and the classical views on passion and the best life. In it (Gorg. 492d-494c) Callicles ridicules Socrates's contented man, because in his control of his desires he resembles a corpse, or a stone, not a living man. Socrates in his turn ridicules the Sophist for preferring the view that the happy man is like a sieve, constantly satisfying desire without ever truly being satisfied. The view which Hobbes takes is clear:

> Continuall successe in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continuall prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I mean the Felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetuall Tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because Life it selfe is but Motion, and can never be without Desire. . . . (L. 129-30)

The promotion of passion to the commanding rank over human life has a significant result for Hobbes's political thought. It means that "man the maker" must keep in mind the ends of "man the matter" as he constructs his commonwealth. He must not try to base his commonwealth on ends other than the satisfaction of human passions.[3] This very important point will be taken up again later in this chapter, and still further on in the argument of the thesis.

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[3] In this chapter I am dealing only with Hobbes's "natural", not his "Christian" commonwealth.

## IV. Passions and Conflict

The fundamental problem about human passions is that they lead men into conflict. The most significant passions in this regard are desire, fear, and pride. The following discussion is devoted to examining this aspect of the passions.

If passions are the natural judge of what is best for man (pp. 59-60), there follows a political consequence, the "Right of Nature". The Right of Nature is the right of a man (who is bound by no previous covenant) to do anything he thinks necessary for his self-preservation (L. 189). Since this right of self-preservation is merely a translation of passion into legal language, and since passion is self-justifying, the Right of Nature is therefore not derivable anything more fundamental than itself.

The Right of Nature allows men to act on their passions and their suspicions of other men without hindrance. It thus inevitably draws human beings into conflict. This can be shown clearly in the case of desire and the case of fear.

All men desire things, either because they are necessary for survival (e.g. food) or because they give pleasure (e.g. works of art). It is not always possible to avoid competing with others for the same objects. When the objects are essential, desire for them makes the competition a life-and-death struggle. Even when men find themselves

currently with adequate provision for their desires, they cannot be sure of an everlasting supply. Man is an anxious animal, and is concerned about his future desires as well as his present ones. Men thus find themselves in competition for their future desires.

The means to the attainment of future desires is power. Men must compete for power if they wish to secure all their desires for the future. This competition is a universal result of desire:

> So that in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restless desire of Power after power, that ceaseth only in Death. (L. 161)

This competition applies to those whose desires are moderate, as well as to those whose desires are immoderate, for if a man does not match or surpass his neighbour in power, he will fall behind first in ability to acquire and then in acquisition, finally endangering his security (L. 161). Since all men must engage in this competition, and since their natural right is unlimited, they will not hesitate to deceive, wound or kill in order to increase their power.

The passion of fear likewise produces conflict. Men instinctively fear pain and violent death. They also fear the loss of their means of livelihood (e.g. land), since that also leads to suffering and death. In response to this fear men are forced to kill all those men who directly threaten their lives, and overpower all the rest who potentially endanger them (L. 184-5). The fear cannot

be eased by mere promises of goodwill, because without government and law there is no force to guarantee that such promises will be kept. In such a situation, the man who is ruled by trust rather than fear may easily be slain (L. 190). Fear, like desire, leads to anticipation, amassing of power, conflict, and death.

Action grounded in fear and desire is in accordance with the Right of Nature (p. 61). But there is another passion, not connected with self-preservation, which tends to lead men into conflict. That passion is pride or vain-glory (L. 140, 185). Man takes pride in seeing himself as superior to his neighbours, especially when this view is confirmed by others in praise or special honours (L. ch. 10; 226). Men love reputation and honour, and dislike obscurity and dishonour. Not to be honoured is to be undervalued by others. If men are undervalued then they are not feared or loved, not thought wise, useful, powerful, or dangerous (L. ch. 10). Men are unwilling to suffer this evaluation. It can produce in them Rage (L. 140), which can produce violent conflict. Or it can make men determined to increase their honour in the eyes of others by harming those who undervalue them. Thus, due to pride, men will invade each other:

> . . . for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other signe of undervalue, either direct in their Persons, or by reflexion in their Kindred, their Friends . . . or their Name. (L. 185)

It is natural that pride should lead to conflict, for pride is based on comparison and thus by its very nature competitive. By contrast, fear and desire turn men to competition not by their nature but by their consequences. It is because of this natural tendency of pride that Hobbes needs to stridently attack it throughout Leviathan. He even suggests that there is a "Law of Nature" against pride (notwithstanding his own argument that passions are unchangeable), so concerned is he about its potential to create conflict. And he singles it out as the key passion hostile to the notion of ruling (L. 362), in his interpreation of the Leviathan passage in Job.

Once one understands the tendency of man's passions towards conflict, one can grasp the meaning of Hobbes's notion of the state of nature.

## V. State of Nature

The state or condition of nature is the state of war between men which necessarily exists in the absence of government. "During the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe" (L. 185), every man finds that his existence is in opposition to that of every other man, so that he must continually be engaged in outwitting, subduing or destroying his fellow human beings. That men should naturally be at war rather than naturally cooperative is a fact that follows directly from the nature of human passion, as described above.

By war Hobbes does not necessarily refer to physical combat. War is really nothing but the continuing potential for conflict:

> . . . the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. (L. 186)

Without such "assurance to the contrary", no man can truly be bound not to use every kind of "Force, and Fraud" (L. 188) in his own interest. No one, therefore, can be trusted, and this perpetual suspicion and readiness for conflict is really war.

Although such a state of nature has existed among certain savage peoples (L. 187), it is not to be understood as a historical generalization:

> It may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of warre as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world. . . . (L. 187)

Rather, it is to be conceived as the theoretical alternative to law, order, and civil society, an alternative which is on occasion nearly realized, as when nations collapse into civil war:

> Howsoever, it may be perceived what manner of life there would be, where there were no common Power to feare; by the manner of life, which men that have formerly lived under a peacefull government, use to degenerate into, in a civill Warre. (L. 187)

With such remarks Hobbes reminds his English readers about the unpleasant consequences of their own rebellion against their King.

He refers to civil war or its consequences on several occasions, which make it clear that civil war, anarchy, and the state of nature are for practical purposes equivalent terms (L. 236-7, 238, 366, 469, 728). Perhaps the most significant of these passages is the following:

> . . . or they must suffer themselves to bee lead . . . into rebellion . . . and 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. (L. 469)

This passage is significant because it appeals to an antithesis between "order" and "chaos". Chaos is the unformed matter of the world (L. 173), writes Hobbes in an allusion to the creation story of Hesiod.[4] The other place where Hobbes mentions a creation story, in his Introduction (L 81-2), speaks about "man the matter" being rendered into Leviathan, the "artificiall man". The parallel Hobbes makes with the Genesis story here puts "man the matter" as the "formless and void" earth (Gen. 1.2), that is, as something akin to Hesiod's "chaos". The chaotic matter which is man is transformed into the Commonwealth, Leviathan, by the ordering activities (L. 82, 363, 368) of the "Creator", man the maker. The dissolution of a Commonwealth in civil war is disorder (L. 363, 366, 367, 369, 378, 469, 728) and a return to the state before creation, the "first Chaos".

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[4]Whether Hobbes understands Hesiod correctly is not an issue here. At this point I only wish to draw attention to the 'creation motif' in Leviathan. Later on I will discuss the relation of Hobbes's 'creation' to that of Genesis.

Hobbes thus thinks of the state of nature as a chaos, an unruly and disordered existence of men governed by their naked passions. This description is significant for understanding Hobbes's notion of "Commonwealth" as well as Hobbes's affinity to the Bible.

Hobbes's feeling about the state of nature is given in clear, forceful statements:

> But a man may here object, that the Condition of Subjects is very miserable . . . not considering that the estate of Man can never be without some incommodity or other; and that the greatest, that in any forme of Government can possibly happen to the people in generall, is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries, and horrible calamities, that accompany a Civill Warre; or that dissolute condition of masterlesse men, without subjection to Lawes, and a coërcive Power to tye their hands from rapine, and revenge. . . . (L. 238)

> . . . In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. (L. 186)

Hobbes's prose conveys with conviction the view that man's pre-political, natural state is not an idyllic life in the field and forest, but rather the greatest of disasters. This disaster is avoided as long as "man the matter" submits to the reason and will of "man the maker".

## Man the Maker

### I. Speech as Uniquely Human

Speech is a power peculiar to man (L. 109), which distinguishes him from the other living creatures (L. 93-4, 98-9, 100). Speech is not, like sense, imagination and passion, reducible to something more fundamental than itself.[5] Rather, it is itself fundamental, a capacity which, along with sense, defines man.[6]

As if to stress the utter independence of the ability to speak from other human faculties, Hobbes attributes its origin to God:

> The first author of Speech was God himself, that instructed Adam how to name such creatures as he presented to his sight; For the Scripture goeth no further in this matter. But this was sufficient to direct him to adde more names, as the experience and use of the creatures should give him occasion; and to joyn them in such manner by degrees, as to make himself understood; and so by succession of time, so much language might be gotten, as he had found use for. . . . (L. 100)

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[5]Sense is nothing but motion (L. 86), imagination only decaying sense (L. 88), passion a tiny interior motion (L. 118-119). For an interesting study on how Hobbes reduces things to materialist first principles, see D. Newton-De Molina, "Nothing But -- A Stylistic Trait in Hobbes' Leviathan", English Studies, 53 (1972), 228-33.

[6]See pp. 51-2 above. A case could be made for treating curiosity and pride as defining characteristics of man. I treat them (as does Hobbes) as passions and thus part of "man the matter". Even were they liberated from this category, my argument for the creative rôle of speech would be unaffected.

Hobbes rarely, if ever, attributes to God anything which he can explain in terms of natural phenomena.[7] Also, in Parts I and II of Leviathan Hobbes is supposed to be dealing with politics without regard for special revelation, so that mention of the Bible seems counter to his purpose. Finally, the account to which Hobbes alludes (Genesis 2.18-23) does not clearly attribute the origin of speech to God; man's naming of the animals seems to be completely his own action. It seems as though Hobbes is going out of his way to present speech as something divine.

One could come to two conclusions about this. It could be that Hobbes is forced to postulate a supernatural origin for speech because his natural science fails him on this point. Or it could be (and this I think is more likely) that for Hobbes, speech sets man so far above the rest of nature (including man's own passionate nature) that its power, if not its origin, is to be regarded as divine. In his ability to speak man resembles God. A comparison will illustrate this. God is a non-sensual,[8] speaking (L. 82) being; animals are sensual, non-speaking beings; man holds an intermediate position as a sensual, speaking being. In

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[7] See above, pp. 46-49, and p. 68 n. 5.

[8] See above, p. 19; also (L. 402) God is not to be thought of as having passion: since passion follows necessarily from sense, it follows that God is non-sensual.

this position, man shares characteristics with both the animals and God. Hobbes, like the Medieval world, has a vision of a "Chain of Being" in which man ranks just below the immortal. But for Hobbes the divine aspect which gives man his high rank in Creation is neither his immortal soul nor his rationality,[9] but his ability to imitate the divine in speech.

The importance of speech in Hobbes's political thought has not been thoroughly studied.[10] Yet Hobbes, immediately upon the introduction of speech in Leviathan, mentions its constitutive power:

> . . . SPEECH, consisting of Names or Appellations, and their Connexion . . . without which, there had been amongst men, neither Common-wealth, nor Society, nor Contract, nor Peace, no more than amongst Lyons, Bears, and Wolves. (L. 100)

The constitutive or creative rôle of speech will be the focus of discussion in the rest of this chapter.

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[9]Hobbes rejects the immortality of the soul (pp. 19-24 above). Rationality, however, is a distinguishing quality of man, but it is derived from speech (L. 106), as will be shown in some detail below. It is better to regard speech rather than rationality as the special quality, because speech encompasses more than rationality: speech produces law, the public will (L. 81), and will is a capacity independent from rationality. This again will be discussed at some length below.

[10]Although I am greatly indebted to the work which has been done, particularly Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960), pp. 239-85, and R. W. Alexander, "The Myth of Power -- Hobbes's Leviathan", Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 70 (1971), pp. 31-50.

