

God and the moral beings

–A contextual study of Thomas Hobbes's third book in
Leviathan

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Abstract

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The question this essay sets out to answer is what *role* God plays in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, in the book "Of a Christian Common-wealth", in relationship to humans as moral beings. The question is relevant as the religious aspects of Hobbes's thinking cannot be ignored, although Hobbes most likely had rather secular and sceptical philosophical views. In order to answer the research question *Leviathan's* "Of a Christian Common-wealth" will be compared and contrasted with two contextual works: the canonical theological document of the Anglican Church, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (1571), and Presbyterian-Anglican document the *Westminster Confession* (1648). Also, recent scholarly works on Hobbes and more general reference works will be employed and discussed. Hobbes's views provide a seemingly unsolvable paradox. On the one hand, God is either portrayed, or becomes by consequence of his sceptical and secular state thinking, a distant God in relationship to moral humans in "Of a Christian Common-wealth". Also, the freedom humans seem to have in making their own moral decisions, whether based on natural and divine, or positive laws, appears to obscure God's almightiness. On the other hand, when placing Hobbes in context, Hobbes appears to have espoused Calvinist views, with beliefs in predestination and that God is the cause of everything. Rather paradoxically it not unlikely that Hobbes espoused both the views that appear to obscure the role of God, and his more Calvinistic views.

Key words: God, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), human morality, predestination, free will, theology, "Of a Christian Common-wealth".

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Introduction: Hobbes's God in *Leviathan*

General introduction to Hobbes's God in *Leviathan*

No matter if Thomas Hobbes was a pious thinker or not, it is an inescapable fact that in particular books I, III, and IV, in *Leviathan* mention God to a greater or lesser extent. Of these books, Book III, "Of a Christian Common-wealth" is in particular concerned with the nature and role of God, in connection with both Biblical and political themes. One may believe, like David Berman, that Hobbes was, at least most likely, a "crypto-atheist[]",¹ and in any case the thinker who "provided the main theoretical basis for Restoration atheism".² One may, on the other hand believe, like Aloysius Martinich, that Hobbes was *not* an atheist, and reject any esoteric interpretations of Hobbes's orthodox statements as heterodox.³ The latter scholar furthermore claims that Hobbes's ideas on Trinitarianism and "Redemption of humankind by Christ" was "ingenious", but more importantly "*novel*".⁴ On the other hand, one may take a middle ground, like Richard Tuck does, and see Hobbes as a deist, and compare him to "Rousseau, the Jacobins, or the early nineteenth-century socialists" in terms of "religious views".⁵ No matter what stance one takes on Hobbes's ideas on God, and his existence, one fact still remains: God occupies a major part of metaphysical, theological and political discussions in *Leviathan*. This is a fact that cannot be ignored. Historians such as Jeffrey Collins claim one cannot avoid the politico-religious aspects of Hobbes,⁶ which Collins highlights when bringing Hobbes's idea of state-controlled religion to the fore⁷ (as does Tuck⁸). I am inclined to agree that such a form of religious revisionism on Hobbes is required and needed more. However, what I stress is the fact that Hobbes puts forth ideas of a more theological nature, for example on God, which the historian Martinich, but also a historian called George Wright (both these thinkers will be discussed later on in this essay), emphasise.

¹ David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell*, New York, 1988, 65.

² *Ibid.*, 61-2. The Restoration is the time during which the English monarchy was restored during Charles II's era, 1660-1685.

³ Aloysius Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics*, Cambridge and New York, 1992, 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-9. My italics.

⁵ Richard Tuck, *Hobbes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, 90.

⁶ Jeffrey R. Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, Oxford, 2005, 4-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 42-9.

⁸ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 89-91.

However, *Leviathan*, besides being primarily a political work, lays an emphasis on human nature, in particular Book I, “Of Man”, with its ideas on epistemology and ethics. These ideas on human nature are at times repeated in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”. Therefore, with two aspects in mind, Hobbes’s theology and ethics, my aim is to shed some light on the third book of *Leviathan* by answering the following question: What *role* does God play in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, in the book “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, in relationship to humans as moral beings?

These are my reasons for raising this question: 1) God is often mentioned in *Leviathan*, as well as his relationship to humans. (Although some of Hobbes’s theological arguments are more implicit than explicit.) 2) The question is relevant in particular regarding “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, as this book is primarily concerned with ecclesiastical and theological matters. 3) It is an attempt at providing a revisionist view on Hobbes, focusing on the religious aspects of Hobbes, and especially relating to scholarly works with a similar focus, such as Martinich’s, Collin’s and Wright’s works, which will be discussed below.

In connection with this question, Hobbes’s theological and general religious views will be analysed, as some of them, for instance his Trinitarianism,⁹ have, whether based on facts or analysis, a direct effect on his views on the role of God in relationship to humans as moral beings. My basic assumption, however, is that Hobbes believed in a God in some form, due to his “first cause argument”, which will be mentioned in the main body of this essay, and due to the fact that he so frequently mentions God in *Leviathan*. However, assuming Hobbes was a theist, or a deist, is *not* the same thing as assuming that he was an orthodox and pious Anglican, or even a Christian. Finally, I am focusing more on the religious than the political aspects of Hobbes’s thinking, although the political aspects will inevitably be tied in the argument.

Some general notes on the content and form of this essay should be mentioned. Firstly, the original page numbers, punctuation and spelling are used in referencing Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. The latter practice is due to my want to read and analyse the text as it appeared to its original readers, as to grasp the nuances of the (original) language employed in *Leviathan*. Also, note that I use the terms “Anglican Church” and “Church of England” interchangeably.

Furthermore, the main body of this essay, discussing the role of God in relationship to moral humans in “Of a Christian Common-wealth” has been thematically divided into four parts: “Regarding salvation”, “The prerequisites for salvation”, “On moral laws” and “Moral

⁹ Or alleged Trinitarianism.

humans and the ontological nature of God”. The reason for making this thematic division is that it is, based on the research question being relative to the ideas one can discern “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, the most appropriate division, in my view. Lastly, I will use italics in three ways in this essay: when naming titles of books cited, utilising foreign terms and when emphasising a point. The context will reveal in what sense I am using italics in each specific case.

Demarcations

I will mainly be focusing on Book III of *Leviathan*, “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, which will in one section be compared and contrasted with one contemporary source, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648), and a religious document that shaped the back-bone of Anglican thought in Hobbes’s time (as well as today): the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1571).¹⁰ The reason for choosing these sources are due to the fact that Hobbes was an Anglican,¹¹ and because both these documents were of relevance for the Church of England in the 1650s, albeit that the first source is nowadays mainly adopted by the Presbyterian churches.¹² They are relevant sources to be compared and contrasted with *Leviathan*, providing this work of Hobbes in an appropriate synchronic context. In general, the overall historical context will be relatively synchronic. Only when briefly discussing the *Thirty-Nine Articles* will I discuss a 16th century work and event, and in general the focus will be on the text itself, implying a discussion of a piece of literature written circa 1649¹³-51. When *historical*, rather than textual, contextualisations will be offered they will either be focused on these years, or the decades most immediately preceding the late 1640s, or extending the early 1650s. Regarding scholarly works I have focused on as recent works as possible as to appropriately discuss present-day views on Hobbes. The oldest reference work employed is *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. X, published in 1975. However, the oldest work on Hobbes employed is David Berman’s *A History of Atheism in England*, published in 1988,

¹⁰ Note that these two sources are derived from (as it appears) reliable internet sources, supported by the fact that they have “.org” and “.edu” URLs, and copyright signs and names of the organisations –and in the case of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* –the editor. However, as with several other internet sources, although being the websites of official organizations, some precaution as to the accuracy of transcription of primary sources should be taken.

¹¹ Formally, at least. See Franck Lessay, “Hobbes’s Protestantism”, in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2004, 265-94, and Patricia Springborg, “Hobbes on Religion” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, Cambridge, 1996, 350.

¹² See “Westminster Confession” in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Micropedia, Vol. X, Chicago, 1975.

¹³ See Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume III*, 19.

and the most recent work cited in this essay is George Wright's *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes*, published in 2006.

Methodology

The main methodological assumption in this essay is that a text cannot be understood by itself, but must be placed in an appropriate (e.g. synchronic) *context* in order to be understood as a historical text. This methodology is derived in particular from Quentin Skinner's emphasis on contextualisation, in particular synchronic contextualisation, in order to understand the nuances of language in a text from a certain historical epoch or context, as well as to avoid anachronisms.¹⁴ To a large extent this method, involving contextualising a text by closely comparing it with other texts, is the method I will employ. Note however that I do not fully accept all of Skinner's theories, as I reject Skinner's (over)emphasis of language consisting of speech acts.

As a matter of time and space I cannot (of course, I may add) compare Hobbes's work to a vast amount of contemporary English works on theology or the philosophy of religion. Thus I will only compare it to the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1571) contained in the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*, and (to some extent, at least) the Presbyterian *Westminster Confession of Faith*, ratified in 1648; i.e. around the time that *Leviathan* was being written, or at least conceptualised.¹⁵ All other information, placing Hobbes in appropriate contexts, will be derived from scholarly works on Hobbes, which will be commented on and analysed throughout this text. Furthermore I will, to some extent, in accordance with the ideas or methodologies of for instance Collins, Berman, Tuck and Lessay, conduct an esoteric reading of Hobbes will be employed where he appears to contradict himself.

The main method employed in approaching the question of God's role in "Of a Christian Common-wealth" (in *Leviathan*), besides contextualisation, will be conducting a *close-reading* of Book III in *Leviathan*. In doing so I will be paying attention to the details of specific passages –regarding, for example, word choices and ironic contradictions – appropriate in addressing the above question. These passages will often be compared and

¹⁴ See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Politics*, Cambridge, 2002, 77, 81-2 and 87.

¹⁵ See Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume III*, 18-21, for a discussion on the exact year that the writing of *Leviathan* commenced.

contrasted with the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the *Westminster Confession*. The empirical and analytical parts of this essay will therefore, to a large extent, be conflated.

Presentation and evaluation of sources

Leviathan, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and The Westminster Confession of Faith

Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill* was published in London in 1651, while Hobbes was still in Paris, in voluntary exile due to the turmoil of the Civil War. The year that Hobbes commenced the work on *Leviathan* appears to be disputed. Quentin Skinner, for example, claims that Hobbes started writing it in late 1649, completing his monumental work "in less than eighteen months".¹⁶ Skinner further states that in all likelihood the execution of King Charles I sparked off the creative surge in writing *Leviathan*.¹⁷

It was especially intended for a broad English audience, in particular addressing the current issues in England: especially the Civil War. Thus, it was written in English and not in the international Latin (although a Latin version was later written). The book was at the start religiously controversial, and Hobbes himself stated in his autobiography *Vita* that the animosity of the Catholic clergy due to the anti-Catholic sentiments of his work made him leave France for England in 1652.¹⁸ However, Noel Malcolm claims the Catholic Church, including the Catholic theologians in France, first "began to take serious notice" of Hobbes and his works, such as *Leviathan*, by the late 1670s.¹⁹ Also, in general it took some time before *Leviathan* became considered a notorious work, especially on the grounds of undermining clerical authority, containing a rationalistic Biblical critique, and at several instances containing purposely heterodox opinions, albeit ambiguously mixed with seemingly orthodox ideas.²⁰ Furthermore, Jeffrey Collins emphasises that *Leviathan* contains several esoteric features concerning religious matters and Biblical exegesis, which was part of

¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2002, 483.

²⁰ Ibid., 21-2.

Hobbes's "rhetorical strategy".²¹ Most likely this was a rhetorical strategy as to avoid persecution. Collins furthermore criticises Pockock and Richard Tuck for not recognising this, at least to some extent, as they take Hobbes's appraisal of Biblical authority at face value.²² In my view, however, the main question when analysing Hobbes's *Leviathan* is not *if* it is an esoteric work on religious matters, but *which parts* are to be considered esoteric, and not.

The *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*²³ were ratified in 1571 by Queen Elizabeth I's permission.²⁴ It is often contained in the *Book of Common Prayer*. It is the Anglican Church's only *official* theological document.²⁵ In a sense it is the Anglican answer to the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession*. It is not written as a complete catechism, but as a document, explaining the Anglican stance towards (mainly) the Catholic Church and the Anabaptists.²⁶ It was furthermore set out to answer contemporary doctrinal disputes in Europe regarding "Predestination and Transubstantiation".²⁷ Interestingly, it has certain Calvinistic influences, which reveals the Calvinistic tendencies that appear to have been common in the Church of England at the time (However, more Catholic or Evangelically oriented Anglicans did exist in the Church of England, such as the Episcopalians Richard Hooker and William Laud.)²⁸

*The Westminster Confession of Faith*²⁹ was completed in 1646, with the exception for some minor revisions 1646-8, and finally ratified in 1648,³⁰ during the English Civil War. It was written by the Presbyterian faction in the Anglican Church, and was utilised in the Church of England from 1648 until 1660, when Charles II restored the monarchy. The Presbyterian churches in Scotland and America also adopted it, and is still used as the official "confession of faith of English-speaking Presbyterians".³¹ Dogmas and doctrines are

²¹ Collins, 56.