## II. Speech, Reason, and Science

Speech is the prerequisite for reason (L. 106). Speech affixes names to thoughts, and general agreement upon such names yields definitions. Speech also assigns names to numbers (L. 104), and thus makes it possible for men to count, arrange things in sequence, add and subtract -- in a word, to reckon (L. 110). Being the mother of definition and of reckoning, speech is also the mother of reason, for reason is simply the reckoning of consequences from definitions (L. 111).

Systematic reckoning from definitions, focussed upon a single subject, yields Science (L. 115). Thus, reckoning all the consequences from the definitions of line, angle, etc., yields the science of geometry (L. 105); reckoning all the consequences from the definitions of sword, thrust, parry, etc., yields the science of fencing (L. 117); reckoning all the consequences from the definitions of covenant, sovereign, law, etc., yields the science of politics (L. 149). Since science derives from reason, and reason from speech, science ultimately derives from speech.

Lacking speech, and hence the ability to reckon from definitions, animals possess neither reason nor science. They can think, accumulate experience, anticipate the future on the basis of past events, and act prudently (L. 96-8); in short, they know rules-of-thumb. But such makeshift rules

are not science; they yield probabilities only. They cannot account for exceptions to apparent patterns, and so cannot yield complete understanding and complete power over what is understood. Science, on the other hand, allows man to say that given a certain event, a certain action must follow, or that given a certain theorem, a certain angle must be so many degrees (L. 113, 115, 147). Science, insofar as it is able to establish clear definitions and reasoned consequences, guarantees complete understanding of a given matter, and thereby greatly augments human power (L. 96, 113, 115, 117, 186, 378, 692). The superiority of man over the animals is the superiority of reason and science over prudence, or the superiority of thought ordered by the power of language over thought not so ordered.

To understand fully the power of speech for Hobbes, one must view it as an action. Language acts upon thought. Establishing definitions is analogous to the physical action of setting bounds to a territory (whence the derivation of the word "definition"). Connecting words in assertions, and assertions into syllogisms (L. 115) are processes analogous to the physical rearrangement of objects. Speech is thus constitutive: sceince is built or created by the operation of language upon human thought. Natural thought, at its best a loosely-ordered set of sense-images, is ordered and perfected by language to become a superior, 'Artificiall'

thought, science. That Hobbes sees language in this way is confirmed by a passage from one of his other works, in which he calls philosophy (which is science, L. 149):

> . . . the child of the world and your own mind . . . perhaps not fashioned yet, but like the world its father, as it was in the beginning, a thing confused . . . if you will be a philosopher in good earnest, let your reason move upon the deep of your own cogitations and experience; those things that lie in confusion must be set asunder, distinguished, and every one stamped with its own name set in order; that is to say, your method must resemble that of the creation.[11]

While it is not possible to have reason without speech, it is quite possible to have speech without reason (L. 106). Speech is without reason when it begins without definitions (L. 101, 105, 106, 108, 113-4, 115, 116, 146) or when it uses self-contradictory definitions (L. 86-7, 108, 113, 179, 182). The danger of unreasoning speech is great, of parallel magnitude with the benefits of reasoning speech (L. 106, 113, 116). This danger, however, is not an argument for the abandonment of language, but rather a spur for the improvement of education (L. 93, 384): universities must take on the task of making speech reasonable, thus producing science for the benefit of mankind (L. 104, 116).

The antithesis of reasoned speech is found in the writings of Schoolmen, the Roman-type theologians, whose

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[11] "Author's Epistle to the Reader" from De Corpore (English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Molesworth, I, xiii), drawn to my attention by Alexander, op. cit., pp. 35-6.

teachings unfortunately dominate university education (L. 86, 87, 93, 99, 101, 106, 108, 112-3, 113-4, 114-5, 146-7, 179, 182). The evil consequences of the speech of the Schoolmen, both in theology and in politics, is the major concern of Hobbes in Parts III and IV of Leviathan. In Part I, however, Hobbes concentrates mainly on the absurdity of that speech. He treats it ruthlessly, though not without wit:

> There is yet another fault in the Discourses of some men; which may also be numbred amongst the sorts of Madnesse; namely, that abuse of words . . . by the Name of Absurdity. And that is, when men speak such words, as put together, have in them no signification at all; but are fallen upon by some, through misunderstanding of the words they have received, and repeat by rote; by others, from intention to deceive by obscurity. And this is incident to none but those, that converse in questions of matters incomprehensible, as the Schoole-men. . . . What is the meaning of these words. The first cause does not necessarily inflow any thing into the second, by force of the Essentiall subordination of the second causes, by which it may help it to worke? They are the Translation of the Title of the sixth chapter of Suarez first Booke, Of the Concourse, Motion, and Help of God. When men write whole volumes of such stuffe, are they not Mad, or intend to make others so? (L. 146-7)

As reasonable language is associated with 'creation' (see pp. 72-3 above), so unreasonable language is associated with the 'chaos' of unformed beginning of the world described in Genesis:

> I find in those that write of this argument, especially in the Schoolemen and their followers, so many words strangers to our language, and such confusion and inanity in the ranging of them, as that a man's mind in the reading of them distin-

> guisheth nothing. And as things were in the beginning before the Spirit of God was moved upon the abyss, tohu and bohu, that is to say, confusion and emptiness; so are their discourses.[12]

It is evident from the above discussion that Hobbes's view of language has a certain Biblical emphasis, similar to that noted in his view of the state of nature (pp. 66-7 above). I will return to this Biblical theme below, in my discussion of the formation of the Commonwealth.

## III. Passion, Reason, and Covenant

Man is driven out of the state of nature by his passions. This statement may seem to contradict what was said earlier (pp. 61 ff.), that passions are the inevitable cause of the state of nature. It is true that certain passions, particularly fear, desire, and pride, generate the natural condition. But this is not the whole story. Passion indeed produces war, but passion is not therefore satisfied with war. War is a disaster. Two passions in particular render this judgment: desire and fear.

Man desires something more than the animal satisfactions available in the rugged natural state. Man desires space, ease, comfort, conveniences -- in short, "commodious

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[12] Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance (English Works of Thomas Hobbes, ed. Molesworth, V), 19-20, again drawn to my attention by Alexander, op. cit., p. 36.

living" (L. 188). The state of war is incommodious (L. 186, margin); there are no comforts or conveniences. War takes away the leisure necessary for the development of arts, sciences, industry, trade and agriculture, and prevents men from enjoying the fruits of these activities. Deprived of such fruits, human desire is unsatisfied.

Men by nature fear violent death more than anything else (L. 186), and will do anything possible to avoid it. Yet the state of nature is the state in which this fear is perpetual. In nature, every man is potentially the murderer of every other. In the face of this possibility, human fear is multiplied. Man seeks deliverance from such a climate.

Thus, both desire and fear are ambiguous passions. They incline men to war, yet they urge the avoidance of war. By itself, passion has no solution to this dilemma. All it can do it provide the imperative that the dilemma must be solved, and pass the problem on to reason. For reason can show the necessary conditions for the abolition of constant fear and unsatisfied desire.

These necessary conditions are called the "Laws of Nature". These "laws" are the principles of conduct taught to passion by reason. They are not "laws" in the proper sense, the sense of "commands", because reason never commands passion, but rather serves it (L. 58-60). Rather, they are the formulations for action relevant to the achieve-

ment of passion's ends. Passion will pay heed to the Laws of Nature, not out of obedience but out of self-interest.

Reason derives the first Law of Nature from the following argument. The condition of nature presents the constant possibility of violent death. The most fundamental concern of man is to avoid violent death. Man must therefore shun the natural state of war; he must seek peace, as far as is consistent with his self-preservation. This is the first Law.

The second Law of Nature is derived from the first. Man must seek peace at virtually any cost. The main obstruction to peace is man's "Right of Nature" (pp. 61-3 above), which allows him unlimited action in his own interest as he perceives it; such an infinite right cannot coexist with peace. Therefore, the rights of each individual must be diminished. The second Law dictates that each man must be willing to give up as much of his infinite right as is contrary to peace, provided that other men will do the same.

The way to achieve this renunciation of right is found in speech. Speech plays an essential rôle because it is the means of indicating a man's will, that is, his dominant desire,[13] in most situations (L. 102). The

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[13]To be precise, the will is the dominant desire or aversion at the outcome of a process of deliberation (L. 127). Since I am discussing the motion toward peace, I am using will in the sense of appetite or desire (L. 119).

dominant desire of men in the state of war is to seek peace, according to the first Law, and to establish a general diminishment of rights, according to the second Law. This desire or will to enter into peaceful terms can be translated by speech into hypothetical actions, e.g., "If you will refrain from harming me, I will refrain from harming you". Men can voluntarily initiate a relinquishing of rights. Thus, through speech, the possibility of peace arises. Without speech, such an expression of will would be impossible; hence, agreement would be impossible, and men would remain in the state of war.[14]

Such spoken indications of will between people are called "contracts", "pacts", or "covenants".[15] In a

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[14]There is a difficulty in Hobbes's thought at this point. Speech is necessary for agreement, and agreement is necessary for peace. Yet speech cannot be prior to peace in this elementary way. For speech, if it is to be intelligible, must consist of words, the definitions of which are generaly known, and the connection of such words according to generally accepted patterns. But for Hobbes, definitions and rules of any kind can only arise from human convention, not from nature. Language could not be operative without some prior human agreement. In the state of war as Hobbes portrays it, men could never hope to be united long enough to construct a common language. Therefore, if men ever had been in the state of raw nature, they never could have risen out of it! Of course, the state of nature is not meant as a historical conjecture (p. 65 above), but rather as a pedagogical model of absolute anarchy, a situation "immitigably disastrous", as one wise critic has put it. But the question is still unanswered: How, in Hobbes's terms, can one account for the existence of language, if one does not take his attribution of it to God literally?

[15]The precise distinction between "contract" and "covenant" (L. 193), is not important here. Hobbes speaks most often in Leviathan of "covenant" (L. 196 passim).

covenant men agree to mutually renounce certain rights (e.g., to kill each other), or to transfer certain rights to one another (e.g., the right to a plot of land in exchange for the ownership of some agricultural implements), or to transfer right to a third party (e.g., the right to arbitrate their disputes). It is by making covenants, and honouring them, that men can peaceably live together. The honouring of covenants is the turning of the speech into the actions; without it, the making of covenants is pointless. Thus is derived the Third Law of Nature, the keeping of covenants, also called justice (L. 201-2).

It might seem that an acknowledgement of the rationality of the first three Laws of Nature is an adequate foundation for peace and human happiness, but Hobbes makes it clear that this is not so. Men have the capacity to act against reason, i.e., against their own reasoned self-interest, because action is finally dependent upon will, not reason, and will is not essentially rational (L. 127). Some men choose not to honour the covenants they make; they insist upon retaining the right to things they have willingly transferred to another. Such violation of covenant, while perhaps beneficial for an individual in the short run, in the long run undermines the trust of every man in the usefulness of covenant, and returns everyone to the state of war and exposure to violent death. It is evident, therefore,

that the Laws of Nature[16] in themselves are not an adequate foundation for peace. Someone is needed to enforce the covenants which people make, someone with power enough to make the "Laws" of Nature into true laws, that is, into commands of human authority. It is this consideration which gives rise to the true "Common-wealth", the only reliable alternative to the fearful state of nature.

## IV. Covenant and Commonwealth

Covenants cannot produce peace unless they are enforced. Men who place their hope in covenants must therefore find an enforcer. But all men are approximately equal in power (L. 183), so that no single man is powerful enough to compel all the others to honour their covenants. Since nature thus fails to provide an enforcer, man is forced to create one: an "Artificiall Man" (L. 81) possessing the irresistible power which any natural man lacks.