²² *Ibid.*, 45.

²³ The source referred to in this essay is more precisely *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, London, 1571, Paul Hallsay (ed.), *Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1571-39articles.html>, 1998.

²⁴ See endnote of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, London, 1571.

²⁵ "Anglicanism" in Lindsay Jones (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 1, United States, 2005.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ John R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church of England*, Brighton, 1980, 214.

²⁸ See "Anglicanism" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 1.

²⁹ Precise source referred to: *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, London, 1648, Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics,

http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/westminster_conf_of_faith.html, 2006.

³⁰ "Westminster Confession" in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*.

³¹ *Ibid.*

explained in greater detail than in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, and, being based on the doctrines of the continental reformed churches,³² the content is more explicitly Calvinistic than the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. However, it appears, at least in the historian Michael Watt's view, as if the Calvinism espoused in the document was less rigid than the Calvinism of the Puritan "Independents".³³ Anglicans generally accepted the theological ideas of these articles, but not the "ecclesiastical structure" recommended by them.³⁴

Contemporary scholarly works employed

The following scholarly works, listed below, will either be employed to a greater or lesser extent throughout this essay, or have otherwise already been employed in the introduction. In most cases they are of relevance for the actual research question. In other cases they provide important general facts on Hobbes and his works. Reference books and scholarly works providing more general facts, in particular about the Church of England and Calvinism, will not be listed here. As I have tried to use and discuss as up-to-date information on Hobbes as possible, there is no work about Hobbes in this essay that is published prior to 1988. However, in the case of reference works providing more *general facts*, the oldest work employed is published in 1975.

Aloysius Martinich's *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (Cambridge and New York, 1992) is written from both a historical, somewhat contextualising perspective, as well as an analytical philosophical one. This book will to a large extent be employed in this essay, due to its extensive mentioning of Hobbes and his views on God, although I do not always, as will be evident, agree with his opinions. Martinich sees Hobbes as basically an orthodox Anglican; and views Hobbes's seemingly pious and orthodox claims with less scepticism than Wright, who will be mentioned below. He definitely does *not* read Hobbes from an esoteric perspective, but takes most of Hobbes's religious ideas at face value.³⁵ To back this claim, he provides textual evidence, pointing to the force of sincerity in Hobbes's language, for instance.³⁶ I am sceptical to this approach, as I at times conduct an esoteric reading of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, based on the examples of

³² Ibid.

³³ Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters – From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, 169.

³⁴ "Puritanism" in Lindsay Jones, (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Volume 11), United States, 2005.

³⁵ See Martinich, 16 and 100.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, 100-2.

previous scholarship, and seeing (most likely) intended contradictions in *Leviathan*, as I will later show.

Furthermore, Martinich compares Hobbes with notable Christian theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, as to show that he does not deviate that significantly from these people, whose genuineness in asserting Christian doctrines are not doubted. Also, he points to the fact that, for example, Aquinas was also regarded with suspicion in his lifetime in his attempt to reconcile Aristotle's teachings with Christian doctrines, just like Hobbes in his attempt to reconcile the new science of the Scientific Revolution Christianity with traditional Christian doctrines.³⁷ Rather interestingly Martinich claims that Hobbes, like a predecessor to Kierkegaard, *saves* the Christian faith by making articles of faith clashing with reason become part of the human *will*.³⁸ Also, Martinich claims the devout Christian Locke contributed more to Deism, and *in extenso* to atheism, by asserting the primacy of reason, in his philosophy.³⁹ On a final note, Martinich claims that Hobbes did, however, unintentionally contribute to secularist thought.⁴⁰ This was partly due to his failures to reconcile the new science and reason with Christian dogma. However, Martinich points to the fact that Hobbes, in for example failing to coherently defend the traditional belief in Trinitarianism, is not unlike canonised⁴¹ Christian theologians, logically failing in their attempts to reconcile faith and reason.⁴²

David Berman's *A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell* (New York, 1988), is used as a reference mainly in the introduction. Berman extensively cites relevant contextualising sources, which in some cases are very appropriate for this essay. However, Berman seldom gives a precise definition of what the term 'atheism' implies, as the modern sense of the word can at times differ from the 17th century sense of the word, which could possibly lead to some of his arguments about mid-17th century atheism in England being anachronistic. Albeit it is a concise historical overview it does provide some in-depth analysis of Thomas Hobbes's alleged atheism, and people's interpretations of Hobbes's religious beliefs, in Chapter 2: "Restoration Atheists: Foundling Followers of Hobbes".

³⁷ Martinich, 15 and 29 (on Thomas Aquinas being regarded as heretical).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 217-8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴¹ Note that Martinich does not use the word "canonised". Also note that by canonised I mean thinkers who are counted to the Christian spiritual and intellectual canon, not *necessarily* the canon of saints.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 336-7.

George Wright's *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes* (the Netherlands, 2006) places Hobbes in the context of mainly Protestant, and even early Christian, theology, which is to a great extent the focal point of this essay. He also offers a kind of *revisionist* view on Hobbes by focusing on the religious aspects of Hobbes's thought. However, unlike Collins, who also focuses on Hobbes's ideas on religion, Wright emphasises Hobbes as a genuine Christian, albeit heterodox in his materialism, rather than a secular thinker. An example of this is when he states that Hobbes "evidently never believed he espoused heretical views. He thought he was right."⁴³ What he does not realize at times is that Hobbes quite evidently held consciously *heterodox* views at times, as my analyses in the main body of this essay will show. The major limitation of his work, in my view is that he takes Hobbes's statements on religion at *face value*, and rejects an *esoteric* reading of Hobbes, which is the focus I have at times employed.

A major advantage of this work is that he touches upon the role of God in relationship to humans explicitly, which is appropriate for the focus of this essay.⁴⁴ It uses a lot of quotes as to do "justice" to Hobbes, which works in a lot of ways; although he at times uses the same quotes, at more or less the same length, on several occasions, which makes the book repetitive on occasions.

Hobbes and History (London, 2000) is a compilation of several essays on, as the title indicates, Thomas Hobbes's views on history. The essay referred to in this extended essay is Franck Lessay's "Hobbes and Sacred History". The main work discussed by Lessay is Hobbes's Latin poem *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a work Hobbes commenced working on in 1659, but was first published (posthumously) in 1688.⁴⁵ Albeit *Leviathan* is not discussed, some of the views regarding God and his relationship to humans can be related to what Hobbes states in *Leviathan*.

Jeffrey R. Collins' *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford, 2005) analyses the politico-religious aspects of Hobbes's works, which is, at least in part, relevant for the focus of this essay. Furthermore, Collins interestingly criticises Skinner for not highlighting the religious aspects of Hobbes's thought.⁴⁶ In doing this, he is providing a sort of revisionist view on Hobbes's work, highlighting religion as an important factor. However, the focus throughout the book is more on the political aspects of religion, than theology per se, which means

⁴³ George Wright., *Religion, Politics and Thomas Hobbes*, the Netherlands, 2006, 11.

⁴⁴ E.g.: *ibid.*, 279 and 287.

⁴⁵ Franck Lessay, "Hobbes and Sacred History" in *Hobbes and History*, Routledge, London, 2000, 148.

⁴⁶ Collins, 13.

Collins does not focus so much on Hobbes's view on God and his relationship with humans, as on Hobbes's views on the church and religion as a political tool.

Franck Lessay's "Hobbes's Protestantism" is the essay in *Leviathan After 350 Years* (Oxford, 2004) I am utilising in my extended essay. Lessay has a rather skeptical approach, in terms of drawing conclusions on Hobbes's Anglicanism, which I find commendable in some cases. Franck Lessay's essay is utilised in this essay as it provides relevant information on Hobbes's Anglican beliefs, in particular regarding predestination and Christ's role, which is of direct relevance in this extended essay. Furthermore, of all the essays in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, this essay is of particular relevance as it focuses, together with Edwin Curley's "The Covenant With God", which is not employed in this essay, on Hobbes as a *religious* thinker in *Leviathan*.

Noel Malcolm's *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002) is a rather monumental scholarly work, which consists of several separate essays, mainly focused on various views on Hobbes, and the impact of Thomas Hobbes on subsequent thinkers, rather than on Thomas Hobbes and his ideas in themselves. Chapter 1, "A Summary Biography" is the only real exception. As the focus is seldom on Hobbes himself this source only at times contains relevant information regarding the role of God in *Leviathan*, but is still an important reference work.

Quentin Skinner's *Visions of Politics. Volume III, Hobbes and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2002) is a scholarly work on Hobbes as a political thinker and a humanist, rather than as a religious thinker, an issue that the historian Collins has recognised.⁴⁷ In providing relevant biographical information, and information on the making of *Leviathan*, this source is highly appropriate for this essay.

Richard Tuck's *Hobbes* (Oxford, 1989) provides relevant information on Hobbes as a religious thinker, which is of relevance for the focus of this essay. However, this work does oftentimes (as does Collins' work) emphasise the role of religion, or more specifically the role of the church, in Hobbes's thought, rather than the role of God, which at times renders the sections on Hobbes's theological thought and religious philosophy irrelevant for the focus of this essay. Nonetheless, the very fact that it emphasises Hobbes's thoughts on religion, makes it more relevant than the 'secular' perspective in Skinner's book, or the externalism (i.e. thoughts and contexts external, yet in relation, to Hobbes) of Noel Malcolm.

The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes (Cambridge, 1996), is, like *Leviathan After 350 Years*, a compilation of various scholarly essays. The essays employed are Richard Tuck's

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

“Hobbes’s Moral Philosophy” and Patricia Springborg’s “Hobbes on Religion”. The essays range over the various disciplines and topics that Hobbes addressed and treated in his lifetime –from mathematics to theology –whereof the latter is of most relevance for this essay. Patricia Springborg’s essay “Hobbes on Religion” and Richard Tuck’s essay “Hobbes’s moral philosophy”, are utilised in this essay as they apply to the focus of this essay: Hobbes’s views on God and religion and on human morality. The latter is in particular of use in the introduction to Hobbes’s views on morals, which now follows.

Hobbes’s views on morals

Hobbes has a rather peculiar view on morals and virtues; or the passions to be more precise, as he does not employ the term *moral philosophy*. Firstly, by “Passions” Hobbes means all material “Voluntary Motions” that take place in the (material) mind.⁴⁸ These passions are, in a Galilean manner, based on the two motions repulsion and attraction.⁴⁹ The only major exception to this rule is contempt, which is “an immobility, or contumacy of the Heart, in resisting the action of certain things; and proceeding from that the Heart is already moved otherwise”.⁵⁰ However, the motions these passions constitute are labelled *voluntary* –i.e. are caused by the mind or will –unlike vital, and probably also mechanical, motions. The will in turn “is the last Appetite in Deliberating”. As the will is constituted of two passions, with the latter technically encompassing the appetite,⁵¹ it appears as if the will is merely a second order passion, being more cognitive. (Of course, Hobbes does not use the latter term.) Nonetheless, as Hobbes’s philosophy appears so consequentially materialistic, it appears unlikely that there was any major qualitative difference between the movements of the celestial bodies and the movements causing images and emotions in the body.

Secondly, a *virtue* is defined by Hobbes as any action that is (relatively speaking) “valued for eminence”.⁵² More specifically, Hobbes defines intellectual virtues as equivalent with “*good witte*”.⁵³ In turn, he distinguishes between natural wit, which is not innate, but consists

⁴⁸ Hobbes, Thomas, (editor: MacPherson, Crawford Brow,) *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-wealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*, London, 1968, (original edition: London, 1651), VI, 23.

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

of a good imagination, as well as deliberation and steadiness in attaining goals, while acquired wit is synonymous with acquired reason.⁵⁴ In the case of natural wit there is at least one passion constituting it, while the acquired wit is determined by reason. Furthermore, the passions “*cause the differences of Wit*”.⁵⁵

When discussing the constituents of morality and virtues –the passions –his definitions of them are rather commonsensical and naturalistic, as he attempts not to transcend the bounds of physics and language. For example, he defines the myriad of passions in ways that do not deviate strongly from common definitions of his day, and which often apply to contemporary definitions. Hobbes furthermore claims humans have several of the passions in common with animals: the one exception is curiosity.⁵⁶ Reason also separates humans from “beasts”, but it is not a passion.⁵⁷

Richard Tuck puts forward an insightful analysis of Hobbes’s views on morals. For instance, Hobbes drew a very clear demarcation line between ethics and “civil philosophy”. The former was concerned with a scientific study of the passions, and the latter was concerned with “civil laws, justice and all other virtues”.⁵⁸ This scheme, in some ways initiated by Francis Bacon, was unusual for the classically inspired humanists of Hobbes’s age.⁵⁹ Furthermore Hobbes’s perception of what the “laws of nature” are, are in Tuck’s view, laws that, except helping us to preserve ourselves, help to maintain peace.⁶⁰ However, Tuck admits opinions do vary as to what sort of moral rules the laws of nature constitute.⁶¹ This gives a natural law a political end, seemingly reduces its divinity (see main body of the text and analysis for further discussion) and makes it less arbitrary than any other moral codes of Hobbes.

Martinich dismisses secularist interpretations of Hobbes, as they complicate Hobbes’s moral theory on natural law, with God obliging people to obey him.⁶² Hobbes claimed the laws of nature were the laws of God, and that they became laws by God’s will and legislation,

⁵⁴ Ibid., 32 and 35.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 35. My italics.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Richard Tuck, “Hobbes’s moral philosophy”, in the *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, 178-9. (Quote from latter page.)

⁵⁹ Ibid., 177 and 179-80.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 190-1.

⁶¹ Ibid., 191.

⁶² Martinich, 108.

as human reason solely cannot determine between good and evil, and Martinich locates the incentive to commit moral acts to the passions.⁶³ This is a form of moral voluntarism or “divine command theory”, which, in Martinich’s view, is present in *Leviathan*, unlike the earlier political-philosophical work *De Cive*.⁶⁴ It is God’s omniscient power that legitimates.⁶⁵ Martinich furthermore claims that Hobbes’s moral theory was not at odds with Christianity, and did not lead to not caring for others.⁶⁶ Hobbes distinguishes between natural and positive laws; positive laws can even be *revealed* and particular laws by God.⁶⁷ Martinich does, however, claim that Hobbes admitted to have forgotten to mention that natural laws are God’s laws, which he compensated by defending himself in his response to Bishop Bramhall.⁶⁸ It is questionable, in my view, however, if Hobbes did not intend to omit God in defining a moral law. Lastly, an action is immoral in Hobbes’s view only if it contradicts a law, natural or positive.⁶⁹

What renders Hobbes particularly modern is his almost relativistic and emotivistic moral theory, in which several moral laws are merely a matter of subjective judgement, and are thus arbitrary. However, his relativism does not extend into a form of nihilism, as the need of a strong state, freed from the so-called natural condition, is emphasised. Thus, individuals are commended for renouncing their private moral judgements as to reach a common societal agreement on moral matters.⁷⁰ Obviously Hobbes’s relativism would appear to pose a problem when discussing the role of an absolute being, God, whose commands and will in relationship to moral humans are often discussed in Hobbes’s theology or metaphysics. However, with regards to “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, as well as the scholarly works employed, the issues at hand, when asking the question of what role God plays in relationship to moral humans, have more to do with various moral laws and divine commands, and moral laws and the passions relative to God’s will, rather than God and moral relativism.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 100-5 and 119-20.

⁶⁴ Martinich, 133.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁷⁰ Tuck, 182-3 and 192-3.

God and moral humans

Regarding salvation

The reason why I am treating the issue of salvation in Hobbes's "Of a Christian Commonwealth" is because it is one of the less politically tinted themes that are present in this book, mentioning God in relationship to moral humans. However, as will be later on shown in this section, Hobbes claims, in a typically Protestant manner, that salvation is more accounted for by *faith*, and good deeds are merely seen as symbolic acts of submission and repentance.⁷¹ Quite typically of Hobbes, he has a very naturalistic definition of what salvation is: salvation is being freed from "Death and Misery".⁷² This issue will be discussed more at length in the second section of this essay, "The prerequisites for salvation". Hobbes furthermore discerns two forms of salvation: particular and general salvations. Particular salvations imply God (*presumably* by his grace) saving people (in the Bible) from particular hazardous or harmful situations.⁷³ On the other hand, *general salvation* implies being saved to an eternal life in New Jerusalem at Christ's second coming, which Hobbes rather concretely, and naturalistically, conceives as a worldly kingdom.⁷⁴

It should be noted that Hobbes, when discussing God in relationship to humans as moral beings, and their salvation, emphasises that he submits "to the interpretation of the Bible *authorized by the Commonwealth*".⁷⁵ This statement does not *necessarily* imply that he submitted himself to the Church of England's teachings, as the heir to the throne of England, whom otherwise was *de jure* the head of the Church, was in exile, and the Puritan Cromwell, who was Lord Protector, favoured religious diversity at the time of the writing of *Leviathan*.⁷⁶ However, it still appears very likely that Hobbes submitted himself to the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* of the Church of England, regarding moral humans' justification in the eyes of God. Whether he submitted himself to the, by the Presbyterians written, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648), can be questioned, however. In a sense this would appear unlikely

⁷¹ See *Leviathan*, XXXIX, 247-8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, XXXVIII, 245.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 245-6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XXXVIII, 239. My italics.

⁷⁶ "Puritanism" in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Volume 11), United States, 2005.

as Hobbes was an “anti-Presbyterian”, more in favour of Puritan “Independency”,⁷⁷ established in Cromwell’s Commonwealth. On the other hand, Noel Malcolm claims that Hobbes had Calvinist tendencies “later in life”, although he was neither a Presbyterian, nor an “enthusiast[ic]” Puritan.⁷⁸ Thus, it is likely that he at least adhered to some of the *Westminster Confession*’s chapters.

A question worth raising in this context is Hobbes’s view on predestination. Both the *Westminster Confession* and the *Thirty-Nine Articles* mention it, in particular articles V, VI and VII in Chapter XVI: “Of Good Works”, and Chapter XVII and XVIII, in the former, and Article XVII, called “Of Predestination and Election”, in the latter. However, the *Westminster Confession* has a more developed argument on the issue, stating, for example, in Article VII of Chapter XVI, that “[w]orks done by unregenerate men, [...] are [not]done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.”⁷⁹ Article XVII of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, on the other hand, states that “for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s Predestination is a most dangerous downfall”, where the implication is rather that thinking of oneself as one of the damned is morally detrimental, while the *Westminster Confession* emphasises the fact that a damned person’s good deeds are worthless. Nonetheless, Article VIII of Chapter III (“Of God’s Eternal Decree”) in the *Westminster Confession* states that “The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.” Thus, even the *Westminster Confession* advocated discretion in putting forth the idea of predestination to fellow humans.

What Hobbes’s stance is on this matter, whether adopting the *Thirty-Nine Articles*’ version, or the more articulated and rigid version of the *Westminster Confession*, in “Of a Christian Common-wealth” is, in my view, not very clear. On pages 247 and 331, discussed above, Hobbes *never emphasises* that there would be a certain number of elect individuals that would

⁷⁷ Tuck, Richard, *Hobbes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, 86.

⁷⁸ Malcolm, 44.

⁷⁹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter XVI, Article VII.

be saved, but rather that God grants his mercy or grace in a rather arbitrary manner. Of course, the *implications* of this could be that there are only a certain number of individuals predestined to salvation or damnation, but looking solely at these texts is not sufficient evidence, as this consequence has *not* been drawn by the majority of Christian theologians between St. Augustine and Calvin.⁸⁰ However, the historian Franck Lessay, in his essay “Hobbes’s Protestantism” claims that Hobbes believed in predestination,⁸¹ and has very compelling empirical evidence, to back his claim. For instance, he cites the subsequent book to “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, Book IV: “Of the Kingdome of Darknesse”, Chapter XLIV, to support his claim that Hobbes believed in predestination. Lessay quotes this chapter, stating: “By the literal sense [...] there is no natural immortality of the soul, nor yet any repugnancy with the life eternal which the *elect* shall enjoy by grace.’ It is right, therefore, to claim that ‘the elect are the only children of the resurrection, that is to say, the sole heirs of eternal life’”.⁸² Lessay also claims that Hobbes put forth further (mainly Biblical) support for predestination in his book *Of Liberty and Necessity*.⁸³ It is peculiar, however, that “Calvin is not mentioned at all”,⁸⁴ despite the fact that Lessay depicts Hobbes as a Puritan,⁸⁵ adopting Calvinist doctrines. This is slightly different from the perspective of Noel Malcolm, who sees him as a non-Puritan and non-Presbyterian, intellectual Calvinist. Also, if Hobbes was somewhat a Calvinist, it is unlikely his “anti- Presbyterianism”⁸⁶ actually implied a rejection of the sections on predestination in the *Westminster Confession*.

Of course there are furthermore discrepancies in the theological doctrine of predestination. If Martinich is correct, Hobbes espoused the very orthodox Calvinistic, idea of “double predestination”. This was an idea that not all Calvinists held, probably not even Calvin himself. The doctrine implies that God both wills that the elect to go to heaven, *and* that the “reprobate” go to hell.⁸⁷ In Martinich’s view, Hobbes also claimed that God’s foreknowledge, due to his being omnipotent and omniscient, implied that God *willed* what he could foresee.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ The Catholic church father Augustine believed in predestination.

⁸¹ Lessay, “Hobbes’s Protestantism” in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, 2004, 269-71.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 270. My italics on “elect”. Quotes within quote are Hobbes’s.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 280. Note that Puritans were basically Calvinists (see “Puritanism” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 11).

⁸⁶ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 86.

⁸⁷ Martinich, 276-7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 275-6.

I have no concrete and contextual evidence to contradict this claim. However, the evidence in “Of a Christian Common-wealth” reveals Hobbes as a theologian, or philosopher of religion, emphasising the primacy of God’s grace, and with no actual mention of predestination, which could, at face value, render Hobbes equally much a Lutheran⁸⁹ as a Calvinist.

Hobbes appears to have a rather traditional Anglican view on the role of God in what could be termed as the Christian *salvation story*, beginning with Adam committing the original sin by eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge. This gave him the possibility to distinguish between good and evil, after which God cast him out of Eden and denied him eternal life by endowing him with mortality as a punishment for his sins. In this, that death (i.e. mortality) is the price of sinning against God, Hobbes concurs with Anglican theology. This provides God with the traditional Anglican role of being a God who has given man a free will to begin with to choose good or evil, yet can only save humans from eternal damnation by his grace, and through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.⁹⁰

What is of note, however, is that in the above mentioned passage from *Leviathan*, in which he admits his submission to the Commonwealth’s Biblical interpretations, he is hinting at a personal interpretation of what would had happened, had Adam made another moral decision, based on the alternatives given by God. Therefore he states “By which it seemeth to *me* [...] that Adam if he had not sinned, had had an Eternall Life on Earth: and that Mortality entered upon himself, and his posterity, by his first Sin.”⁹¹ By stating an alternate and possible outcome, he appears, in my view, to hint at the fact that Adam had a *free choice*, in making his moral decision of eating from the tree of knowledge, or not. Obviously there is the philosophical problem of whether there was such a thing as morality before the Fall (i.e. his committing of original sin), but Hobbes never discusses this issue. Either this is because Hobbes deemed it an irrelevant question, or it was a means to avoid controversies with scholars of divinity on this matter. The idea that Adam had a free choice is in itself not very controversial, when contrasted with the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, but may have clashed with the more explicitly deterministic theology of the *Westminster Confession*, if Hobbes now knew of it when writing “Of a Christian Common-Wealth” in France. What does make this claim typical of Hobbes, if the intention was to state a possible alternative outcome, is the fact that it

⁸⁹ In particular with regards to the primacy of God’s grace Hobbes could be rendered a Lutheran. See “Lutheranism” in Jones, Lindsay (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 8, United States, 2005.

⁹⁰ Hobbes, Thomas, (editor: MacPherson, Crawford Brow.) *Leviathan*, Penguin Books, London, (England), 1968, (original edition: London, 1651), Chap. XXXVIII, 238-9 and XXXIX, 247.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, XXXVIII, 238.

ties in with his more general political idea of humans in a –often theoretically postulated – natural state having a free choice; but once entering a contract, or in the case of Adam, making the choice to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, a human could not revert back to the natural or primal state.⁹² There is one important distinction: Eden’s primal state was one of moral perfection and not a “brutish” one as the, real or hypothetical, natural state; and breaking a contract, unlike reverting back to the permanent original sin, is immoral or absurd, rather than impossible.⁹³ In any case, it is a fitting *analogy*, as both Adam (and Eve) and a person making a contract or covenanting, have lost certain rights by their own free will. However, in Adam’s case it is more a matter of a punishment, than a sacrifice as a means to preserve oneself.

Regarding God’s role in relation to Adam making the moral decision to obey or disobey God, it is hard to determine, drawing from what is stated in “Of a Christian Commonwealth”, if Hobbes thought it was an expression of the will and power of God that Adam made that decision. This would in particular concur with the strongly Calvinistic *Westminster Confession*, Chapter II claiming that God “work[s] all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will”. Furthermore, Chapter III states that “God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass”, although God is (somehow) still not “the author of sin”, nor someone that takes away “liberty or contingency of second causes”. If Hobbes had this idea in mind, this would give God a prominent role, as everything that happens in this world would be an expression of his will. However, if Adam made that decision *independently* of God, it would render God rather distant in relation to human moral decisions. In any case, in the case of the moral decision of Adam. Although Hobbes is often portrayed as a Calvinist, or a philosopher inspired by Calvinism, the evidence in “Of a Christian Commonwealth” is in scarce support of the rather strong determinism articulated in the *Westminster Confession*. For instance, as mentioned above, Adam appears to have had a free and alternate choice. For example, Hobbes claims that “had he [Adam] *not* broken the commandment of God, he had enjoyed it [life] in the Paradise of Eden Everlastingly.”⁹⁴ Also, it is stated that “Adam lost Eternall Life by his *sin*”⁹⁵ and that he became mortal, “not by his Creators commandment, *but*

⁹² Ibid., XIV, 65.