The "artificiall man" is brought into being by a covenant among men, that is, it is a product of the will of men as declared in speech. By a unanimous speech, men renounce all that natural right which is repugnant to peace,

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[16]The other Laws of Nature (L. 209-217) are derivable from the urge to peace. I have omitted them from my account, which requires only the principles necessary for the creation of commonwealths, not for thier sustinence.

and transfer it to one man (or assembly of men), thereby authorizing that man (or assembly of men) to govern them in all affairs pertaining to the maintenance of peace. The corporation of men thus formed is known as the Commonwealth. The particular man (or assembly) authorized to govern the corporation is the Sovereign. The creation of the Commonwealth is described by Hobbes in this striking passage:

> The only way to erect such a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their owne industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will . . . to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and everyone to owne . . . whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act . . . and therein to submit their Judgments, to his Judgment, and their Wills, everyone to his Will. This is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a reall Unitie of them all, in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such manner, as if every man should say to every Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man, in such a manner, as if every man should say to every man, I Authorise and give up my Right of Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner. This done, the Multitude so united in one Person, is called a COMMON-WEALTH, in latine CIVITAS. This is the Generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather (to speake more reverently) of that Mortall God, to which wee owe under the Immortall God, our peace and defence. (L. 227)

It is interesting to note how little action is required of "man the maker" in erecting the Commonwealth. The parallel phrases which define "conferre all their power

and strength" make this clear: "appoint one man"; "every-one to owne"; "submit their Wills". All of these indicate not physical motion, but speech. The transfer of power does not refer to anything accomplished by men's bodies (e.g. giving up all the weapons to the Sovereign). Rather, Sovereignty is established by the declaration of will alone. The founding covenant is a speech of creative power, virtually supernatural. Nothing is done, yet everything. One moment there is a chaotic multitude, next a commonwealth. It is like the divine fiat "Let there be light" which in itself produces light (Gen. 1.3). Indeed, Hobbes has the divine commands of Genesis in mind when he writes about the origin of government (L. 82). Willful speech is the mysterious creative power of both God and "man the maker".

Seeing the founding covenant as an act of creation does not force one to conceive political creativity as a historical action. Indeed, it seems that Hobbes thinks that such a self-conscious institution of Commonwealth as he describes is unlikely. In the above passage he notes the hypothetical nature of the formal agreement with the words ". . . as if every man should say to every man, I authorise. . . ." And elsewhere Hobbes implies that Commonwealths founded by institutions are not the rule. Rather, states are usually founded by less formal procedure and more violence:

> . . . there is scarce a Common-wealth in the world, whose beginnings can in conscience be justified. (L. 722)

The lack of an explicit founding covenant, however, does not change the nature of the Commonwealth. The rights of the Sovereign and the duties of the subjects are the same when the Commonwealth is founded upon paternal rule, or when it is founded upon conquest (L. 256). This is because the covenant is regarded as having been made implicitly, by the consent of the subjects to live in such Commonwealths. Men must always and everywhere act as if they had willfully established their Commonwealths, so that they will bear in mind the unpleasant alternative of the natural state and understand the need for unqualified obedience to rule.

Man's political creativity, then, is not found only when he institutes a new Commonwealth. It is found wherever men by rational labour construct the "Laws of Nature", and wherever men will that those principles be actualized, in sustaining a well-built Commonwealth or amending the flaws of one inadequately built. In Genesis, God creates but once, yet the firmament which he builds sustains that creation by keeping out the waters which would plunge the world back to formlessness (Gen. 1.6-7; 7.11, 17-24). Thus God's creativity is in a sense perpetual. So in the case of man: he rarely actually creates a commonwealth, but his mind can comprehend that creation and tell him what he must will in order to guarantee its permanence and prevent the chaos of civil war.

## V. Sovereignty, Will, and Law

Nature provides no universal standard of good and evil. Good and evil are not independent realities, says Hobbes, but words by which individual men stamp their preferences upon the world. A thing or state of affairs which a man desires, or thinks would please him, he calls "good"; a thing or state of affairs which a man does not desire, he calls "evil" (L. 120). The use of the words is thus governed by passion.

The varying directions of men's passions (L. 83) naturally produces varying judgments of good and evil, which is reflected in varying wills and actions. Varying wills conflict by nature; the problem of good and evil is therefore irreconcilable by nature. It can only be solved by human convention. One judgment of good and evil must supplant all private judgments; one will must supplant all individual wills.

The only person whose will can represent that of all men is the Sovereign of a Commonwealth. It is thus only through the existence of Commonwealth that men can know of standards of good and evil. The Sovereign establishes the existence of good and evil by public proclamation, that is, by speech. He declares his will that certain things shall be done, and that certain things shall not be done, by the members of the Commonwealth. What he enjoins is good; what he forbids is evil. The proclamation of Sovereign will

which defines good and evil is the Law (L. 81, 120-1, 234, 365).

Law, like science, is a product of the creative capacity of speech. Much as the philosopher's speech creates a universal body of thought, science, out of incoherent sense-images, so the Sovereign's speech establishes a universal will, law, out of irreconcilable passions.

Law is unchallengeable. It cannot be resisted on the grounds that it is unreasonable, because reason is an irrelevant criterion. The Sovereign is not asked to produce truth, he is asked to sustain order. Order is maintained when everyone obeys the law, whether that law is reasonable[17] or not. Nor can law be challenged on the basis of some external standard of good and evil, such as private conscience or a divine inspiration (L. 365-7). The introduction of any second standard into the Commonwealth can only divide the subjects and thus is contrary to the purpose of law. Hobbes's Sovereign, like Hobbes's God, stands above all mortal judgment, for he is the creator of the values by which men judge. In the legal sphere he must be treated "reverently", like a "mortall God".

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[17]A law could only be "unreasonable" in the sense of "not in the best interest of the Commonwealth". Even so, obedience to laws made without wisdom is less dangerous that disobedience to law, which on a large scale guarantees chaos.

## VI. Passions and Commonwealth

Hobbes insists that there is nothing in the nature of human passion which needs to upset the proper working of a Commonwealth:

> Therefore when they come to be dissolved, not by externall violence, but intestine disorder, the fault is not in men, as they are the Matter; but as they are the Makers, and orderers of them. (L. 363)

Man the matter does not need to be (indeed, cannot be) altered; rather, it is the correctness of the political arrangements which guarantee the stability. Where Sovereignty is properly established, passions do not harm, but actually contribute to, the well-being of the Commonwealth. This can be shown by an examination of fear, desire, and pride in the context of the established state.

The founding covenant does not abolish fear, but redirects it to make it the cement of the Commonwealth. By nature, men fear their neighbours; in the Commonwealth, they fear the Sovereign. But fear of one's neighbours leads one into war, whereas fear of the Sovereign leads one to peace. This does not mean that in a Commonwealth men no longer fear their neighbours. Rather, in the Commonwealth the fear of the Sovereign overrides all other fears. Neighbours may kill a man, but their fear of the Sovereign's punishment makes this less likely. On the other hand, defiance of the rules of peace by the same man invites certain death from the Sovereign. Certain death is more fearsome than

possible death, and so Commonwealth compels a man to place trust in his neighbours. Fear, the same amoral passion which operates in nature, is thus manipulated to produce safety and security.

Desire is also very much present in the Commonwealth. It could hardly be otherwise, since desire for commodious living is one of the major impulses toward the institution of civil society (p. 75-6 above). Subjects may pursue the objects of their desires, restricted only by those laws of property deemed necessary by the Sovereign (L. 234, 296), as much as they wish (L. 264). The desire of material things, even of great wealth, is no more evil in the Commonwealth than in nature (L. 376, 123). Civilization does not require the reduction or elimination of desire, but only conventional restraint upon the means to its satisfaction.

Even pride, the most dangerous passion, can be diverted so that men may compete for esteem without endangering the public order. Members of the Commonwealth may enjoy popularity and public honours (L. 235-6, 393-4), as long as no competition with the Sovereign develops (L. 238, 394). That pride which becomes cruelty (L. 210), feuding (L. 224), or other unnecessary strife (L. 185) is turned, by fear of punishment, to the politically beneficial contest for public recognition.

For Hobbes, the order of civil society is maintained by the prudent redirection of passion. "Man the matter" does not need to undergo any "chemical" or inward transformation, but he must allow himself to be physically rearranged according to the law of the Sovereign. But the law of the Sovereign is just the extension of man's own desire for peace. The law thus serves the ends of passion by manipulating passion. In the best possible political arrangement, passion is neither subdued nor abolished, but ruled in such a way that it may be satisfied.

## Conclusion

Hobbes sees the design and institution of states as acts of creation. The design of states is a human creation produced by the exertion of reason upon the chaos of human thought. The institution of states is an act of creation accomplished by the exertion of will over the chaos of human passion. Reason thus produces the principles of political science, and will, in the form of covenant, establishes those principles as law. Both reason and covenant are possibilities because of man's godlike power of speech. Hobbes's presentation of politics in terms of divine speech, chaos, creation, covenant and law reflects some reading of the Torah, and suggests a need for a political exposition of that text.

# CHAPTER THREE

## HOBBES AND THE TORAH

In the last chapter, I reviewed the political thought of Hobbes's Leviathan with a view to bringing out the Biblical "presence" which pervades that work. In particular, I noted the use of a vocabulary -- creativity, the power of speech, covenant, law -- which is reminiscent of the Five Books of Moses, or Torah. The presence of the language of the Torah in Hobbes's work indicates the possibility that his thought has been shaped by his reading of that literature.

This consideration leads one to ask: Is there a distinctive political teaching presented in the Torah? If there is, and if it resembles the teaching of Hobbes in important respects, then it is likely that Hobbes's political vocabulary indicates a real indebtedness to Biblical thought. On the other hand, if there is no coherent political teaching in the Torah, or if it has a political teaching which fundamentally differs from that of Hobbes, then Hobbes's use of Biblical notions is dishonest, and must be considered (along with much of his explicit use of the Bible, see ch. 1 above) as a rhetorical stratagem aimed at his Biblically-oriented readers.

In this chapter I will argue that the Mosaic books do present a political teaching, that their political

teaching resembles that of Hobbes in important respects, and that Hobbes seems to be presenting that teaching implicitly in Leviathan. I will caution, however, that Hobbes does not accept everything in the Torah, that he in fact rejects the supernatural grounding upon which it claims to be based. In other words, Hobbes achieves a political interpretation of the Torah by divorcing its politics from its theology.

I will proceed in three parts. First, I will conduct a survey of the political thought of the Torah. Second, I will show the similarity of the political teaching there to the thought of Hobbes, concerning such notions as mortality, passions, state of nature, self-interest, covenant and law. Finally, I will show the central ingredient in Hobbes's political thought which is in opposition to the teaching of the Torah, the notion of human creativity.

## I. The Political Thought of the Torah

Before beginning this section, I must make some preliminary remarks. First, this will not be an exhaustive account of the political teaching of the Mosaic books. Such a task is beyond my present capacity. It is also beyond the immediate purpose of my thesis, which is to indicate such central ideas of the Torah as seem to be reflected in Hobbes's writing. Because of this I may give the impression of interpreting loosely. This is not my intention, and to avoid unduly simplifying what is in the Bible I shall expand on certain difficult points in my footnotes. Still, what I present

will not be adequate as a Biblical exposition, and one of the secondary aims of my thesis is to invite others to undertake something more thorough.

Second, while most of the points in my interpretation can be made from a good English translation,[1] I occasionally consider the Hebrew original. This may seem an improper procedure in a thesis about Hobbes, since Hobbes seems to have been ignorant of Hebrew.[2] Yet a broader goal implicit in my thesis -- the introduction of the Bible as a text containing substantial political thought -- seems to

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[1]Hobbes knew of the King James (1611) version (L. 444); its lineal descendants, the Revised Version (Old T: 1885) and the Revised Standard Version (Old T: 1952), give a good idea both of the original Hebrew and of the English which Hobbes knew. These two translations, along with the literal rendering of Eugene Combs (see note 4), have been consulted throughout my study.

[2]It may appear from certain allusions that Hobbes knew Hebrew. His use of the word tohu and bohu from Gen. 1.2 (see p. 75 above), and his unsupported claim about the lack of "copulative est" in Hebrew (Molesworth, IV, 304) sound authoritative, but they do not indicate command of Hebrew any more than the frequent use of phrases like sitz im leben shows real acquaintance with German. The evidence against Hobbes's knowledge is strong: (i) Neither Aubrey (his contemporary biographer) nor any modern scholar whom I have read mentions that Hobbes ever studied or knew Hebrew (ii) Hobbes makes an elementary error in confusing the word "lord" (ʾădonāy) with the word "Lord" yᵉhōwāh in Gen. 19.18 (L. 436) (iii) Hobbes does not hesitate to flaunt his Greek and Latin to make points (L. 132-3, 444-5, et passim); it is unlikely that he would have held back so much had he known Hebrew.

justify speaking about the Hebrew where necessary.[3] By indicating when I am considering a detail of the original, invisible to Hobbes, I hope to avoid any serious confusion.