⁹³ Ibid., XIII, 63, and XIV, 65.

⁹⁴ Ibid., XXXVIII, 238.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 240. My italics.

by his own sense".⁹⁶ The latter I interpret as meaning Adam sinned by his own will. Nowhere in the text is it made clear that it was an expression of God's will, although he may have *implied* it. If the Fall –i.e. the committing of original sin –was more on account of Adam's will than God's will, then God has less of a role to play in (at least) the story of the Fall. At the same time, *Adam's* (and Eve's) role as a free *moral* being (or beings) comes more to the fore than Calvinist theology usually permits, in which God's grace and human faith are of greater relevance. However, this is rendered unlikely when placing Hobbes in the context of his other writings. (Of course, consistency is not always to be expected in a philosopher's thought, whether in his, or her, collected works, or in one and the same book.) For example, Franck Lessay in "Hobbes's Protestantism" states that Hobbes, in *Of Liberty and Necessity*, "argue[d] for predestination" and determinism as an effect of "God's omnipotence", in polemic against Bishop Bramhall, who argued for free will. As examples Hobbes mentions, paraphrasing *Romans* 9:11-19, God's favouritism of Jacob over Esau and God's instrumental use of Pharaoh as an antagonist to the Israelites.⁹⁷ Given these examples, it is *not unlikely* that Hobbes thought the Fall of Adam and Eve was an expression of God's will, although this is not, as I have mentioned earlier, explicit in "Of a Christian Common-wealth".

There is nothing in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* or the *Westminster Confession* that states that God uses any *force* to make people believe, or be morally upright. Instead He works, seemingly arbitrarily, by endowing people with his grace. This is, for instance, stated in Article X in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* where the traditional idea of humans obtaining "faith and calling of upon God" through his, or her, own good deeds, but only by God's grace. In Chapter 36 of *Leviathan* a possibly different *or* similar –depending on how one views it –idea of how God makes people believers and moral is mentioned. This is mentioned briefly when Hobbes discusses in "what manner God spake to [...] Sovereign Prophets of the Old Testament",⁹⁸ and other Biblical characters.⁹⁹ In discussing this issue he discusses statements that would limit God's nature. Yet, at the same time, from a traditional view, he de-spiritualises God by claiming that "to say he spake by the Holy Spirit, as it signifieth the graces, or gifts of the Holy Spirit, *is to attribute nothing to him supernaturall.*"¹⁰⁰ He then continues, stating: "For God disposeth men to Piety, Justice, Mercy, Truth, Faith, and all

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 216. My italics.

⁹⁷ Lessay, "Hobbes's Protestantism", 270.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXVI, 229.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 230-1.

¹⁰⁰ *Leviathan*, XXXVI, 228. My italics.

manner of Vertue, both Morall, and Intellectual, by doctrine, example, and by severall occasions, naturall, and ordinary.”¹⁰¹

What is relevant here is that he depicts God as working, like the church,¹⁰² by means of *persuasion* –i.e. by “doctrine” and “example” –and not force (at least force is not mentioned), as to render humans pious and moral. Another relevant point in the larger context of the text, is that the doctrinal teachings of God, and the naturalistic statement of the “naturall, and ordinary” workings of God, rather than miracles or actual transfer of incorporeal bodies, which Hobbes is sceptical to and rejects respectively,¹⁰³ seem to be *the* spiritual workings of God. The idea of God bringing humans to Him by spiritual (i.e. emotionally and intellectually inspiring) teachings, and by natural examples, whether this is His own creation or evidence leading to the “first cause argument”,¹⁰⁴ appears to furthermore conform to Anglican orthodoxy. However, the fact that God is here working by some form of persuasion *may* imply that humans can attain some form of salvation by their own willpower, albeit that it is the “*graces*, or gifts of the Holy Spirit” he is providing and that God “disposeth” them to being virtuous.¹⁰⁵ The passage is furthermore too short and undeveloped to provide any evidence that Hobbes believed Adam could attain salvation by his own willpower, and it appears from other parts of *Leviathan* that Hobbes was mainly in line with the *Thirty-Nine Articles* (and most likely large parts of the *Westminster Confession*) on the doctrines of God’s grace and justification. This is thus in all likelihood the same idea on and grace and justification as expressed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, phrased slightly differently.

The prerequisites for salvation

The prerequisites for salvation that I will be discussing here will be both on account of what God has prepared and what He does for humans, in Hobbes’s view, so that humans may be saved. Also, I will be discussing what human actions are deemed necessary, in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, in order for a human to be saved.

Firstly, God *appears* to have a very traditional Anglican Christian role in *Leviathan*, at least given that Jesus *is* God, who saves people by his grace, rather than accounting for

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., XLII, 270.

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, XXXVII, 236-8 (on miracles), and XXXIV 214-5 (on spirits).

¹⁰⁴ See Martinich, 192-4 and Tuck, *Hobbes*, 78.

¹⁰⁵ *Leviathan*, XXXVI, 228. My italics.

human's good deeds.¹⁰⁶ Concerning Christ's godliness and being united in the Godhead of the trinity, as stated on page 267 in "Of a Christian Common-wealth", should however, maybe not be taken at face value as orthodox, as he furthermore, in that passage, states that *representing* God is sufficient to be counted as one of God's "persons". No matter what the case is on Hobbes's Trinitarianism, Hobbes does not embrace the, from an Anglican point of view, heresy of Pelagianism: i.e., that a human can be saved on account of their good deeds, rather than God's grace, as condemned in Article IX in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Furthermore, albeit a sovereign could probably provide salvation until God's kingdom returns,¹⁰⁷ only God can save humans from sin and thus provide them with eternal life.¹⁰⁸ (How such a supernatural act is possible is not explained.) Salvation is, however, in one respect viewed in a very concrete sense, as salvation merely implies being freed from "Death and Misery",¹⁰⁹ and these things are in turn the punishment for sin. Thus Hobbes could claim, quoting the narrative in *Matthew* 9:2 about the paralysed man, healed by Jesus, that Jesus' saying "Thy Sinnes be forgiven thee" and "Arise and walk" are "all one", as death follows from sin, and eternal life is in turn the consequence of salvation. Although salvation in Hobbes's view is most likely deemed possible by the grace of God, the link between original sin and salvation is apparent in Hobbes's theology; or alternatively, philosophy of religion. In this respect Hobbes does not deviate significantly from conventional Anglican theology; yet he also emphasises that salvation is something *non-metaphysical* –i.e. being saved from physical and psychological harm¹¹⁰ –rather than being saved from evil spirits, Hell, and the realm of Satan.

Thomas Hobbes emphasises faith and obedience as a prerequisite for human salvation (provided by God). In fact, faith in Jesus as the Christ (i.e. Messiah) and obedience towards worldly authorities, as commanded by the apostle Paul in *Romans* 13:1-10, are the only two moral actions that Hobbes sees as necessary in order to obtain God's salvation. In the first sense he does not deviate from the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Article XIII (for example), on good works preceding "*Justification*", i.e. salvation, states that "[w]orks done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not pleasant to God, *forasmuch as they spring*

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., XXXVIII, 247.

¹⁰⁷ See the parallell drawn between sovereigns and God regarding salvation in *ibid.*, XXXVIII, 238, and Martinich, 272 on the sovereign working as a redeemer.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 245.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

not of faith in Jesus Christ".¹¹¹ This passage is very similar to Hobbes's idea that believing in Jesus is the Christ is the only *belief* necessary for salvation.¹¹² On the other hand, Hobbes deviates from Anglican theology, with respect to the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, as the articles do *not* emphasise obedience to the queen¹¹³ or civil magistrate (authorised by the queen) as necessary for justification; alternatively salvation. It is noteworthy that he emphasises such a minimal amount of faith- and moral-related stances. Albeit that Anglican Christianity could emphasise very simple doctrines, in Hobbes's case his minimalism almost implies that God's actions as a saviour is *limited*. I.e.: limited from religious points of view with more emphasis on the details of Christian doctrine, to merely two instances in Hobbes's philosophy of religion.

Like the majority of Protestants of his day (and even today), Hobbes emphasises God's grace, rather than morally good deeds, as necessary for salvation. Yet good deeds are seen as important as symbolic acts of our intent to be saved which, and thus, in Hobbes's view, "God accepteth it [good deeds] for the Performance itself".¹¹⁴ However, Hobbes appears to emphasise *faith* in place of good deeds in order to be saved by the grace of God, albeit that *his* Christian faith was often rather heterodox. (Especially on account of his consequential materialism and Trinitarianism.) For instance he states,

God accepteth not the Will for the Deed, but onely in the Faithful; it is therefore Faith that makes good our Plea [for salvation, or justification]; and in this sense it is, that Faith [and, as it seems, at least in several cases, *obedience*] only Justifies.¹¹⁵

With regards to faith as the thing required to be justified in the eyes of God he appears almost to be repeating a well-established Protestant doctrine. For instance Article XI of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, "*Of the Justification of Man*", states "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ *by faith*,¹¹⁶ and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort; as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification." Finally, his

¹¹¹ My italics.

¹¹² *Leviathan*, XLIII, 323.

¹¹³ Queen Elizabeth I was queen at the time of the ratification of the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*.

¹¹⁴ *Leviathan*, XLIII, 330.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁶ My italics.

limitation of faith necessary for salvation to one article can be seen as a manoeuvre on his part to *appear* as an uncontroversial Christian thinker, who did not disagree with several Protestant Christian beliefs, although he probably did. Evidence for this is that his theological “minimalism” regarding religious doctrines is, by Collins, related to humanists such as Vossius, who heterodoxly emphasised morals and politics in Christianity, rather than revelation.¹¹⁷ Obviously, the tenet that Jesus is the Christ, unlike the moral command to obey worldly authorities, has more to do with revelation than politics and morals. Thus, this form of minimalism may not have been extremely heterodox. At least if one, like Martinich, believes Hobbes was genuine in his religious statements.¹¹⁸ However, the evasiveness of the tenet may imply that what Hobbes meant by “Christ”, and a Trinitarian meant by “Christ”, were two different things. This is due to the word the word meaning both “the “Anointed One””, which is the original Greek meaning of the word, referring to the king of the Jews, and with “no connotation of divinity”, or, in, a tradition based on the Apostle Paul, it could be the “divine title of the incarnate God”.¹¹⁹ Based on the fact that Jesus was put to death for being the Christ, according to Hobbes, or more precisely (it seems) “for saying hee was King”, and crucified as “THE KING OF THE JEWES”,¹²⁰ *only* the former definition of the “Christ” appears to apply to Hobbes. This is furthermore the interpretation of Hobbes Lessay appears to espouse in his wordly interpretation of Hobbes’s Christology.¹²¹ However, due to the double meaning of the word, Hobbes may have intended readers to interpret him as orthodox, as they would interpret the term “Christ”, based on the latter definition of the word.

Hobbes appears on a whole to have a rather conventional Anglican view on the ideas of sin and redemption through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. In a conventional, seemingly Calvinist, manner, he emphasises that “[b]y his [i.e. the sinner’s] Ransome, is not intended a satisfaction of Sin, equivalent to the Offence, which no sinner for himselfe, nor righteous man can ever be able to make for another” as this would make the satisfaction for a sin something “vendible”.¹²² By this Hobbes means that sinning against an almighty creature, i.e. God, whose power is almighty, cannot be recompensed in the same way as the replacement of an

¹¹⁷ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 49. Vossius was a 17th century humanist. (See *ibid.*)

¹¹⁸ Martinich, 16.

¹¹⁹ Kenneth Scott Latourette and, Hyam Maccoby, “Jesus Christ”, *Collier’s Encyclopedia*, Vol. 13, Ontario, 1995.

¹²⁰ *Leviathan*, XLIII, 325.

¹²¹ See Lessay, “Hobbes’s Protestantism”, 287-8.

¹²² *Leviathan*, XXXVIII, 247.

item can serve as an appropriate compensation for property damage. Instead Hobbes emphasises that a sin, rather arbitrarily, can only be recompensed by an almost *symbolic* act of penance –symbolic as the act *in itself* does not satisfy as compensation –“as God hath been pleased to require” and “is pleased to accept”.¹²³ (Merely the word “pleased” emphasises that God does not by necessity save humans due to their being virtuous, but by his free will.) Thus, Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, in Hobbes’s view, did not serve as a compensation for human sins, but served more as a prerequisite for salvation that “God was pleased to require [...] at his second coming”.¹²⁴ When utilising the (possessive) pronoun “his” he is most likely referring to *Christ*. However, if Hobbes were a genuine Trinitarian, he would in this case in effect be referring to God himself. Again, by claiming that it was something God was “pleased to require” it appears as if Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was an expression of God’s free will and “mercy”¹²⁵ (or grace), rather than something that had to happen by necessity. This very point, although it is not explicit, *could* be a heterodox belief of Hobbes, embedded in seemingly conventional way of describing Christ’s sacrifice, “oblation” or “price”.¹²⁶ The fact that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was done out of mercy appears to have certain backing in Hobbes’s alleged Calvinism, at least in the view of Martinich. What Martinich claims is that Hobbes embraced the idea that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was a sign of God’s mercy, which Calvin also did, rather than Luther’s idea that it was due to God’s justice.¹²⁷ Also, Martinich claims that Hobbes embraced the Calvinist idea that Christ died as a ransom for man’s transgression, rather than a satisfaction for human beings’ sins, which was Luther’s idea,¹²⁸ which is supported by the above quote. However, the philosopher Martinich misses an important nuance in the history of theology, when determining Hobbes as a Calvinist on account of his mentioning salvation depending on God’s grace, as this was also an important Lutheran doctrine, although Luther also relied on the justice idea of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (which Hobbes does *not* accept). Nonetheless, it is still most likely Hobbes embraced Hobbes embraced the Calvinist idea of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, judging from the concurrence of other secondary sources on Hobbes’s Calvinism.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Hobbes sees these terms as equivalent (Ibid.)

¹²⁷ Martinich, 269-70.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 267-71.

A contrasting with Article XXXI of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, from which Hobbes may have derived some of the points he made, will here be of use as to see on what points Hobbes deviated from Anglican orthodoxy on this issue: “The offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone.” What is most striking is that the article embraces the satisfaction theory of redemption, which Hobbes did not embrace.¹²⁹ However, more importantly, it is also of note that although this article does not either emphasise the point that Christ’s offering on the cross was of necessity. It does, however, emphasise the *uniqueness*, in stating “once”, of Christ’s offering on the cross, which Hobbes does not explicitly do. The article could, of course, be *interpreted* as to reveal the necessity of Christ’s death on the cross for the sake of human salvation, but it should be emphasised that the subsequent sentence in the article dismisses the use of, for example, saying mass for the dead. This makes it clear that Article XXXI was written mainly to emphasise the point that Christ’s sacrifice was performed only *once* for humankind, and not repeatedly in the Eucharist of the Catholic mass.

It is noteworthy, however, that Hobbes does not explicitly emphasise the *uniqueness* of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, but rather as a fact of the conventional *salvation story* of humans. This may be due to his minimalist theological beliefs, often emphasised by Jeffrey Collins. In this minimalist belief, God as an almighty being, in relation to humans, cannot ask for an adequate compensation for human sins (given that he genuinely adopted the originally Lutheran and Calvinistic ideas of justification), is of more relevance than a singular historical incident: the crucifixion of Christ. However, the very general terms in which he speaks of God’s sacrifice of his son on the cross as his voluntary expression of wanting save us through a basically symbolic sacrifice, omits the very important points that Article II of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* makes that “Christ, very God and very man, [...] truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, *to reconcile His Father to us*, and to be a sacrifice, *not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men*”. What makes this article more specific than the much longer passage of Hobbes referenced above is that these articles of the Anglican Church were very clear on the point that their version of Christianity was Trinitarian, which Hobbes is rather ambiguous on throughout Book III of *Leviathan*. Also, Hobbes neither made it explicit that the sacrifice on Calvary would “reconcile His [Christ’s] Father to us [humans]”,¹³⁰ nor

¹²⁹ See *Leviathan*, XLI, 262.

¹³⁰ *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*, Article II.

that it erased original sin. These are relevant points as the arbitrary relationship between God and humans as moral beings in the context of Christ's death on the cross as a (albeit symbolic) means of salvation would be clarified, had he discussed these points explicitly. If Christ, in Hobbes's view, is a mere *representative* of God's person, which appears likely when juxtaposed with his idea that representing God is sufficient to be one of the persons of the Godhead, Christ could still serve as a sacrifice that God demanded for our salvation, and thus make Christ "reconcile His Father to us" albeit it deviates from the traditional Trinitarian view of the Anglican church of Hobbes's day. If Hobbes, however, saw himself as a Socionianist,¹³¹ but disguised it in a scriptural and doctrinal exegesis, striving to be conventional, it is very understandable that *Christ's* role in the *salvation story* in relationship to moral humans as well as God is not made as explicit as Article II. Were he, however, a conventional Trinitarian –which, judging by the implications of his representational Trinitarianism, where Moses represented God the Father and the Apostles the Holy Spirit appears unlikely¹³² –it is altogether conspicuous that Christ's role, whether as a sacrificial man or a sacrificed god, is not made more explicit. (Unless Hobbes saw such discussions as truisms, which in turn seems unlikely when juxtaposed with his at times parrot-fashion descriptions of Christian dogmas.) Franck Lessay, in "Hobbes and Sacred History", discusses a similar issue, when analysing Hobbes's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In this essay, Lessay claims that Hobbes did not see "the Advent of Christ" as a crucial point of God's presence in a (from Hobbes's point of view¹³³) almost cyclical history, let alone a providential point, as Christ was merely deemed a moral teacher, rather than genuinely being the Son of God, revealed to humankind.¹³⁴ The arguments in *Historia Ecclesiastica* regarding the role of God, Christ and the Trinity, in all their heterodoxy and ambiguity appear to be identical with those in *Leviathan*, and further strengthens the idea I have put forward here that Christ's sacrifice on the cross may not have been of such theological significance in Hobbes's thought.

Lastly, the fact that Hobbes speaks of the transgressions of humans, that God pardons by his good will (as no punishment is sufficient), in judicial terms (albeit Hobbes did not embrace the justice or "satisfaction theory" of human salvation through Christ's death on the

¹³¹ I.e.: someone who rejects the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹³² See *Leviathan*, XLII, 268-9.

¹³³ At least this is Lessay's interpretation

¹³⁴ Franck Lessay, "Hobbes and Sacred History" in *Hobbes and History*, Routledge, London, 2000, 156-7. The quote is derived from the latter page.

cross¹³⁵), rather than spiritual, may be of note. It is also noteworthy that he does not mention original sin on page 247, as Article II, albeit that the claim that “once [a human is] guilty of Sin, [he or she] is obnoxious to the Penalty of the same”,¹³⁶ could be referring to original sin. However, it is *more likely* it is referring to every particular sin (alternatively immoral act) committed by a human. All in all, Hobbes expresses God’s relationship with moral humans in the context of the sacrifice of Christ in rather conventional terms, but with *peculiar omissions* when contrasted with a conventional text, which could render the God-Christ-moral human relationship less spiritual than Anglican orthodoxy would permit.

On moral laws

Notable protagonists in the Bible, such as Adam, Noah and his family and Abraham are pointed out as people who stand in *special* relation to God, whom God “command[s] by a voice”, and whom then have, at different times, constituted the kingdom of God.¹³⁷ However, Hobbes appears to mean it is not by necessity their good deeds that guarantee this special relationship. For example, Adam *disobeyed* God by his own free will. At least that is most likely what Hobbes means when claiming that Adam disobeyed God, and thereby became mortal, “not by his Creators commandment, *but by his own sense*”.¹³⁸ Thus, at least if he was in line with conventional Protestant theology on salvation, Hobbes believed that the special relationship was guaranteed by God’s grace, as Adam’s deeds would not be sufficient.

In the case of Abraham, Hobbes conventionally points out that God established a covenant with Abraham, in which “*Abraham promiseth for himselfe and his posterity to obey as God, the Lord that spake to him; and God on his part promiseth to Abraham the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession*”.¹³⁹ As a sign of this covenant, circumcision was made a practice, just as baptism is the sign of the new covenant.¹⁴⁰ What is relevant, regarding the covenant, however, is the *moral* aspect of it, as this covenant is further explained as a “Contract between God an Abraham; by which Abraham obligeth himself and his posterity, in a peculiar manner *to be subject to Gods positive Law*; for to the Law Morall he was obliged before, as by an

¹³⁵ Martinich, 269.

¹³⁶ *Leviathan*, XXXVIII, 247.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 216 and even 217, on Abraham.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216. My italics.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 216-7.

Oath Allegiance.”¹⁴¹ What is of note here is the fact that the covenant entails an enforcement of a (moral) law that is “positive”, meaning it is of the same nature as a sovereign’s legislation or lawful commands. Thus, it is most likely solely an expression of God’s good will, as well as man’s submission to what God wills. The covenant’s permanence is thus questionable; and in (Christian) Biblical history the non-permanent nature of the covenant is revealed by the upheaval of the old covenant, and its practice, circumcision, with the coming of the new covenant through (or in) Christ.¹⁴² The positive law furthermore appears to be something added to the “Law Morall”, as the adjective “peculiar”, as to describe the positive nature of the covenant law, and the reminding phrase “for to the Law Morall he was obliged before”, reveal. What the *nature* of the moral law is, is, however, hard to determine.

The most *likely* explanation to what a moral law is, in Hobbes’s view, is that it is a natural law. In particular, I find this supported by Martinich’s claim, when he personally answers a contemporary critic of Hobbes, that a natural obligation is a *moral* obligation in Hobbes’s philosophy.¹⁴³ Rather interestingly the historian Richard Tuck points out that the term “[moral] laws of nature” which Hobbes mentions in *Leviathan*, was troubling for Hobbes. Thomas Hobbes appears to have seen the *need* for *knowing* of God as a lawgiver of the laws of nature (a law would require a lawgiver in Hobbes’s view), as unnecessary, as the laws of nature arise out of our need of self-preservation.¹⁴⁴ This would render God rather obsolete, as only contingent laws could be ascribed to him, while laws that moral humans adhere to by necessity render God’s role as a lawgiver obsolete. What speaks against this view is that Hobbes in “Of a Christian Common-wealth” at times states that the laws of nature and the laws of God concur. For instance, Hobbes claims “Before that time [of Moses] there was no written Law of God, who as yet having not chosen any people to be his particular Kingdome, had given *no law to men, but the Law of nature*, that is to say, the Precepts of Naturall Reason, written in every mans own heart.”¹⁴⁵ However, the sincerity of these claims can be questioned, as one can question if human reason is not sufficient. One historian who takes Hobbes’s sincerity at face value is Martinich. He claims that natural laws are God’s laws, as a

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 217. The phrase “positive Law” is put in my italics.

¹⁴² See Robert Carol and Stephen Prickett (editors), *The Bible, Authorised King James Version*, The World’s Classics, Oxford and New York, 1997 (original edition: 1611), *Corinthians* 4:1-12 and 7:1-6.

¹⁴³ Martinich, 92-3.

¹⁴⁴ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 79.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., XLII, 282.

law by necessity requires a lawgiver, which Hobbes genuinely believed was God.¹⁴⁶ This, at least in part contradicts Tuck's more secular interpretation of moral laws. Also, God's irresistible power "enforce[s] required sanction" of that law in Hobbes's view (Martinich claims).¹⁴⁷

However, moral laws may be of a more Biblical nature, if Hobbes by moral laws intends what is referred to in the *Westminster Confession* as moral laws. For instance, Chapter XIX "Of the Law of God", states that both Adam and Moses were provided laws, or a "law" (however, the singular form does not imply it was one law), which is "commonly called moral". This law bound Adam to obedience towards God, with the threat of death (or, as Hobbes correctly points out, mortality¹⁴⁸), and in Moses' case came in the form of the Ten Commandments. As these cases are very similar to the positive law Hobbes speaks of, which was enforced when Abraham covenanted with God, it appears likely that Hobbes would concur on what the *Westminster Confession* terms as "law[s], commonly called moral". However, it is true that the first law, issued to Adam, is very similar to the natural (moral) law of one's duty to preserve oneself. This still does not prove though that what Hobbes calls a moral law, and what the *Westminster Confession* calls moral law, are one and the same thing.

Moral humans and the ontology issue

It may appear peculiar to link Hobbes's ontology with the question of what role God plays in relationship to moral humans. However, as the question I have raised has to do with a metaphysical matter: i.e. God's *role* in *relation* to moral humans, I find it crucial for there to be at least some analysis of Hobbes's metaphysics. What is firstly of note is that Hobbes makes no remarks on God's ontological nature in *Leviathan*; albeit his dismissal of an "incorporeall substance" as a contradiction,¹⁴⁹ renders God material, which is far from the definitions of God in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the *Westminster Confession*. In particular, the *Westminster Confession*'s description of God, in Chapter II, as "a most pure spirit, invisible, [and] without body", must have been viewed as a highly contradictory statement in Hobbes's view. Nonetheless: whether out of fear of being tried for blasphemy, or a genuine belief that God is a mystery, Hobbes avoids any remarks on God in "Of a Christian Common-

¹⁴⁶ Martinich, 84-5 and 88.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 88.