Third, my exposition of the Torah is greatly indebted to the efforts of three previous interpreters, Eugene Combs, Leo Strauss, and Robert Sacks.[4] Indeed, my way of reading the text has been so shaped by these men, that I can rarely tell whether a particular point or line of reasoning originated within me or comes from one of their suggestions. Therefore, I am limited to a general acknowledgment that the form and substance of my interpretation owe their existence to my engagement with the words of these writers.

I will divide my interpretation into two sections. First, I will consider the Torah's understanding of human nature and why man needs to be ruled. Then, I will indicate the Torah's teaching about the best way for men to be ruled.

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[3]Since any independent study of Old Testament thought will naturally begin from the Hebrew.

[4]Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens", Commentary, 43 (1967), 6:45-57; Robert Sacks, "The Lion and the Ass", Interpretation, May 1980, pp. 29-101 and August 1980, pp. 1-81; Eugene Combs and Kenneth Post, The Foundations of Political Order in Genesis and the Chandogya Upanisad: A New Method of Comparative Textual Study, forthcoming, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York (pages cited are from the unpublished manuscript, used in Religious Studies 1C6, under the title Two Texts: Two Teachings, McMaster University, 1981-82).

## I. Man's Mortality and the Problem of Rule

Any coherent teaching about politics must be based upon a plausible view of human nature. For societies are organizations of people, and an incorrect appraisal of what people are, or can be, can lead to bad formulations of how they should live together. Thus, thinkers like Hobbes and Machiavelli criticized Greek and Christian political thought, on the grounds that it had too high a view of man and therefore aimed too high, dooming itself to failure. Conversely, Hobbes and Machiavelli have been attacked for having too low a view of man, and thus grounding their politics in such baseness as to eliminate real possibilities of human nobility.

The Torah also takes care to establish its view of human nature before making its political recommendations. This view centres on the passions of man which arise in response to human mortality and the deprivations of the physical world. I will elaborate upon this understanding in the following section.

Genesis 1 asserts an optimistic view of the world. The world is created for the benefit of living things, especially man, and man is a God-like being (Gen. 1.26-7) who enjoys dominion over this beneficent order. There is a supply of food adequate for the sustenance of every living thing (Gen. 1.29-30). There is ample room in the earth and sea for man and the other creatures to multiply and fill them (Gen. 1.22, 28). There is no violence exerted by man

upon animals; although he has "dominion" over them, this is not achieved by force, and man does not eat meat (Gen. 1.29). There is no struggle for priority between man and woman, and no subordination of one to the other; man is created as a unity which is male and female (Gen. 1.27). Nor is there strife between man and man, for this presupposes individual interest. Genesis 1 does not speak of individuals, but only of "kinds". It is the collective "man" to which God gives the directive to populate and subdue the earth (Gen. 1.28). Because of this lack of conflict between living beings, there is an absence of regulation governing their conduct. It is especially important to note that nothing rules man. Life in the beneficent order, according to Genesis 1, is non-political.

Such a view of life is obviously inadequate, perhaps even naïve; it bears no resemblance to life as it is daily experienced. Genesis 1 incorrectly evaluates the world and man. Genesis 2-9 sets out to present a truer picture, which I will proceed to examine.

Genesis 1 stresses the likeness of man to God; Genesis 2 emphasizes his connection with the earth. 'Created in the image of God' is quite different from 'formed from the dust of the ground' (Gen. 2.7). In the first case man is depicted as coming down from on high; in the second, as being raised up from the low. Similarly, in Genesis 1 man

is self-reliant, able to live in the world as it is created and subdue it; in Genesis 2 man is not able to take care of even his most basic needs. He dwells in God's garden, and relies upon it for sustenance (Gen. 2.9-10, 15-6). It seems that Genesis 1 stresses man's greatness and power, whereas Genesis 2 strongly evokes a picture of man's smallness and weakness.

It is with this conviction of man's fundamental weakness and lack of sufficiency that Genesis 2-3 raises the question of mortality. If man is basically dust, then he is not a strong or enduring creature: he can be immortal only by the grace of God. In the Eden story, this grace is represented by the tree of life, which grants eternity to the one who eats of its fruit (Gen. 3.22). Man is permitted to eat of this tree, along with most of the other trees of the garden (Gen. 2.15-6). He is not, however, permitted to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2.17). Should he eat of the forbidden tree, he will lose his immortality; he will surely die. Immortality and knowledge of good and evil are thus mutually exclusive options. This exclusiveness is made sharply apparent by the cherubim with the flaming sword which cuts off the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3.24).

The two trees represent two different ways of life. The tree of life represents comfort and the providence of God. Its benefits are eternal life, and the concomitant benefits

of living in the garden: food, water, pleasant surroundings, freedom from fear and anxiety. Its price is that man remain in ignorance and entrust his weak self to the beneficence of God. Man must allow God to decide what is good for him: it is God who plants trees "good" for food (Gen. 2.9), and God who says that it is "not good" for the man to be alone (Gen. 2.18). To partake of eternal life man must renounce self-government.

The tree of knowledge represents the prudence of man. It teaches man how to achieve "good" for himself and avoid "evil"; it teaches him which actions are beneficial and which harmful. It gives man the worldly, practical cleverness which he turns to his survival and the attainment of his desires.[5] The way of the tree of knowledge is a way of human self-reliance, self-determination, and great effort, for everything which the other tree gives freely, must be earned independently by man if he chooses knowledge. It is also a

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[5]After eating the fruit, man is no longer helpless and dependent; he starts to invent and devise. He makes an apron of fig leaves (3.7); he hides to avoid discovery (3.8). Man's son, Cain, learns how to till the soil, becoming independent of God's beneficence (4.2); he also learns to lie with a glib tongue ("I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"). For good discussions of the practical nature of the knowledge of good and evil, see Eugene Combs, op. cit., (note 4), Genesis IV, esp. p. 24, and F. R. Tennant, The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 8-16.

way of anxiety and fear, for man cannot be sure that his own knowledge and effort will always be enough to sustain him. Finally, it is a way of danger, for it can result in great wickedness (Gen. 6.5). The way of prudence chooses human independence in the face of the possibility of suffering, failure, and sin.

Why does man choose human prudence over divine providence? According to the text, it is the desire to partake in divinity. The serpent convinces the woman that man can be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3.5). He convinces her that God is holding back from man one of his privileges, a privilege which can be gained by eating from the tree. And the serpent is partly correct: Man does indeed become like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3.22). But the serpent has perpetrated a deception nonetheless, for he said that man would not subsequently die (Gen. 3.4). The serpent thus claimed that man could partake <u>fully</u> in divinity, could be both knowledgeable and immortal. This God will not allow:

> "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" -- therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden . . . and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3.22-24, RSV)

There is a strong hint of jealousy in God's speech. It is as though he fears that man, knowledgeable and immortal, could prove a dangerous rival. This motif occurs again in

the Babel story.[6] It suggests that God claims a rank and power absolutely imperial, and will not share it, even though this means that human beings must be subject to the miseries of the mortal state. In fairness to God, however, it must be admitted that he warned man about the loss of immortality. Still, one cannot help identifying with the man and feeling that he has been harshly treated by his eviction into the travail of the mortal state.

The nature of the mortal state is described in Genesis 3.14-19. It is nothing like the picture painted in Genesis 1. There is strife between man and the animal world: serpents bite men's heels and are crushed by the same (Gen. 3.15). Woman is to be subordinated to man, and to suffer pain in childbirth (Gen. 3.16). The ground is cursed; it brings forth thorns and thistles rather than nutritious vegetation, so that man will have to labour all of his life just to eat (Gen. 3.17-19). And at the end of it all, there is death. For all concerned, the world is far from beneficent! And man's ability to cope with this world is in doubt; he is reminded of his frailty and his low birth (Gen. 3.19, 23). He is only as mighty as dust. The noble

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[6]Note the similar language of God in response to the project of Babel (Gen. 11.6-8), esp. ". . . and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (RSV). For a different view of God's words, see Combs, op. cit., Genesis XI, p. 10.

"image of God" of Genesis 1 seems absent from this portrait of man's existence.

The real tension which exists between the two views of human life under discussion cannot be avoided. The view that sees God as wholly benevolent necessarily encourages men to accept the world as the best possible. Such a view is untenable in the face of human mortality and its attendant sufferings. At the same time, the view that sees God as selfishly guarding his divinity encourages men to ignore God and act in stubborn self-reliance. This latter course is taken by the men of Genesis 4-6, with disastrous results. Neither claim about the position of man in the world is satisfactory. A middle position, the actual view of the Torah, is to be found in Genesis 9. Before examining it, I will turn to Genesis 4-6 to show what it teaches about men who see the world as privation.

I stressed above the radical difference between the two ways of life characterized by the two trees. In Gen. 4-6 man has chosen the way of prudence. He tries to live aided only by his "knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 3.22). One of the first results of this "knowledge" is procreation. The first action man performs in addressing life outside of the garden is the "knowing" of his wife (yāda$^{c}$). This "knowledge" (the Hebrew root is the same as in the name of the tree) produces offspring. Offspring are an extension of oneself; they live on after one dies, and in their resemblance keep

something of their parents alive. The generation of offspring is thus a substitute for eternal life. The human sexual instinct is a knowledge which attempts to duplicate the benefits of the tree of life. Man still wishes for immortality, and employs his "knowledge" to achieve it insofar as he may. This parallel of procreation with immortality, of the way of the tree of knowledge with the way of the tree of life, is made clearer when one considers the absence of an account of sexuality in the garden with the immediate introduction of sexuality outside.[7]

Procreation continues to be a response of man to the possibility of death. After Cain is forced to leave the ground, his means of livelihood (Gen. 4.12), he "knows" his wife, thus securing a son, Enoch (Gen. 4.17). Later men seem to grasp the relation between wives and offspring. Lamech "takes" two wives (Gen. 4.19), and is the only man in the Cain line (Gen. 4.17-22) to have more than one son. Men learn that the taking of wives is "good" (knowledge of

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[7]Also to be considered is the physical impossibility of man's multiplying in the limited space of the garden, as opposed to the vast area outside. Hobbes picks up the mathematical contradiction involved in assuming immortality with procreation (L. 481).

good and evil) for the production of offspring (Gen. 6.2).[8] Deprivation of immortality leads men to place an emphasis on sexuality.

Another consequence of mortality is fear, especially fear of violent death at the hands of other men. The story of Cain provides the paradigm for this fear. After murdering his brother Abel, Cain fears that all other men will attempt to murder him. The reason for this fear is unclear. Perhaps Cain, having so easily disposed of Abel, is struck by the realization of how vulnerable men are. Perhaps he imputes to all other men the same motives which induced him to kill Abel. Perhaps both of these considerations, and others, are on Cain's mind. In any case, he has the fear. God tries to alleviate this by promising to avenge Cain if he is killed (Gen. 4.15). Cain does not see this as a remedy; he takes his own measures to guarantee his continued existence: he procreates (Gen. 4.17) and he builds a

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[8]The "sons of God" of Gen. 6.1-4 may well be late descendants of Cain (for the argument, see Lyle Eslinger, "A Contextual Identification of the bene ha'elohim and benoth ha'adam in Genesis 6:1-4", Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, 13 (1979), pp. 65-73), and may be polygamous ("they took wives for themselves out of everyone whom they chose", Gen. 6.2). The theme of increasing sexuality parallels the theme of increasing violence (4.8; 4.23-4; 6.11), and so that sexuality is called into question by the Flood.

city (Gen. 4.17), behind whose walls he and his offspring will be safe.[9]

And does not Cain have a good reason to doubt God's protection? Will men believe in God's threats of vengeance, that is, in God's justice, when they know that he spares murderers like Cain? Will they not disregard God and kill whom they please? Will they not supply the justice God lacks? Such is the path taken by Lamech, Cain's descendant. Since there is no visible avenger, Lamech acts as his own (Gen. 4.23-4). He kills those who only bruise him, and boasts of it. Extreme human violence arises as men, anticipating the possibility of their own death, strike first, ruthlessly and without measure. Men like Lamech and Cain are separated from God by the fear of death, and turn to their own resources.

Mortality also generates privation: the lack of comforts and even of basic needs. The ground is cursed (Gen. 3.17-19); it does not easily yield its fruit. Men are aware of God as the one who condemns them to labour (Gen. 5.29). It is not surprising, then, that man turns to his own cleverness to solve the problems of privation. Crude technique appears quite early: Adam and Eve make themselves

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[9]Cain's procreation may be prompted by the general desire for continued life in an uncertain world (see bottom of p. 100), rather than by the specific threat upon his life. However, I suspect the motives are simultaneous. The text is often ambiguous, as though it wishes to show the complexity of human motivation.

aprons of fig leaves to overcome their nakedness (Gen. 3.7). However, such efforts are inferior; God has to improve on men's clothing (Gen. 3.21). But man learns to do better. Cain becomes a tiller of the ground (Gen. 4.2), and thus surpasses his father, who had to rely on God to plant the garden (Gen. 2.8). When Cain is banished from the ground, and thus placed in a situation more perilous than that of Adam (because he is then without a reliable supply of food), he is able to respond with still greater technical achievement: the city.[10] The city is the centre for the development of arts (Gen. 4.20-22), particularly advancements in agriculture (Gen. 4.22), which make it possible to wrench food from the stubborn soil. The city also supplies comforts unavailable even in the garden: music also springs from the technical line of Cain (Gen. 4.21).

The problem with man's increased cleverness is that it seems to go with increased deception and violence. Man gained the knowledge necessary to cover his nakedness, but at the same time gained the ability to deceive God by hiding (Gen. 3.8). Cain, more sophisticated technically, can also deceive more effectively. Where Adam fumbles and gives

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[10]Again, I argue for a multiple meaning of a fact (see note 9): with reference to violent death, the city means "protection", with reference to starvation and discomfort, the city means "arts".

himself away (Gen. 3.10), Cain brazens it out with a lie and change of topic (Gen. 4.9) -- "I do not know -- am I my brother's keeper?" Similarly, men come to "know" that women are "good" for offspring, but they obtain them by "taking" (lāqaḥ) them. "Taking" has an odious sense inasmuch as man lost immortality by "taking" of the forbidden fruit. "Taking" also has the sense of violent and unjust seizure (as Abram's wife is "taken" at the whim of Pharaoh, Gen. 12.15) in some cases. In Genesis 4-6, the "taking" of wives is seen in close proximity to violence: Lamech's anticipatory killing (4.23-4), and the violence following the appearance of the "sons of God" (cf. Gen. 6.2 with 6.11). All of this suggests something questionable about the sexual "takings" occurring before the Flood (see n. 8, p. 101 above). Again, men learn of the forging of metal instruments which plow the ground and increase the supply of food; could they not also forge weapons and increase the efficiency and amount of killing? Given the violent nature of some men, is this not likely? In fact, are not the "mighty men" (gibborîm), the "men of renown" of Gen. 6.4, heroes, warriors -- men whose reputation comes specifically from fighting with such weapons?

It becomes clar, then, that man's knowledge of good and evil is problematic. It is the only thing which seems to alleviate man's condition and make his mortality bearable, yet it also poses the potential of great destruction. This is clear to all by the time of the Flood.

The result of human existence, as defined in Genesis 3 and set into motion in the events of Genesis 4-6, is described in Genesis 6.5: "And God saw that the evil of man was multiplied upon the earth, that every devising of the thoughts of his heart was only evil daily". In Genesis 1 it was man who was to multiply (rābāh); here it is his evil which does so. A perversion of God's intention has occurred. The source of this perversion is man's knowledge of good and evil. Man knows how to benefit or harm himself and others. He has used this knowledge consistently for the harm of others, without achieving his own good, for the earth is filled with the violence he has produced (Gen. 6.11-3). Thus, there is a reversal of the "seeing" of Genesis 1: there, God saw that it was very good (Gen. 1.31), but here he sees nothing but evil. The Flood is God's brutal, effective means of erasing that evil.

But we must not hastily conclude that man alone is to blame. True, man acts harmfully. He follows his passions -- fear, anger, desire -- without restraint. But both of these words -- passion and restraint -- require close examination. Why are man's passions so extreme? Why is there no restraint? On both of these charges, God must take some blame.

Regarding passion: Are not man's extreme passions the product of the world he inhabits? Is he not a weak and frail mortal, in a world in which the soil is nearly unworkable, and in which his neighbours are selfish and violent?

In such a world, where starvation is never far away, and fear is pervasive, is it not reasonable for the human race to come to worship power, and to produce a breed of "mighty men", who take what they desire, and do what they will?

Regarding restraint: Has God given man adequate instruction as to how to deal with his passions? True, he told Cain to "rule" (māshal) over sin (Gen. 4.7), but what could that mean to Cain? Where has he been told what it means to "rule"? For that matter, where has he been taught that he is his brother's keeper?[11] And where does God teach any of the other pre-Flood men?

God, then, is partly to blame for what happens. He is to blame for the harshness of nature and the lack of guidance. The harshness of nature can easily be mitigated by God, and in fact will be (Gen. 8.21). The question of guidance is more vexing. In stepping out of the garden, man was taking on responsibility for himself, as is appropriate for a being who knows good and evil. By standing aside, God allowed man to live independently, according to man's own stated wish (stated, by his choice of the fruit of knowledge).

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[11] I am not trying to excuse Cain for the murder or for the lie which follows it. My only point is that if the reason one should not murder is because one is one's brother's keeper, Cain was not told this: what he was told was confusing and therefore useless.

Yet God knew of the dangers, so he tried, without directly interfering, to evoke from man some internal regulative principle ("You must rule over it", Gen. 4.7). But man, or at least most men, do not possess such an internal regulation. Just as woman must be physically "ruled" (māshal) by her husband (Gen. 2.16), so man must be ruled by something outside of himself. What is high enough to rule man, who knows good and evil? Only another being with such knowledge. This means that man can be ruled only by God, by other men, or by some combination of the two. God sees this: The rest of the Torah is an attempt to show which of these choices is the best.

With the emergence of Noah from the ark (Gen. 8.15-9.17), there is a new beginning. The language of the new beginning is striking: it resembles at many points the "creation" language of Genesis 1. The Flood, which is reminiscent of the original watery state (cf. Gen. 1.2 with Gen. 7.19-20), recedes from the earth, leaving dry land (cf. Gen. 1.9-10 with Gen. 8.13-14). Noah and his wife are like a second "male and female"; they and their offspring will be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (cf. Gen. 1.27-28 with Gen. 9.1). The animals and birds on the ark are also to be let out to be fruitful and multiply upon the earth (cf. Gen. 1.22 with Gen. 8.17-18).

Yet this similarity must not obscure the great differences between the two beginnings. Just as striking in

Genesis 9 is the language of Gen. 2-6, the language of mortality: of violence, fear, and death. Man no longer has a benevolent dominion over the other creatures; rather his "fear and dread" are over them, and he shall hunt them as food (Gen. 9.2-3). Acknowledgement is made of the violence that occurs between men; of the shedding of blood and the price to be paid for the shedding of blood (Gen. 9.5-6).

This combination of the languages of beneficence and of mortality is deliberate, for Genesis 9 is teaching a compromise between the world views of Genesis 1 and Genesis 3. I will show this first with reference to the view of the whole, then with reference to the character of man.

In Genesis 9, the world is neither utterly beneficent, nor harsh and cruel. It is tolerable, liveable. The curse upon the ground is lifted (Gen. 8.21), and man's food supply is further increased by the addition of the animals. These facts go a long way toward the lessening of the privation described in Genesis 3. On the other hand, against Genesis 1, there is still labour: Noah becomes a farmer (Gen. 9.20). Yet life seems not so onerous for Noah as for Adam and Cain. The structure of the world in Genesis 9 is stable and secure: God gives an apparently unconditional promise that he will restrain the Flood waters forever (Gen. 9.8-17). This contrasts with Genesis 2-3, in which there was the uncomfortable sense that man's entire well-being is bound up with the

temporary goodwill of a God who carefully guards his own superiority at all costs. In the overall security of the world, Genesis 9 resembles Genesis 1. On the other hand, from the point of view of the animals who are now prey for man, the world is less secure than it was is Genesis 1. Overall, Genesis 9 balances the two views: the goodness of the world is mitigated, but not decisively, by the mortality of man. Put very unphilosophically, the world is not perfectly good, but it is good enough.

The view of man adopted by Genesis 9 is equally a compromise. In Genesis 1 man is Godlike and apparently flawless. In Genesis 4-6 he is savage. In Genesis 9 he is seen as capable of evil, yet teachable. God hopes to lead man to acceptable behaviour by offering him two simple principles of conduct, regarding restraints upon his violence and his eating (Gen. 9.4-6). Such general guidance may seem flimsy in light of man's absolute degradation in Genesis 6, yet that behaviour was partly the result of the harshness of the pre-Flood world. In a liveable world, man's nature is seen as good enough to be teachable. So certain is God of this judgment that he binds himself by covenant not to destroy the world, no matter what man should do (Gen. 9.8-17). God's confidence bespeaks a view of man higher than that depicted in Genesis 4-6. On the other hand, God certainly expects disappointments from man ("the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth", Gen. 8.21), so that the

view in this account is lower than the view found in Genesis 1.

In summary, Genesis 9 records a compromise between two views of the world and of man. The optimists, accepting the reality of human mortality, lower their claims about the beneficence of the world and their expectations for man. The pessimists, on the other hand, concede a basic goodness to the world and admit the possibility that mortal life can be satisfactory if men are willing to accept some amount of governance. To focus more specifically on human nature, Genesis 9 accepts the fact of human weakness and human passion, on the grounds that men are mortal, yet it inists that human weakness and passion are not the whole story. It insists that men can learn to be ruled, that they may attain an existence proper to a being created "in the image of God" (Gen. 9.6).

The view of human nature found in Genesis 9 is the view deemed appropriate by the Torah for the post-Flood world, that is, for <u>our</u> world, the world for which political theory is written. It is the view of human nature fundamental to the political teaching which follows.

## II. How Men Are To Be Ruled

If the two views of human nature have been synthesized in Genesis 9, perhaps another fundamental tension is thereby lessened: the tension between man's prudence and God's providence (pp. 95-7 above). For reliance upon God's providence

alone is associated with, and therefore rejected with, the view of the world as beneficence, whereas reliance upon man's prudence alone is associated with, and therefore rejected with, the behaviour of man as found in Genesis 4-6. This suggests that life after the Flood will involve a combination of human knowledge and power with divine guidance.

In Genesis 4-6, men attempted to take care of themselves through labour and invention. Now, with the curse on the ground lifted, human capacity should be adequate for survival. God's rôle, for the most part, will not be to supply man with the needs basic to mortality. What was lacking, however, in Genesis 4-6 was politics: there were no rulers, no kingdoms, no covenants, no laws. Man did badly because of his inability to rule his passions (Gen. 4.7). God's rôle, then, is to help establish rule in the world, so that men can live in a state of relative peace, and prosper, using their prudence for helpful rather than harmful ends. God's providence will centre upon his attempt to teach men politics.

The first thing to be noted is that God seeks to teach man restraint in his violence. Before the Flood lived the vicious Lamech, and the warlike offspring of the "sons of God", whose violence corrupted the earth. Then God responded to violence with violence: as man's action had "corrupted" or "destroyed" or "ruined" (Hebrew root: shāḥat) the proper way of all flesh (Gen. 6.11-12), so God determines to "destroy"

(shāḥat)[12] man in an exhibition of divine violence, in the Flood. But note the theme of restraint which appears after the Flood. God promises not to smite the earth again (Gen. 8.21), and in particular he promises to restrain the mighty waters which are above the firmament. His covenant (Gen. 9.9 ff.) guarantees that he will never again destroy (shāḥat) the earth (Gen. 9.11). The use of the word "covenant" (b$^{e}$rît) in this connection is significant. God applies a political word to the restraint of violence upon his part. "Covenant" is a binding relationship between parties which governs their actions; it assigns to them responsibility or recognizes their special rights. By using this word, God indicates that the proper order of the world is maintained "politically". Perhaps he expects man to see his own need for restraint as a parallel.