¹⁴⁸ *Leviathan*, XXXVIII, 238.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., XXXIV, 207.

Wealth” that would clearly define, or possibly limit, His nature. Thus, when Hobbes quotes King David, who claims: “*Shall he that made the eye, not see? Or he that made the ear, not hear?*”, he makes it clear that “this may be spoken, not (as usually) to signifie Gods nature, but to signifie our intention to honour him. For to *see*, and *hear*, are Honourable Attributes and may be given to God [by humans], to declare (as far as our capacity can conceive) his Almighty power.”¹⁵⁰ There appears to be an almost secularist, or in any case heterodox, statement hidden in the text, as this would imply that humans in a sense *create* God, as to give expression for our reverence of him. Martinich claims an opposite hypothesis, stating that the distinction between “honorific language”, referring to God, and language about God that is “literally true” is blurry in Hobbes’s thinking.¹⁵¹ This unclear distinction may be true in certain instances in Hobbes’s writings. However, in the case of the above quote Hobbes states this language used to honour God is “not [...] [used] to signifie Gods nature”, and would therefore carry no literal meaning. Thus, the words expressing our reverence for God would in turn be an expression of *human* morality. God’s nature in itself is, however, shrouded in mystery. Although allegorical religious imagery, as an expression of our morally good religious feelings were not unknown in Christianity even before Hobbes’s time –mystics like Dionysus Areopagita and Eckhart, and their descriptions of God “via negativa”, serve as a prime example of this¹⁵² –God’s role in the world appears more to be a mysterious being that humans endow with attributes as an expression of *their* morality, than a being that can be intelligibly explained as having attributes and qualities by himself, albeit it has to be done through (e.g.) negative metaphors. At least God’s nature appears to be hard to explain independently of moral humans’ perceptions, in Hobbes’s view.¹⁵³ However, as I shall discuss later in the analysis section, it appears more likely that this idea is an expression of Hobbes’s naturalistic scepticism, than an expression of genuine mysticism.

Hobbes has a naturalistic, but at the same time rather mysterious view on what angels are. He defines them as “some image raised (supernaturally) in the fancy, to signifie the presence of God in the execution of some supernaturall work; and therefore in the rest, where their nature is not exprest, it may be understood in the same manner.”¹⁵⁴ As in the case of God’s

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., XXXVI, 227.

¹⁵¹ Martinich, 201.

¹⁵² See “Via negativa” in Lindsay Jones (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Volume 14), Thomson Gale (The Thomson Corporation), United States, 2005.

¹⁵³ See Martinich, 185-7, who believes Hobbes’s theological scepticism is applicable even to theologians such as Anselm of Canterbury (187-8).

¹⁵⁴ *Leviathan*, XXXIV, 212.

communication with man, the *mechanism* whereby this is rendered possible is not explained. (Tuck makes a similar point regarding Hobbes not explaining the mechanism by which Christ redeemed humankind;¹⁵⁵ a point Martinich would hardly concur on.) Albeit that Hobbes denies the existence of angels as independent, ontologically existing beings –i.e. not being mere symbols or products of human imagination –good angels are expressions of God’s (in all likelihood good¹⁵⁶) will. These apparitions, communicated by God, are in turn deemed benevolent *by humans*.¹⁵⁷ In a sense this makes God’s contact with humans, at least as mentioned in the Bible, more direct, as angels are not independent beings, but rather directly tied to God. (If they, in several cases, can be called angels in the traditional sense of the word.) On the other hand, the gap in the communication between God and moral humans is emphasised by the fact that He communicates by utilising illusory images, rather than appearing directly to humans. This lends support to my idea that Hobbes’s God is, in a sense, a distant God in relation to human beings, which in Latin is termed as a *deus otiosus*.¹⁵⁸

This passage will further illustrate Hobbes’s views on revelations:

To say that he [a person] hath seen a Vision, or heard a Voice, is to say, that he hath *dreamed* [my italics] between sleeping and waking: for in such a manner a man doth many times naturally take his dream for a vision, as not having well observed his slumbering. To say he speaks by supernatural Inspiration, is to say, he finds an ardent desire to speak, or some strong opinion of himself, for which he can alledge no strong opinion of himself, for which he can alledge no naturall and sufficient reason. So that though God Almighty can speak to a man, by Dreams, Visions, Voice, and Inspiration; yet he obliges no man to believe he hath so done to him that pretends it; who (being a man) and (which is more) may lie.¹⁵⁹

It appears, from the passage above that Hobbes has a minimum, if any belief at all, in visions, and it is somewhat a *truism* that a man is not obliged to believe a feigned vision. Yet the question is raised *how* a man would derive knowledge from *God* that a person is pretending a vision, when it appears that man’s reason is sufficient enough. Furthermore, spiritual inspiration, which possesses a *moral* quality (at least to some extent) in the passage above, appears to be derived from human nature, and not from God, although a human may *believe* it

¹⁵⁵ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 90.

¹⁵⁶ Hobbes is not explicit on this point.

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 211.

¹⁵⁸ See “Deus otiosus” in Lindsay Jones (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 1, United States, 2005.. In this dictionary “*deus otiosus*” means, in Latin, ““a god at leisure” or “god without work [...] who has withdrawn from active life.”

¹⁵⁹ *Leviathan*, XXXII, 196.

is derived from God. Albeit that this passage may support Berman's claim that Hobbes was an atheist, what appears more likely in my view, from the evidence at hand in the passage, is that God is portrayed as a distant, or almost *absent*, God –i.e. a 'deus otiosus', who reveals himself through *reason* (to moral humans) and not revelation. The first cause argument would be an example (maybe the only example in Hobbes's view) of God's existence being proven through reason.¹⁶⁰ What is of note, however, is that some of his scepticism towards claims of having revelations could imply that all earlier mentioning of revelations earlier on page 196 is a mere sham, so that Hobbes could establish his rhetorical ethos as the ethos of a conventional philosopher of religion.

It is also of note that God's "Spirit", as referred to in a number of Biblical passages quoted by Hobbes, appears to be moral qualities in humans, rather than an essence of God himself. For instance, Hobbes claims:

But for *metaphorical* significations, there be many [definitions of the word "Spirit"]: for sometimes it is taken for a Disposition or Inclination of the mind; as when for the disposition to controul the sayings of other men, we say *a spirit of contradiction; For a disposition of uncleanness, and unclean spirit* [...] and for *inclination to godlinesse, and Gods service, the Spirit of God* [...].¹⁶¹

When contrasting Hobbes's ideas with the *Thirty-Nine Articles'* Article I, which speaks of "things [...] invisible", which is in all likelihood spirits, and Article V, where the phrase "[of] one substance", in talking of the Holy Spirits place in the Trinity, most likely signifies an incorporeal substance, the question arises if the word "Spirit" has anything to do with God at all. The mechanism by which God (for example) inspires humans to do good deeds is never explicitly explained.¹⁶² This may be either due to Hobbes genuinely seeing God's interaction with man as a mystery, as God transcends the material world; or, alternatively, he views God's nature and the material world as incapable of direct interaction. A third possible alternative is that he sees God as identical with the material world, like Spinoza did, but *conceals* this belief. A quote that may confirm that Hobbes held a view that God was a mystery to some extent is his statement, "[i]n the same manner, to take *Inspiration* in the proper sense, or to say that Good *Spirits* entered into men to make them prophecy, or Evill *Spirits* into those that became Phrenetique, is not to take the word in the sense of the

¹⁶⁰ Tuck, *Hobbes*, 78.

¹⁶¹ *Leviathan*, XXXIV, 208. My italics on the word "metaphorical".

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, XXXIII, 206. Richard Tuck emphasises a similar claim.

Scripture; for the Spirit there is taken for the *power of God, working by causes to us unknown.*¹⁶³ God appears here to play a *direct* role in inspiring humans, albeit that from an orthodox Anglican, or Presbyterian, view, his spiritual qualities are at the same time reduced. A further reduction, from an Anglican point of view, is evident when Hobbes furthermore states that the holy wind that came upon the assembled apostles and faithful in Jerusalem on the day of the Pentecost was *not* the Holy Spirit as such, “but [...] an Externall sign of Gods speciall working on their hearts, *to effect in them the interall graces, and holy vertues* hee thought requisite for the performance of Apostleship”.¹⁶⁴ Albeit that God here has the role of endowing humans with morally beneficent qualities, in particular in mentioning the passion-based virtues, some theologians of his day may have deemed this as an expression of the ‘unforgivable sin’ against the Holy Spirit.¹⁶⁵

Hobbes has a very naturalistic definition of the word “Holy”, which he defines as something that is in God’s possession. It is also a very politically charged definition of holy which he gives as it is what “men in their Kingdomes used to call *Publique* or the *Kings*.”¹⁶⁶ What is striking in this definition is that no spiritual qualities are attached to the word, which is in line with his materialistic metaphysics, in which the term “Spirit” is taken in a metaphorical rather than in a literal sense. Nor is the moral quality of the word, as something that should be revered, lacking; albeit that in his philosophy a sovereign should be obeyed almost unconditionally,¹⁶⁷ which would render something holy as possessing an absolute moral quality, being in the possession of an absolute and monarchical deity: i.e. God. In providing this definition, he is furthermore implying that *persons* that are rendered holy are holy because they are a possession of God, in the same sense as a subject is the possession of a king. For instance, he states: “The whole Nation of the Israelites were a people Holy to God; yet the tribe of Levi was amongst the Israelites a Holy tribe; and amongst the Levites, the Priests were yet more Holy; and amongst the Priests, the High Priest was the most Holy.”¹⁶⁸ One important question that should be raised here is *by what means* something is rendered

¹⁶³ Ibid., XXXV, 215. All italics, with one noted exception, are Hobbes’s. The phrase “power of God” is put in my italics.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. My italics.

¹⁶⁵ See *The Bible, Authorised King James Version*, Matthew 12:31-2, Mark 3:29 and Luke 12:10. Note, however, that throughout the history of Christianity there have been differing opinions as to what actions qualify as the ‘unforgivable sin’.

¹⁶⁶ *Leviathan*, XXXV, 220-1.

¹⁶⁷ See *ibid.*, XVIII, 88-9.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, XXXV, 220-1.

more holy than something else. Hobbes is not clear on this point, but there are two possible solutions, that can be connected with Hobbes's metaphysics and theology. If it has to do with the moral qualities of the persons involved, just as the term "Spirit" has to do with psychological and moral states or qualities, it would render people rather independent in relation to God. However, such an idea would border the Pelagian doctrine that someone is justified, or in this case rendered holy, by good deeds. As Hobbes, at least officially, adhered to the more Protestant idea of "justification by faith", and believed that one was justified, and most likely even predestined, through God's grace, such an opinion *may* have been unlikely. In connection with Hobbes's idea of being justified by the grace and mercy of God, it seems likely that it was purely by *God's* arbitrary will that he rendered certain things as being in his domain, or special domain: or more precisely being "Holy".

Analysis: The role of God in "Of a Christian Common-wealth"

Introduction to the general themes

There are a few points regarding God's role in relationship to moral humans that ought to be considered. I will here briefly summarise the main points from the above sections. These points will thereafter be analysed and discussed. The first subsection, "Regarding Salvation", in the section "God and Moral Humans" is in particular concerned with what defines salvation, God's workings and grace in saving humans, predestination, human's, in particular Adam's, freedom in making moral decisions, and the fact that God does not use any force, but works through persuasion. The second subsection, "The prerequisites for salvation", is concerned with God saving by his grace, and not on account of humans' good deeds and the minimal amount of human actions, or stances, required for salvation: belief in Jesus as the Christ and obeying the sovereign. (All other Christian virtues and tenets are derived from these two, as Hobbes sees it.) Christ's role in salvation, in particular regarding the importance of his sacrifice on the cross, is also considered. The third part, "On moral laws", discusses protagonists in the Bible (which will not be discussed in the analysis), and in particular Abraham receiving positive laws in covenanting with God. These laws are placed in contrast with *moral* laws, and in discussing what the term may imply interpretations of what Hobbes meant by "laws of nature" are provided, and if moral laws are natural laws. The fourth

subsection, “Moral humans and the ontology issue” is concerned with God’s, seemingly metaphorical and obscured, attributes in relation to moral humans, angels as an expression of God’s communication with (moral) humans, spiritual inspiration from God and the meaning of the word “Holy”.

The above topics will be analysed, and discussed, in the following section, in a more precise form as to answer the question what role God plays in relationship to moral humans. In doing this, I will be taking into account Hobbes’s views on morals, discussed in the beginning of this essay as an introductory topic. Finally, I will in general discuss Hobbes’s views on God’s role in relationship to moral humans, “distilling” the analysis above. In doing this, I will attempt at reaching some conclusions, based on the analysis. These conclusions will then be presented in the last section: the “Summary and final Discussion”.