Whether or not man sees the parallel, God makes sure he is instructed about violence. His instruction, which may be regarded as the first law, involves its curtailment. Man may direct his violence upon the animals, but only for food, and even then he is to refrain from eating the lifeblood (Gen. 9.5), and thus keep in mind the sacredness of life. On the other hand, man will no longer be allowed to kill other

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[12]This word play is not visible in English, but the theme of restraint here under discussion certainly is.

men indiscriminately. God will henceforth require the life of a murderer from the hand of his fellow-men (Gen. 9.6). He teaches men that they are made in God's image and therefore not to be extinguished by human caprice. The "life for a life" arrangement which God ordains means that the measureless vengeance of the pre-Flood days is curtailed. There will still be violence, but not as much; there will be the possibility of decent human relations.

A second thing to be noted after the Flood is the rise of a "political" notion about men's living together, the rise of the conception of a "family" or "people". Genesis 1 referred to "kinds" of living creatures. The word "kind" points to universality; it stresses the sameness or unity of the individuals comprised by the "kind". The word for "man" (hā'ādām) in Genesis 1 has this same generic sense. The "kind" in Genesis 1 is all-important, and the individual not even mentioned. Hence, there is no politics, which implies relations between individuals. Genesis 4-6, however, spoke of individuals: Adam, Eve, Cain, Lamech, Noah and others. It thus posed the possibility of politics, but that possibility was not realized. There was no organization of human relationships. Individual acts of force existed, but nothing was converted into obligation. There was no covenant, no kingship. Nor was family life mentioned. Men had children, but there is nothing that says that they ruled over them, instructed them, loved them or even dwelt with

them. Men saw themselves as lonely, vulnerable individuals. Genesis 9, however, sees the rise of true politics, of individuals dwelling together in a specific relationship. It marks the introduction of the "family".

Noah takes up a career of agriculture (Gen. 9.20), and his sons dwell with him. When one of the sons, Ham, commits a sexual misdemeanour by looking at his father's nakedness, and speaking of it, his brothers (Gen. 9.22-3) act honourably by covering up their father without looking. In this action they show for the first time a notion of paternal respect, and of family solidarity. That men will henceforth dwell in families is evidenced by the subsequent events. With the birth of the grandchildren of Noah, the whole earth is populated by families, each having a distinctive land and tongue (Gen. 10.6, 20, 32). God's announcement to Abram, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12.3), takes for granted the fundamental division of the race of men into families.

Families contrast with both kinds and individuals. Kinds are all-inclusive. They assume a oneness of interest or destiny. In Genesis 1, all of mankind is called to the destiny of dominion over the earth. After the Flood, however, there is a diversity of families, a diversity of interests, a diversity of destinies. There is thus a variety of possibilities. Unique goods and unique evils may arise. This is not

possible when man acts as a "kind". On the other hand, families are not particular in the sense that individuals are particular. Individualism, as pictured by Genesis, meant the total opposition of the interest of every man to that of every other man. No man felt he could be safe or content unless he could destroy, intimidate, or protect himself from all other men. The inevitable result of individualism is thus political anarchy. Families reject this position. They presuppose that some men can share interests and destinies. This possibility is the basis for cooperation, compassion, and decent human relationships. The family is thus a middle way. It is more particular and more defined that a race, but it is less anarchic than a collection of individuals. And the Torah argues that it is a way superior to either of the others.

The weakness of individualism is represented by the Torah in a convincing manner in Genesis 4-6. But what is wrong with universalism? Why cannot men dwell together in one massive unity? Genesis 11 attempts to answer this question. Here men attempt to resist the spread of the human race and the divergence of languages and families. They are all of "one lip" (Gen. 11.1) or language, and use this common characteristic to build for themselves a single home: the city and tower of Babel. They want to be one "kind" as in Genesis 1. God, however, sees this as unacceptable. The reason given is that, with one language and racial unity,

man is too potent: "nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them" (Gen. 11.6). This could be taken as meaning that man unified is a threat to God.[13] There is another possibility, however, that is more in line with the political teaching I am attempting to uncover. Man has shown himself to be capable of great evil. His evil can grow in step with his technical progress (pp. 103-4 above). The existence of Babel signifies unlimited technical progress, collective human prudence unchecked by other considerations. If individual human knowledge is capable of producing great harm, is not the limitless knowledge produced by the universal state at Babel capable of even more? Especially given that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"? It seems to be for this reason that God rejects the possibility of the unity of mankind and "scatters" men (Gen. 11.9), enforcing the division of the race into families or peoples.

The two points raised above, about the importance of "covenant" and "family" are vital ingredients of the final political teaching of the Torah.

The political unit known as the family is defined by genealogy and language. Another way of defining a political unit is by force. This way is symbolized by Nimrod (Gen. 10.8-12). The forceful manner of Nimrod has been discussed

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[13]See above, pp. 97-8 and note 6 on p. 98.

above (pp. 42-4). Nimrod has the first "kingdom" (Hebrew root mālak). Kingship is thus the rule achieved by force, the assertion of the will of one man over others. Israel is to be surrounded by Kingdoms: Babel, Erech, Accad, Nineveh (Gen. 10.11-2) in the east, the kingdoms of the Philistines on the west, the kingdom of Egypt, ruled by Pharaoh, in the south. Indeed, kingship is almost the universal form of rulership in the Torah, at least for city-dwellers. The most common form of rule is thus rule by man, and rule by the force of man.

It is interesting, then, that Abram is called out to become a great "nation" (gōy), that is, a great people or family (Gen. 12.2). He is not called to be a king. The call to Abram is the initiation of a kind of rule which does not rest solely on the imposition of human force. Abram, in fact, early on battles a group of "kings" (mālak) for the life of his nephew, Lot (Gen. 14.13-16). He defeats them, and it is important to see why. He is aided in his endeavour by allies, men who are bound to him in a covenant ($b^{e}rît$, v. 13) of mutual aid and self-defence. Abram and his allies work together not because one "rules" the rest, but because they derive mutual benefit from such an agreement. A covenant is a political device which enables men to live peacefully together and be of aid to one another without their being forced to do so. The fact that Abram's "covenant"

forces defeat the forces of "kingship" in this episode is indicative of the general position of the Torah. Israel's covenant distinguishes it and sets it above the ways of other peoples (Deut. 4.5-8). Covenant, along with family, is at the centre of what Israel is about.

Abraham (Abram's ultimate name) and his descendants have a tendency to conduct their lives according to covenants. In Genesis 21, Abraham settles a property dispute with Abimelech (a virtuous king, who shuns the use of unjust force, Gen. 20.8-16; 21.22-34) by a covenant which establishes Abraham's ownership of a well. Isaac, Abraham's son, makes a covenant of non-agression with Abimelech (Gen. 26.28). Jacob, Abraham's grandson, makes a covenant with Laban to secure previous property agreements and ensure peace between them (Gen. 31.44). In general, the people of Abraham are pictured as people who seek peace whenever possible, and establish relationships with other men on the basis of mutual interest rather than force.

The Torah, however, does not allow its reader to see covenants between men as adequate to the achievement of peace and justice. There must be a deeper covenant, one between man and God, which underlies and sustains all others. This covenant is first seen between God and Abraham, and is fully developed when it is renewed (in Exodus) with the family of Abraham upon its emergence from Egypt.

The covenant with Abraham is important because of the human possibilities it holds together: on the one hand, ethics and self-sacrifice, and on the other, self-concern and prosperity. It is clear that Abraham is an ethical man. He knows, unlike Cain, that he is his brother's keeper, for he risks his life in battle to save his nephew Lot (Gen. 14.13-16). He will not take a reward for his heroic acts from the unfortunate king of Sodom (Gen. 14.22-23). He serves the strangers who come to his door, humbly and generously (Gen. 18.1-8). He stands up for the innocent of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18.23-32). On the other hand, Abraham is no ascetic; he is a mortal, with mortal desires and fears. He accumulates wealth quite eagerly when it falls his way from Pharaoh (Gen. 12.16, 13.1-2, 6) and Abimelech (Gen. 20.14-16). Like Cain, he fears violent death, sometimes without warrant (Gen. 12.12-13; 20.11), for not all men are evil (e.g. Abimelech is innocent 20.4-6). He fervently desires offspring, and hopes that God will give him one (Gen. 15.1-3). The covenant of God with Abraham appeals to both sides of Abraham's nature.

Abraham is to become a great nation with a great name (Gen. 12.2). His descendants shall be numerous, and have a land of their own (Gen. 12.7, 15). God will be Abraham's "shield" or protector (Gen. 15.1). Abraham's heirs will have the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (Gen. 17.1-21). God appeals to human passion.

The making of Abraham into numerous progeny satisfies the longing for a kind of personal immortality. The ancestry of a people of "name" satisfies the desire of men to have fame and fixed identity.[14] The possession of Canaan provides the possibility of material comfort and satisfaction of desires. The protection of God quells fear. God recognizes the motives that drive Adam, Eve, Cain, and men generally.

At the same time, God expects Abraham to "walk" before him and be "perfect" (Gen. 17.1). He wants Abraham to continue in righteousness and humility, and to instruct his descendants in his way (Gen. 18.19). He wants Abraham to acknowledge the instruction of God and show the external sign of the circumcision (Gen. 17).

The covenant thus holds together ethics and prosperity, the desire of God for man and the desire of man for man. It acknowledges a 'ruling' rôle for the divine voice in human conduct, yet deals appropriately with human passion. It is neither the way of the ascetic nor of the hedonist. It requires 'ruling' of desire by the ethical imperative of the image of God, but it does not seek to do the impossible and abolish desire altogether.

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[14]The men at Babel wanted a "name" (Gen. 11.4). The name is reserved for one part of mankind, the family descended from Shem (Hebrew: "name"), which includes Abraham (11.10 ff.).

The idea of covenant receives its fullest political expression in the books Exodus through Deuteronomy, in which God enters into a detailed agreement with the people of Israel, the family of Abraham. As might be expected, this covenant represents a compromise between the desires of man and the expectations of God.

The physical benefits of the covenant for Israel are quite clear. The Israelites are to gain "a good land and large . . . a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3.8, 17; Deut. 26.9). God guarantees health (Ex. 23.25), fecundity, descendants, long life (Ex. 23.24), and protection from all external enemies (Ex. 23.27-8).

In return, the Israelites must acknowledge God's sovereignty. They must obey him (Ex. 19.5), and become his peculiar "kingdom" (Ex. 19.5-6). They must follow God exclusively: they may accept no other God and no other laws or ways (Ex. 23.24, 32-33; Deut. 4.1-4, 12-26). They must take on the ethical standard of Abraham, inasmuch as it can be politically embodied in the law delivered by Moses.

The nature of this as an agreement of mutual benefit is brought out clearly in the following passage:

> This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be

> his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, in name, and in honour. . . . (Deut. 26.15-19, RV)

Something further must be noted. "Kings" rule by force and fear. Israel is called God's peculiar kingdom. It follows that Israel should fear God, and indeed it does. Moses is afraid upon his first encounter with God (Ex. 3.8). There are bounds around Mt. Sinai and fear of death is associated with crossing them (Ex. 19.12-13). There is thunder, lightning, and thick cloud, and the people tremble (Ex. 19.16). The mountain quakes (Ex. 19.18). The people are told not to go near lest they directly encounter the power of the Lord (Ex. 19.21-24). The people are afraid of sudden death (Ex. 20.19). God is regarded here as a fearsome, all-powerful sovereign, whose kingship is unshakeable and who is acknowledged in awe. Yet this does not thereby make God no better than Nimrod. For fear of the Lord is not purely the worship of God's power, but means ethical conduct. Abraham and Abimelech, the two most ethical men in the book of Genesis, are said to fear the Lord (Gen. 20.11 ff: 22.12). There is nothing in the fear of Nimrod, or Pharaoh, or any king, which makes men more virtuous. In the Torah, the fear of God's power is employed to educate men to righteousness and harmonious cohabitation, not for the selfish purposes of the divine sovereign, but for the benefit of his subjects.

The political teaching of the Torah can now be summarized. The Torah attempts to reconcile human passions, which proceed from man's mortality and hence his weakness, with his potential for ethical life, which proceeds from man's being made in the image of God and hence from man's strength. It attempts to wed the self-interest of man with the demands of justice, piety, and charity.