The four subsections, and their general themes, on Hobbes, God and moral humans –an analysis and discussion

Hobbes is mainly concerned with human salvation when discussing God’s relationship with, and role relative to, moral humans, when discussing the God-human relationship on a less political basis. What is firstly of note is that salvation implies being saved from different types of evils, in particular what does not lead to our self-preservation. This applies both to the particular forms of salvation –i.e. being saved from different types of harm –and the general form, which at its most simple level implies gaining eternal life. That is, for the first time since Adam lost his potentiality of longevity by committing an immoral act against God. This is in line with the part of his ethics, in Book I of *Leviathan*, in which he discusses the laws of nature requiring us to evade death.¹⁶⁹ However, as Hobbes, in line with Anglican orthodoxy, as is for instance expressed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, believed that salvation was a grant of God’s grace, it is questionable if salvation entails a moral aspect or not on the part of humans. Unlike the laws of nature, which are commands, mediated through reason,¹⁷⁰ through which humans are obliged to preserve themselves, God’s grace satisfies the human desire of self-preservation on account of His arbitrary goodness, rather than humans by their own will attempting to preserve themselves. (In the case of gaining an eternal life, this would, of course, be an utter impossibility.) Thus, God’s role in relationship to humans, whether

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., XIV, 64.

¹⁷⁰ At least from what Hobbes mentions in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, a law of nature is a command of God, although this is not made clear in the *definition* of a law of nature, as will be discussed later.

regarding particular or general salvation, would be one in which a benevolent (and therefore moral) God, willing to preserve humans to the eternal life, has the power over humans whose morally beneficent deeds have nothing more but a symbolic value when it comes to being saved. That is, however, only in the case of the “elect”, predestined to go to heaven. It is unclear, however, based on what is stated in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, if Hobbes would regard salvation as something close to amoral on the part of human beings.

In connection with Hobbes’s ideas on human rewards and punishments issued by God in the afterlife, is the matter of Hobbes’s view on predestination. It appears likely that Hobbes adhered to the Calvinistic teachings dominant in early 17th century England, and thus embraced this deterministic doctrine that God wills people to go to heaven or hell, as is expressed in the *Westminster Confession* and in Article XVII in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. However, Hobbes does not make it clear that he adheres to the doctrine of predestination in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, which makes it hard to determine, when analysing the book in isolation, on what exact (Protestant) theological grounds he stood when discussing human salvation. On the other hand, he *does* mention this briefly in Book IV, Chapter XLIV, in speaking of the “elect” reveals that he most likely adhered to the doctrine of predestination. This is furthermore supported by the scholarly works consulted, whether explicitly speaking of his belief in predestination, or his Calvinistic beliefs. (Albeit Lessay is ambiguous on this point as Hobbes does not mention Calvin in his poem *Historia Ecclesiastica*.¹⁷¹)

An important question to be raised about predestination is the actual role God plays in relationship to moral beings, with regards to the doctrine of predestination. If Hobbes saw God as the cause of everything, and what he could foresee, due to his omniscience, was also what he willed, and thus God in consequence predestined humans to heaven or hell,¹⁷² then human actions count for nothing. In consequence, God would be almighty, and human actions would not be moral in any proper sense as their seemingly free will is predestined. However, philosophical speculation may not have been relevant from Hobbes’s point of view. For example, Hobbes does not develop any philosophical arguments in “Of a Christian Common-wealth” about the moral consequences of predestination, and seems to claim that moral human actions result from a free will. This does not mean Hobbes rejected the idea of God’s omniscience and omnipotence, and the doctrine of predestination, but rather that Hobbes did not see it as a theological and philosophical *problem*. If this is the case, one consequence that

¹⁷¹ See Lessay, “Hobbes’s Protestantism”, 289.

¹⁷² Refer to Martinich, 275-6.

could be drawn, albeit it is rather ambiguous in a strictly logical sense, is that humans are free in their moral actions, despite them being predestined, and due to God letting them being free in virtue of his omnipotence.

Furthermore, in connection with Hobbes's ideas on predestination, it is worth questioning if Adam's moral choice in the *salvation story* was a choice. While Hobbes appears to have embraced the idea of predestination it appears rather peculiar that Hobbes seems to portray it as if Adam had a moral *choice* in choosing between falling from grace or not. Of course, as I have mentioned earlier, the choice may not have been discerning between good and evil, but between a moral dichotomy versus an amoral state of bliss, preceding the state of original sin. On the other hand, the fact that evil exists as a potential implies that at least on God's, but maybe not on Adam's, part, there exists a distinction between things being good and evil. Nonetheless, the question still remains if Adam had a choice, in particular if Hobbes, in a deterministic manner implied that God, in virtue of his omniscience, was the cause of everything. If that is the case, then Adam made no moral decision of his own. Hobbes makes no further investigation of the philosophical convolutions of these philosophical-theological problems, nor do the *Thirty-Nine Articles* do so. The only thing he states is that Adam committed original sin out of his "own sense", which most likely implies that he had a free will. Yet again, the, applying strict logic, inconsequential idea of humans being able to make free moral decisions despite everything in the world happening according to God's will may in all likelihood be the idea that Hobbes espoused. Also, judging from his almost sole focus on Adam's moral choice he may have held a similar idea that is expressed in Chapter III in the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession*, which, for instance, does not dismiss "liberty or contingency of second causes", despite God having predestined moral humans, according to his (free) will, since the beginning of time.

As mentioned earlier, Adam's choice may be analogically be linked with Hobbes's contract theory. What should be disregarded in this analogy is that the state of nature that Hobbes describes is almost the opposite to the state of perfection in Paradise. What appears to be similar between the contract theory of the formation of a state, arising from a state of nature, and Adam committing original sin, is that in both cases they are close to being irreversible. Also, in both cases they depend on human decisions, albeit in the latter case God is more evidently present. Yet again, it is merely an analogy, although a very relevant one.

What is of note is Hobbes's idea of God *not* using any force in making people virtuous and true believers, which is also expressed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles* or the *Westminster Confession*. This could imply that God provides humans with a certain amount of free will,

giving them a moral *choice* to accept his grace or not. However, if Hobbes accepted the doctrine of “double predestination”, as well as saw God as the cause of everything, the logical consequence would be that humans have no real choice. Alternatively one could say humans have no free choice independently of God’s will, which in my view appears tautological, and renders the term “free” problematic. However, *for Hobbes* the discrepancy may not have been tautological, which the seemingly unreflected mentioning of God not working by force, and thereby by consequence providing humans with a choice to accept his grace or not. Hobbes’s statement in Chapter XXXVI that God “*disposeth* men to Piety, Justice, Mercy, Truth, Faith, and all manner of Vertue, both Morall, and Intellectual, by doctrine, example, and by severall occasions, naturall, and ordinary”¹⁷³ may imply, however, that God makes people moral and believers at least mildly deterministically. To be disposed to be moral or a believer implies at least a weak determinism, albeit one is free in making certain choices. However, if this is the case, it does not eliminate the fact that Hobbes believed humans could make a choice out of their own free will, given a certain amount of choices and possibly a certain affinity to being pious and virtuous.

It is of note that Hobbes mentions such a minimal amount of human actions as sufficient for salvation: belief in Jesus as the Christ and obeying the sovereign. This most likely conforms to Tuck’s and Collins’¹⁷⁴ idea of Hobbes having a “minimalist” theology. However, the two precepts in themselves are rather orthodox, when contrasted with the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the *Westminster Confession*. Faith in Jesus as the Christ as necessary is similar to the idea expressed in Article XVIII of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* that “Holy Scripture doth set out to us only the name of *Jesus Christ*,¹⁷⁵ whereby men must be saved”. Neither the *Westminster Confession* nor the *Thirty-Nine Articles* claim, however, that it is necessary to obey the sovereign in order to be saved, although Chapter XXIII of the *Westminster Confession* claims “[i]t is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience’ sake”. Although the only actual tenet of *faith* to be espoused according to Hobbes in order to be saved is orthodox, it is evasive in Hobbes’s case, as he does not make it clear if Jesus is God or a man that was (or is) merely subordinate to God the Father. As mentioned earlier, it could merely imply believing that Christ is the king, rather

¹⁷³ *Leviathan*, 228. My italics.

¹⁷⁴ Collins links it more clearly with Hobbes’s political philosophy.

¹⁷⁵ My italics.

than he being God. An interesting consequence of this belief, if this was Hobbes's view, is that the belief is more of relevance with the second coming of Christ. Also, if this is the case, the second prerequisite for being saved –which is of a more directly moral character, as a sovereign's commands creates the structure of what is moral or immoral for humans to do (at least this is one interpretation) –has very little to do with God. Even though it is in line with St. Paul's command, Hobbes appears to draw the consequences of this idea to the extreme, as Hobbes deems it morally right to lie about one's faith if the sovereign forces his subjects to obey a non-Christian religion.¹⁷⁶ Chapter XXIII of the *Westminster Confession* does state that "Infidelity, or difference in religion, does not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them". However, faith in Christ, and the Christian religion, in all likelihood *externally* as well as internally, is deemed as crucial in both the Presbyterian and Anglican doctrinal documents. Hobbes, on the other hand, takes the precept of obeying sovereigns unconditionally as so crucial for salvation that it ironically obscures the role of God as a moral authority, and almost puts the sovereign in place of Him. In other words, God's role in relationship to moral humans becomes one of a *deus otiosus*.

The moral command to obey civil sovereigns unconditionally may also put both the idea of justification by faith and predestination at odds. In other words: what the sovereign commands appears to have primacy over believing that Jesus is the Christ, the second prerequisite for salvation, as a sovereign can unconditionally force a subject to deny this doctrine. Thus, by implication, salvation appears to depend on a human's willingness to submit him or herself to civil authorities, rather than depending on having the right faith. Put into context that Hobbes, for example, mentions Adam's free choice in committing original sin, Hobbes (anyway almost) appears to espouse the Pelagian doctrine that good works justify a human in the eyes of God. Also, God's arbitrary predestination of humans to heaven or hell *could* be at stake if Hobbes rendered it more important to obey temporal authorities in order to be justified in the eyes of God. However, Hobbes does claim a sovereign serves as a *link* between humans and God, and has a sacerdotal position, being the head of the Church.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, Hobbes appears on a whole to espouse the doctrine of God's grace and justification by faith in "Of a Christian Common-wealth"; and, placing Hobbes in both a textual and biographical context, renders it likely that he espoused Calvin's predestination doctrine as well. Whether Hobbes believed, like Luther, that God's grace was crucial and that

¹⁷⁶ *Leviathan*, XLIII, 330-1.

¹⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, XL, 254-5

humans were justified on account of their faith,¹⁷⁸ which it can *appear* was his view in Book III, or if he believed, like Calvin, that *only the elect* were justified on account of their faith, God is rendered the final judge of whom is to be saved. This would be regardless if obedience to sovereigns has primacy, which would imply a greater emphasis on morality in salvation, or if both obedience to the sovereign and faith in Jesus as the Christ, were of importance.

What is also of note is Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and its importance for human salvation, and its role in relation to humans as moral beings. The first issue to be raised in connection with this is whether Christ is God, which Martinich¹⁷⁹ and Wright would claim, or subordinate to God. The latter view is, according to George Wright, a "common criticism of Hobbes's Trinitarian teaching", although he, similarly to Martinich rejects this criticism.¹⁸⁰ Instead he claims that Christ is equal to Moses, who represents God the Father (a doctrine which Hobbes espoused in the English, but not the Latin *Leviathan*), and thus Christ is not subordinate to God in the earthly representations of the Trinity.¹⁸¹ Personally I, as is mentioned before, *doubt* that Hobbes's representational trinity is genuinely Trinitarian, as Moses and the Apostles are basically equated with Christ. It does not essentially solve the problem of homousion by having people representing someone, as it most likely implies that they are not the object or referent itself (i.e. God). If God did not sacrifice himself on the cross, which seems to be the case, then it appears as if God plays a more indirect role in saving humans than in the conventional Trinitarianism of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* or the *Westminster Confession*. However, the question, just as in connection with salvation in general, is if salvation has anything to do with the good deeds of humans; and in this case the question of what sort of saviour was hung on the cross may become secondary. In Hobbes's case, who appears to have professed the orthodox Calvinist "grace" theory of why Christ's crucifixion (at least in Martinich's view), which implied that it was on account of God's *grace* that this act could redeem people, it appears unlikely that human moral actions have any bearing whatsoever. Interestingly, however, is that an analogy can be drawn between good deeds being mere symbolic acts that please God, but have no bearing on his predestination, decided from eternity, and Christ's sacrifice on the cross; also (in all likelihood), being a symbolic act of grace in Hobbes's view. However, if it were a mere historical fact, albeit being an expression of God's grace, the moral, or immoral, choices of Pontius Pilate, the

¹⁷⁸ See "Lutheranism" in Jones, Lindsay (Editor in Chief), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 8, United States, 2005.