The Torah teaches that this reconciliation could not be achieved by man alone. Israel is conceived in the mind of God and initiated by the action of God. Man by himself is shown to be incapable of governing his passions. Law, then, is superhuman. Human beings can recognize it, but they cannot make it. Law, the basis of peace and order, is a teaching from God, a gift from the divine to man. The Torah, which claims to be a political teaching relevant to the human world, points beyond itself to that which is superhuman.

## II. Affinities of Hobbes to the Torah

Hobbes's "natural man" is much like Genesis's "mortal man". Hobbes's man is corporeal, made of physical substance like the rest of the world; Genesis' man springs from the dust of the ground. Hobbes's man has nothing immortal about him, no incorporeal soul which survives death; Genesis' man returns to the dust, and is never heard from again. In

both texts, man's mortality is made central to political discussion.[15]

Hobbes's conception of passion, and of the state of nature, likewise bears resemblance to what is described in Genesis. For Hobbes, man is necessarily subject to anger, fear, desire, pride and lust; for Genesis, man is necessarily accompanied by the desire to procreate, an attraction for what appears good, fear of violent death, anger, and possessiveness. Hobbes says that passion by nature knows no restraint; Genesis teaches that without external force or instruction, men are unable to rule their desires. Passion without law is for Hobbes the state of nature, an anarchy, with violence, and life nasty, brutish and short. For Genesis passion without law equals a multiplication of individual selfishness, violence, and death.

Hobbes's conception of government resembles, in many respects, the conception found in the Torah. Hobbes says that peace and justice can only be brought about by convention, which in practice requires the imposition of rule over men's actions by a superior power. The Torah agrees that men are incapable of peace and justice without law, and that law requires imposition by a superior power. The Torah, however,

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[15]See pp. 21-24 above, and contrast with Plato's writings, in which the immortality of the soul appears in political contexts many times, e.g. Apology 40a-42a, Gorgias 523a-527a, Republic 614b-621d.

asserts a difference in character between human and divine lawmakers, and hence a superiority of divine to human law. This qualification does not change the emphasis in both texts, which is that power is at the root of law. It is not the superiority of God's law, but the superiority of his power, which causes the people of Israel to accept his rule. He delivers Israel from Pharaoh; he feeds Israel in the desert; he alone is capable of giving Israel land and prosperity. If his law is better than the laws of other nations, this fact is not evident to the people of Israel at the time they agree to adopt God as their ruler. It is God's power, in particular his ability to protect them from danger, which seems to move the Israelites. Of course this exchange of protection for obedience is central to Hobbes's understanding of government (L. 728).

The corollary of the power to protect is the power to endanger, and the power to endanger produces fear among subjects. Hobbes teaches that the binding thread of the Commonwealth is awe of the sovereign, the "mortal god" who is infinitely strong and may deal death to lawbreakers. The Torah also teaches that God is mighty beyond hope of opposition, that Israel makes its covenant with him in fear and trembling; further, the laws of Israel prescribe death as the penalty for a wide range of offences.

Another significant parallel in the two texts is the use of the conception of "covenant". Hobbes teaches that the

superior power needed to rule man is established by a voluntary (if implicit) covenant between ruler and ruled. The ruled submit to limitations on their actions regarding one another, and give unqualified obedience to the sovereign, in return for which the ruler gives protection and the opportunity to prosper. In the Torah, the covenant between Israel and God follows the same pattern. Israel submits to be governed by God's law in affairs of life and property, and pays respect to God, its mighty benefactor, in religious worship. In return, God guarantees his help against the foes of Israel and their secure ownership of Canaan.

In both cases the covenant is seen as satisfying the passions of men. Hobbes says that in the best possible political arrangement, desire and ambition can be let loose over a very wide range of activities, that they may be gratified. The Torah teaches that land, wealth, offspring and permanence are legitimate human aims and are realizable at the same time as justice and piety. Passion is thus emancipated to a great extent in both texts.[16]

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[16]The Torah does not give unqualified justification to passion, as does Hobbes. For Hobbes, all passion is inevitable. Therefore, "thou shalt not covet" as traditionally interpreted is for Hobbes a human impossibility. For this reason Hobbes refers "covet" to intent rather than to desire (L. 336). But the Torah seems to indicate that desire is partly controllable, although it never approaches asceticism, which venerates the abolition of passion. Ascetic tendencies can be found in Eastern religions and in branches of Greek and Christian thought, but they are alien to the Torah and to Hobbes alike.

In sum, the political thought found in Leviathan and the Torah agrees upon the following outline: Men are to be seen as individualistic, competitive creatures, driven by fear, desire and pride, who must come to blows unless they are externally ruled. Ruling comes to be out of spoken agreement, out of covenant. Covenant produces a power, the sovereign, which generates fear and establishes laws. The net effect of this arrangement is to encourage men to obey laws, live harmoniously with their neighbours, and pursue their deepest passions with great fervour. The only thing which men must renounce is self-rule.

The similarity between Hobbes and the Torah is thus quite marked. This likeness in teaching, combined with Hobbes's use of Torah themes (see ch. 2 above) and his explicit political interpretation of the Bible (see ch. 1 above), makes it a reasonable claim that Hobbes has been influenced by what he sees as the political thought of the Torah.

## III. The Fundamental Difference

The fundamental differences between Hobbes and the Torah centre upon Hobbes's attribution of divine creativity to man. Hobbes sees man as godlike in his capacity for speech. Speech produces science and thus increases man's ability to transform the world (see pp. 71-2 above); speech produces law and hence civil society (see pp. 75-83 above).

Hobbes explicitly compares man to God as a being whose speech creates things and gives law, in passages recalling Genesis and Exodus (L. 81-2, 504-5). Further, he sees creation and law-making as closely related, if not identical, activities.[17] Thus, the human establishment of law and civil society fuses the accomplishments of God in Genesis and Exodus: man creates law.

The Torah rejects this possibility. God's feats cannot be duplicated. Man is not seen as creative. It is true that humans have the capacity to "build", "make", and perform other activities which we might now be inclined to call "creative", and the Torah knows of such human capacity. But the word "creation" is used to translate an activity peculiar to God, an activity different in prestige and in nature to human making.[18]

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[17] L. 81: Nature is "the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World". The emphasis is mine, but it shows the connection in Hobbes's ideas. Making and governing are linked activities describing God's relationship to the physical world; they are both aspects of his creative power (see pp. 82-3 above). Hobbes extends this union of making and governing to the political realm: man creates Leviathan and in so doing establishes government (L. 81, 362, 363).

[18] The Hebrew verb bārā' is rendered as "create"; it is predicated almost exclusively of God in the Old Testament. Thus God creates (bārā') the sea creatures (Gen. 1.21), while Cain builds (bānāh) his city (Gen. 4.17). Creation refers to the bringing-to-be of life and the establishment of the physical universe; it is inconceivable that this could be attributed to man. The Old Testament would not deny that men produce marvels, but would not dignify such marvels with the divine term "creative".

It might be thought that Hobbes's carrying of divine creativity into the human sphere is legitimate on the grounds that man is said to be in the image of God (Gen. 1.26), and therefore in a sense divine. But the Torah does not make this connection. It is true that in Genesis 1 the "image of God" seems to refer to man's high station and his power over the rest of the world. But as I have shown above, Genesis 1 is not the final word of the Torah on the definition of man. The true picture appears in Genesis 9, and there the phrase "image of God" recurs. But there the phrase points, not grandly to human dominion over the world, but soberly to the fact that men can die a violent death at the hands of other men, and that justice is needed: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9.6, RSV). The image of God, while evoking a sense of the sacredness of human life, associates that sacredness more with man's weakness than his strength. It is the precariousness of human life, not the mighty creative potential of man, which makes it necessary for us to be reminded that we are in the image of God.

There is one other spot in the Torah which might lead Hobbes to an exalted view of human creativity: the story of Babel. Babel is a kind of mock creation: the divine speech in Genesis 1 is "let us make man"; the human exhortation in Genesis 11 is "let us make bricks . . . let

us build a city". From Hobbes's point of view, the men of Babel have the central requirement for scientific and technical progress: they have a unified language (Gen. 11.1). That fact has already enabled them to virtually complete the city and tower with its top in the heavens, and it promises to make everything else possible for man (Gen. 11.5-6); it gives man something like creative power.

Yet the teaching of the Babel story goes against that of Hobbes. God does not approve of the Babel project; he sees it as dangerous (see pp. 115-6 above). He therefore places limitations upon human speaking and therefore on human doing (Gen. 11.6-7), thus bringing to an end the unified technical effort of mankind and the benefits accruing therefrom. Hobbes could not be consistent with his own philosophy if he approved of God's action at Babel.[19]

Strangely, Hobbes does approve. He interprets the city-builders as staging a "rebellion" against God (L. 101). Since so much of Hobbes's argument in Leviathan aims at the elimination of theoretical justifications for rebellion, it makes sense that he should wish to use the Babel story in this way. But this is not the intent of the story. It is

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[19]For Hobbes's belief in the betterment of mankind through science, see p. 47 above. In this connection, one should also think of Francis Bacon, with whom Hobbes was familiar. Bacon also urged for the adoption of a precise and universal scientific language, and had a vision of human creativity as being central to the betterment of man. This is strikingly clear in his late work, New Atlantis.

not political insurrection which is the danger; it is the unified language of man and its unlimited capacity for "doing", that is, it is man's approach to something like divine creativity. The Torah seems to teach that human speaking and human doing, that is, human science and human technique, are best limited -- a conclusion which Hobbes's philosophical framework would find difficult to accommodate.

Regarding law, the Torah does not allow man to think that he is capable of discerning how he is best ruled. The best laws are those revealed by God. There is no apparent possibility of man duplicating this revelation. If he could, God's action at Mt. Sinai would be superfluous. In giving to Israel the wisest law, God is giving to Israel what no nation could discover for itself (Deut. 4.5-8).

This point is made clear by the contrast made in the Torah between the way of Israel, which is God's way, and the ways of purely human kingdoms, which are the ways of pagan gods. Other nations worship stars and beasts and created things (Deut. 4.15-20), and they practise abominations. But the people of Israel are forbidden such worship and such practice. The way of covenant is opposed to the way of normal human kingship. Those within the covenant reject other gods, other kings, and the other ways of life associated with them. To worship the Lord is not simply to swear a certain political allegiance; it implies justice and

purity. This is not true of those who follow the gods of Egypt, Babylon, and Canaan.

Such a distinction does not appear in Hobbes's political thought. The way of life in a state established by covenant is not different in principle from the way established by conquest. For Hobbes, Nimrod must have had the same political powers as Israel's God, and he must have established similar kinds of laws, or he could not have been a successful ruler. Further, to the degree that Nimrod followed the same principles as God, he was as good a ruler as God. This is because peace and justice do not come from the nature of the lawmaker, nor from the character of the people, but from the proper establishment of the principles of political science. This establishment can be accomplished by anyone with absolute power, whether he be divine or human.

This lack of distinction means that for Hobbes, the founding covenant of a state may well be a historical fiction. The truth of "covenant" lies not in its correspondence to a physical event, but in that it is an accurate conceptual description which demonstrates the necessity for the absolute obligation of subjects (pp. 80-3 above). For Hobbes then, the distinction drawn by the Torah between Israel's covenant and the kingships of other lands must also be a fiction -- a "noble lie", as it were -- a device conceived by the Israelite lawmakers to pictorially represent the unquestionable need for obedience to law. Such fiction is completely

acceptable to Hobbes, because he sees politics as the science pertaining to obedient conduct, not to the dissemination of historical or philosophical truth (L. 115, 131, 149, 233, 410, 425, 703). There is nothing wrong with claiming that a good human government originated with God, if belief in such a claim is likely to increase obedience from subjects. Hobbes, however, would always insist that the obligation to obey the government comes from the subjects' own consent, not from its divine origin. Men may make a covenant under the belief that they are entering God's kingdom -- their obligation is not lessened if they find out later that their belief was false.

It can be seen that Hobbes believes that men, not God, create government, law, peace and justice, and in this belief he differs from the teaching of the Torah.

## Hobbes and the Torah: Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have tried to show how Hobbes reads the Torah. The following is a summary of my argument.

Hobbes attempts what seems to be a radical interpretation of the Torah -- an interpretation which separates its political thought from its theological assertions. Hobbes accepts from the Torah notions roughly translatable as "passion", "state of nature", "covenant", "sovereignty as power", and "law", and makes these central to his political presentation in Leviathan. But he rejects the intertwining

of this political theory with the notion of an active, interfering God. Instead, he argues that man himself is to take on the rôle of the Torah's God. Man is like God: rational, willful, creative; able to define the world and manipulate it in science and technique; able to define himself and order himself so as to produce law, peace, and commodious living. Because of this creative capacity, man alone, without aid from an external divine Being, is capable of ruling man. So Hobbes parts company with the teaching of the Torah.

To conclude, Hobbes treats the Torah as a political teaching (perhaps the best political teaching prior to his Leviathan!), but he thinks that it cannot be fully turned to human benefit until it has been "de-divinized", with the divine attributes of God transferred to man, who acts creatively, as God's image on earth. This transfer is achieved in Leviathan, which introduces into the West a distinctly "Biblical" political thought.

# CONCLUSION

## HOBBES, THE BIBLE, AND MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

In this thesis, I have argued that Hobbes must be considered as a serious interpreter of the Bible. I have argued that his explicit exposition of the Bible is plausible at many points (see ch. 1 above), and I have laid particular stress upon the implicit interpretation of the Torah (see chs. 2 and 3 above) which seems to be central to Hobbes's presentation in Leviathan. I have contended that Hobbes sees the Torah as a good political teaching, because in his view it correctly describes human nature and understands how men must be governed.

In this closing section, I will discuss the implications of my thesis. The first implication is that the Bible is a more political book than is generally acknowledged. The second is that modern western political thought, insofar as it partakes in the thought of Hobbes, is somewhat Biblical in orientation. I shall touch on the first point briefly, the second at some length.

The Bible appears, in the light of Hobbes, to be concerned with political questions: Is God's will the only basis for law? Is divine or human rule better for man? What are the rôles of persuasion and compulsion in Church and State? Such questions are not usually the focus of

Biblical scholarship, but they should be. Politics is a central fact of human existence, and any literature (including the Bible) which claims to teach fundamental truths must have something to say about it, or else it runs the risk of irrelevance. Biblical scholarship has usually failed to recognize this, probably because it has been too deeply immersed in philological and historical questions. Yet until it begins to ask fundamental political questions -- about law, about the city, about the possibility of a universal state -- some of the deepest teachings of the Bible will remain buried. One aim of my thesis has been to spark interest in the excavation of these teachings.

My primary aim, however, has been to understand the Biblical orientation of modern political thought, as far as that is revealed to us by the study of Hobbes. Hobbes is generally conceded to be at the root of modern English political thought: capitalism, liberalism, democracy. If Hobbes's conceptions are deeply influenced by the Torah, it follows that the liberal, capitalist democracies have inherited some of this Biblical content. Since Hobbes also makes pointed attacks upon classical and Medieval thought, it again follows that the politics of the English-speaking world should be distinctly different from that of its classical and Medieval antecedents. In sum, inasmuch as Hobbes and Hobbesian thought have shaped the present,

it should be possible to see the 'Old Testament' character of that shaping by contrast with some of the fundamental presuppositions of 'classical-Christian' politics. In the following discussion, I will make this contrast with regard to two of the primary axioms of English-speaking politics: possessive individualism and equality.

Hobbes teaches that men are not basically sociable, but rather individualistic. The natural state of man is one of continual competition. Civil society, then, is unnatural, and men must be artificially induced to accept it. They must be led to see that living under the restraint of law is consistent with their own interests. This doctrine clashes with that of the Greek philosophers and of Medieval Christianity, in which man is supposed to be basically sociable.[1] It is, however, quite compatible with the Torah, which argues that men are intrinsically antagonistic without law.

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[1]For Hobbes, society is formed because of fear of violent death. Men enter society because it keeps them alive to behave selfishly. For Plato, men enter society because of need (Rep. 369b-c); there is a natural impulse to community. For Hobbes, language is that which overcomes antagonistic human natures and creates society. For Aristotle, language is the fact that proves man's natural tendency toward cooperation (Pol. 1253a1-18). The Church held to these Greek conceptions, as is clear from the outrage of traditionalists over Hobbes's amoral man. John Eachard in 1672 pinpointed the fundamental quarrel of Hobbes with the political tradition as being his denial that man was a social animal (Mr. Hobbs's State of Nature Considered, Liverpool University Press, 1958, pp. 37 ff.).

The doctrine of a-sociability alone did not produce a possessive individualist society. It had to be connected with the emancipation of the passions. Hobbes's thought liberates passion. For him it is not something 'low'. Passion is inevitable and therefore to be accepted. Further, it is a source of great energy which can be turned to the generation of wealth, invention and expansion, for the benefit of individuals and states. Greed and ambition can drive men to mighty achievements, not the least of which is commodious living. This contrasts sharply with older views, Greek and Christian, in which desire for wealth or success is the sign of a defective soul.[2] But again, the Torah (with much of the Old Testament) seems to view material success quite differently. The desires of men are not condemned in themselves. Abraham, the great servant of God, is a wealthy man. That nation of Israel is promised

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[2]For Plato, the desire of wealth belongs to the lowest part of the soul, and the pursuit of wealth is socially the lowest activity (Rep. 439c-442a). The criticism of the spiritual dangers of wealth in the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 19.16-24, Luke 16.19-31) were also of great significance for the later tradition. Poverty was an essential part of being a monk, who represented the height of Medieval spirituality. The condemnation of lending money at interest (the basis of capitalism!) by the Medieval Church was grounded in Christian charity. All in all, the classical-Christian culture put great restraints upon desire, which in modern times has fueled Western economies.

riches and fame in return for obedience to the Law, and the Torah sees nothing shameful in such a worldly motivation. This is not to accuse the Torah of crass materialism, but only to assert that for the Torah, the economic and political well-being of man is not separable from the condition of blessedness. Asceticism has no spiritual value. In this sense, the Old Testament in general is close to Hobbes.

It was necessary to assert both the individualistic nature of man and the emancipation of the passions in order to justify modern capitalist societies. Man had to come to think that it was "natural" for life to be defined as a competition for power and wealth, if he was to willingly participate in the society of aggressive, expansive self-confidence envisaged by Hobbes and his intellectual heirs. Similarly, modern capitalism depended upon the rejection of the classical-Christian scorn for material success. For its model of economic man, it dared not look to Socrates or Christ, but could willingly revere an Abraham or a Job who combined morality with freedom from undue restraint in worldly matters. The combination of the notions of individualism and the liberation of passion is the basis for the characteristic definition of English political thought as an ideology of "possessive individualism". The development of this ideology and its importance in the

history of political thought, have been clearly described by the distinguished scholar, C. B. Macpherson.[3]

If possessive individualism is one great cornerstone of modern politics in the English world, equality is the other. It is axiomatic that all men are equal; that all should be accorded the same civil rights and social opportunities. This conception of equality leads to the notion of democracy: all men must have equal right to participate in their own government, so that their equality before the law and in relation to public institutions may never be forgotten.

Hobbes lays the theoretical groundwork for this axiom of equality. He argues that all men are equal in a fundamental sense because they can die. Any differences in intellect, strength or skill are levelled by this fact. Thus, from the point of view of the mortal body, all men have the same 'natural right' to comfortable self-preservation. Civil society must begin from this observable fact about the body. It must begin from the assumption that men will demand equality of treatment regarding their lives and property. It must reject any 'natural' or

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[3]C. B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (London: Oxford, 1962).

'divinely ordained' gradations of men. For a man to assert that he is essentially better than the others, and hence worthy of preferential treatment, is the cardinal sin of pride. Hobbes shares with all modern English-speakers a hostility toward the pretensions of would-be aristocrats. This view of equality finds its completion in Hobbes in the doctrine that any government finally rests in the consent (albeit implicit) of the majority that such government is good for them. Thus, whatever his personal views on democracy, Hobbes grounds his politics in an understanding of consent which is impregnated with a democratic orientation.

Such views again contrast with those prevalent in the classical and Medieval worlds. Distinctions which had political significance, such as king and commoner, noble and peasant, master and slave, were seen as coming from 'nature' or the 'will of God'.[4] It was inconceivable that political ordering should be based upon a false concept such as equality.

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[4]Plato contested that philosophers had nobler souls and therefore were more fit to rule by nature. Aristotle thought that there were natural slaves (Pol. 1254a18-1255a3). In Medieval Christian society, the hierarchy of pope-emperor-nobility-serfs was seen as derived from statements of Christ and Paul (see source cited on p. 44, n. 20). For both the Greeks and the Medievals, it is fair to say that justice meant not equality but "giving to each his due" -- where each was due quite different things.

On this issue there is a close affinity between Hobbes and the Torah. In the Torah the fundamental fact about men is that they are mortal, and hence able to suffer violent death. Each man must fear every other man until violence is restrained by law. Mortality logically forces men to acknowledge themselves as equal under some law, whether the restrictions proclaimed by God after the Flood or the Law given to Israel. To put the question of equality in religious terms, justice is born out of the knowledge that human life is sacred because man is made in the image of God. Since it is man, the 'kind' -- not the wise men, or the older men, or the noble men, or any other select group -- which is in the image of God, it follows that the life of every man is equally sacred. Law, inasmuch as it attempts to institute justice, must on this view produce a society in which the notion of equality is visible.

The notion of equality is indeed very visible in the account of the Law given at Mt. Sinai. When God speaks to Israel, he does not recognize any ranks within the people. Nothing in the Law distinguishes 'king' from 'commoner', 'wise' from 'foolish', 'wealthy' from 'poor'. All the men of Israel bear equal responsibility for the maintenance of the Law. All are subject to the same penalties. All may be called out to war. All are to participate in the

public execution of blasphemers and abominators. And all originally consent to the Law because all participate in the founding covenant. In the Law, there is an impulse toward egalitarianism and more than a hint of democratic attitudes.[5] Again, Hobbes seems to be drawing upon the Torah in a sound manner, and rejecting the very different principles of the classical-Christian tradition. And again, the argument for the influence of the Old Testament in the formation of Western liberal thought appears strong.

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[5]It may be argued that since the Israelites are permitted by their Law to own slaves, their society cannot in any way be considered a forerunner of egalitarianism or democracy. This hardly seems fair in light of the fact that the Athenian and Roman democracies are seen as ancestral to our own, even though the members of the voting populace possessed slaves. It would be more consistent to say that neither the Hebrew nor the classical tradition can escape condemnation from the modern liberal viewpoint. But there are some subtleties about Hebrew slavery worth mentioning. The Torah does not offer any high-sounding philosophical or religious justification for slavery. Slavery appears to be regarded as a matter-of-fact economic institution. Outside of the Torah, the Western religious and philosophical literature is filled with fantastic and perverted justifications, which reach their moral nadir in the United States before the Civil War. Also, there are traces of distaste for the physical and psychic abuse of slaves: limitations are placed upon the cruelty of masters (Ex. 21.20, 21.26), and time limitations are also given (Ex. 21.2, Deut. 15.12-15), implying that man is not fit for permanent servitude. The second of these restrictions is accorded only to Hebrew slaves, not foreign ones; nonetheless, the beginning of anti-slave sentiment is there. Aside from the issue of slavery, it seems clear that the notion of equality is more pronounced in the Torah than in Greek or Medieval thought.

In this final section, I have attempted to show how "possessive individualism" and "equality", two of the cornerstones of liberal capitalist democracy, can be seen as products of a turn away from the classical and Medieval traditions of politics and toward a politics conceptually grounded in the Torah. In my thesis Hobbes has been the focus for the uncovering of this reorientation of Western politics. There is no reason to suppose, however, that Hobbes alone was involved in this reorientation.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Spinoza and Locke also wrote political treatises with the Bible at hand; the Old Testament appears to dominate their discussion. Is it inconceivable that there is a common perception of the Old Testament as a political book in all of these thinkers? And is it unthinkable that they deliberately sought to redirect the political thought of the West, visibly or covertly, toward the Old Testament? At this point the question is still wide open; I hope that I have shown it to be worthy of further investigation.

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