¹⁷⁹ See Martinich, 206-7.

¹⁸⁰ Wright, 198-9. Quote from 198.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Jewish priests (Sanhedrin) etc., would have had an important impact. However, considering that Hobbes, as a Calvinist, saw everything as dependant on God's will, these actions may not have been ones of moral choice. However, Hobbes does not appear, in similitude with the *Westminster Confession*, to see any clash between a deterministic predestination theory, and a belief in humans having a free will.

Regarding Hobbes's view on natural laws, or moral laws in general, it should be made clear, as the opposing viewpoints on Hobbes's reveal, that it is not crystal clear what role God has in shaping natural laws. On the one hand, Hobbes claims that a moral law is defined as a "Precept, or general Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive to his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same".¹⁸² On the other hand, the laws of nature and the laws of God are depicted as concurring in "Of a Christian Common-wealth", where it is, for instance stated: "Before that time [of Moses] there was no written Law of God, who as yet having not chosen any people to be his particular Kingdome, had given *no law to men, but the Law of nature*, that is to say, the Precepts of Naturall Reason, written in every mans own heart."¹⁸³ In other words, there is, as is often the case with *Leviathan*, an ambiguity expressed here. Personally I am inclined to agree with Tuck's more secular interpretation of what Hobbes implies by laws of nature, than Martinich's, for one simple reason: God as an author of the laws of nature is not mentioned in the *defintion* of a law of nature just quoted. Thus, the later equation of the laws of nature with God's laws in "Of a Christian Common-wealth" (i.e. Book III) is most probably not genuinely meant. Finally, as I have stated earlier, it, in particular when taking the definition of a law of nature into account, appears as if human reason would be sufficient. As stated before, this would render God distant and obsolete, i.e. a *deus otiosus*, and the textual ambiguity that can be discerned when juxtaposing Book I and III appears almost in itself to reveal the minimal role God plays in providing the laws of nature. However, this is an inference based on the obvious ambiguity, and is not directly implied in the text, and thus this is speculative. However, it is also reasoning on good grounds, provided Hobbes is to be read esoterically when he appears to contradict himself.

Furthermore, the same idea could be applied to what Hobbes calls a "Law Moral", if now moral and natural laws are the same. If there is an analogy between natural obligations, which are equated with moral obligations in Hobbes's view (Martinich claims), and natural laws,

¹⁸² Ibid., XIV, 64.

¹⁸³ Ibid., XLII, 282.

then natural laws are equivalent with *moral* laws. Also, the fact that Hobbes contrasts moral laws with contingent, positive laws makes it likely that they are natural laws, which have a permanent character. It is not clear if this is the actual case, however, as it is not explicitly stated. However, the above deductions render it *likely*. If this is the case, this would *strengthen* Martinich's claim that moral laws are God's. However, Hobbes is not clear on this point whether these are natural laws or not. Nonetheless, what can be inferred from the text is that Hobbes saw these permanent, moral laws as directly provided by God.

As can be noted in the subsection "The Ontology Issue", understanding what role God plays in relationship to moral humans implies some understanding of Hobbes's ontology, otherwise known as metaphysics. However, Hobbes's metaphysics has characteristics that are definitely not in line with what is found in most Christian theology: his metaphysics is materialistic, and often vague or ambiguous regarding the nature of God. This complicates the question of God's role in relationship to moral humans, with regards to Hobbes's metaphysics. However, one can discern a few metaphysical, or semi-metaphysical, ideas with regards to the God-human relationship, which are *very likely* to have been espoused by Hobbes.

In a sense God appears to have a fictionalised role in relationship to moral humans, at least from a human perspective. What bearing this has on God's role, from a human perspective, is that he is an unknown and rather distant God, a *deus otiosus*, which nonetheless humans revere and basically create in their own image, as a sign of reverence and honour. This idea can be juxtaposed with Hobbes's view on *fear* of the unknown, which he mentions discussing his passion-based ethics and psychology in "Of Man" (Book I):

Feare of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed, RELIGION; not allowed, SUPERSTITION. And when the power imagined is truly as we imagine, TRUE RELIGION.¹⁸⁴

What is interesting with the juxtaposition of Hobbes's mentioning of using "honorific" language when talking about God's attributes, and the above quote, is that in the former passage it is not mentioned whether the honorific language arises out of fear or a more mystically inclined reverence of God. If this honorific language arises out of fear of a God, assigned imaginary attributes, it appears almost in consequence that the honorific language, although appearing to be morally commendable, is *not* an expression of *true* religion, as the

¹⁸⁴ *Leviathan*, VI, 26.

“power imagined is” *not* “as we imagine”. This would almost render God’s role in relationship to moral humans even more distant, as his attributes would not be an expression of a true religion. Martinich insists on the fact that Hobbes’s honorific language and language that is literally true are often similar. However, as mentioned earlier, the evidence in the particular passage (in Book III) discussed points rather to the opposite. However, the question is if the distinction between fearing and revering God was that great in Hobbes’s thinking. If it is not that great a difference, then the honorific language may be an expression of an untrue religion, and maybe describing a false God.

Furthermore, a similar issue arises on the issue of angels, as they are in several cases an expression of God’s direct, as well as indirect, will to communicate with (moral) humans. The reason why it is direct is that angels *generally* do not exist according to Hobbes, but as mere “phantasms” work as God’s communication devices when speaking to humans. However, there is a second interpretation, and that is that angels are an indirect means of communication to moral humans, as God cannot reveal himself *directly*. This idea cannot in itself have been considered unorthodox by Anglicans in Hobbes’s day. What must have been considered unorthodox is that Hobbes often does not ascribe angels an independent nature. The real issue at hand is, however, emotivistic; and this is the issue of whether angels are benevolent in themselves, due to God’s will or due to them being deemed as such by humans. It could be argued, as in the case of the laws of nature, that it is by God’s will, sanction and decree that the phantasm angels are deemed *morally* benevolent, and not just due to a benevolent appraisal of them by the human passions. However, if Richard Tuck is correct, the human passions, which are the basis of morality in Hobbes’s, and human reason, would be sufficient to deem angels beneficent.

What is furthermore of note is the issue of what spiritual, and in turn moral, inspiration from God actually implies. If there is no transfer of any actual spirits (as Hobbes dismisses immaterial substances as an illusion) from God to humans, then the inspiration must arise from the human passions and the intellect. In particular this is the case as Hobbes’s theory is so clearly egoistic and emotivistic. If this is the case, the question is how much spiritual inspiration depends on God or on human moral predispositions.

Lastly, the word “Holy”, which is entailed with a naturalistic and political definition, is of note. It is worth raising the question whether something is holy on account of human’s moral deserving, or not. Hobbes is not clear on this point, but it appears unlikely, as this would border Pelagianism, which is hardly in line with Hobbes’s Calvinistic, or Calvinistic influenced, ideas. If holiness is not on account of a human’s deserving, it is, in a sense and

from a human perspective, *amoral*, as is the case with attaining salvation, being dependant on God's arbitrary will what is counted as his property or not. The same would thus apply to the varying degrees of holiness, although Hobbes is, yet again, not clear on this point, as in several other metaphysical questions, as to what made, for instance the high priest in Jerusalem more holy than the other priests. There appears to be some commonsensical coherence to the degrees of holiness, such as the high priest being holier due to being higher in rank, but it would seem coherent, with regards to Hobbes's theological voluntarism, that the degrees of holiness solely depended on *God's will*. This gives God a very prominent role in his relationship to humans, although they may not become holy by their own deserving. Of course, as stated before, the *Westminster Confession*, Chapter III, states, God allows for at least a certain amount of "contingency" in nature, and most likely in human affairs, as an expression of his benevolent omnipotence. Also, as in the case of salvation or redemption, good deeds, as *symbolic* acts, may render a person holy, or more holy than another person. However, the analogy may be flawed. Furthermore, like Hobbes makes virtually no mention of predestination in "Of a Christian Common-wealth", Hobbes makes no mention of whether someone *deserves* to be holy or not. However, the fact that Hobbes, taken in context, appears to have embraced the theological idea of divine voluntarism, it is very likely that holiness, just as morality and salvation appears to (to a greater or lesser degree depending on who interprets Hobbes), depends on God's will. This would consolidate God's omnipotence at the cost of the importance of human morality.

Final analysis

Whether speaking of Hobbes's views on salvation, predestination, moral laws, his view on the term "Spirit", the function of angels being a communicative device of God, the role and significance of Christ's crucifixion, or the more political theme of the sovereign obscuring God's role in redeeming humans, the research question needs to be addressed explicitly. That is, the question of what *role* God plays in relationship to moral to humans as *moral beings*. Based on the previous analysis of the four subsections I will now generally discuss three possible ways of viewing God's role, in relation with moral humans:

- 1) God has *sole* power over humans, as He is the cause of everything. The moral deeds of humans count for nothing, whether it comes to redemption or (technically) in everyday life, as humans by necessity have no free will. This is a form of strong determinism.

2) Humans have some degree of freedom in making moral decisions, and act in accordance with their passions and reason, whether granted by God or not, making them partially autonomous of God. God is thus not always in control of every single cause and action in the world.

3) God has predestined everything since the beginning of time, and is the cause of everything, and is thus omnipotent. However, as a function or an expression of His omnipotence, He grants humans at least a certain degree of freedom in making moral decisions and performing moral actions, as an expression of their free will. However, this has no bearing on God's "eternal decree"¹⁸⁵ since the beginning of time that he has willed to send certain people to heaven, and others to hell.

The last view on God's role in relationship to moral humans is, peculiarly, the one I would view as the one that Hobbes most likely espoused. I will in the following paragraph provide my reasons as to why I think this is the view Hobbes held, and not the two alternate views.

Firstly, it appears, judging from the majority of scholarly works on Hobbes (employed in this essay) that Hobbes accepted the Calvinist idea of predestination. Whether he was a moderate, or individualistic, Calvinist, as Malcolm appears to claim, or an orthodox Calvinist, as Martinich claims, believing, unlike Luther, that God willed not only the morally good to go to heaven, but the damned to go to hell, it appears that he believed in *predestination* of some sort. There is, however, virtually no evidence of this in "Of a Christian Common-wealth" (Book III), but it is some brief evidence of it in Book IV. Thus, Hobbes could, taking Book III at face value, be just as well deemed a Lutheran, espousing an idea very similar to viewpoint 2, with the exception that humans are entirely dependant on God for their salvation. (A view that is interestingly mentioned in Article X of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*, "Of free will".) However, it is rendered unlikely when placing Hobbes into biographical and textual context that he saw humans as having an entirely free will that would render them autonomous of God's omniscience and omnipotent will. (The omnipotent will would most probably be a function of his omniscience, at least if Martinich's interpretation is to be trusted.) Thus, God not being the cause of everything, and thus not willing every moral *or* immoral action by

¹⁸⁵ This alludes to Chapter III of the *Westminster Confession*, "Of God's Eternal Decree", which mentions the doctrine of predestination.

humans as stated in view 2, is improbable to have been held by Hobbes, from a contextual viewpoint.

However, the very fact that Hobbes for instance speaks of Adam appearing to have a free choice in eating from the tree of knowledge renders the strong determinism mentioned in view 1 unlikely. Also, the fact that all positive laws, except the ones provided through revelation, are the creation of humans reveals that humans must be independent of God in some way. At times, in particular when a sovereign can by law criminalise Christianity, and that sovereign must still be obeyed in order to obtain *salvation*, as expressed in Chapter XLIII of *Leviathan*, positive laws almost appear to obscure the role of God. Furthermore, the fact that Hobbes is ambiguous regarding if natural (sometimes possibly called moral) laws are a function of human reason solely, or God's will to legislate certain actions as right and wrong –although these laws of God are discerned by humans through reason and also espoused by the passions –complicates the strong determinism of view 1. Had it not been for these particular cases in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, and if Hobbes's views had only been analysed with regards to his explicitly Calvinistic doctrines in other parts of *Leviathan*, and other works, view 1 would have been the most likely view.

Thus, given the three most possible viewpoints I have inferred as the most likely, based on my analysis of “Of a Christian Common-wealth” and contextual information, it appears as if view 3 is the most likely view. It has, as is mentioned earlier in this essay, certain logical flaws, as God being the cause of everything would appear to make both good and evil a function of God's will, and not the free will of humans, which technically would be nonexistent. However, Hobbes does not appear to draw these consequences, and opts for a much softer determinism, despite his rather orthodox Calvinistic belief in predestination. What is peculiar is that the inconsequential view on the almightiness and the omnipotent will of God standing in relationship to morally free human beings can almost be ascribed to the Presbyterian *Westminster Confession*, in particular Chapter III, and most likely the views of Jean Calvin himself. At least if the contents of “Of a Christian Common-wealth” and Hobbes's Calvinism are to be reconciled. Of course, this is an interpretation of Hobbes's view on God's relationship to humans, and an attempt at a reconciliation of seemingly opposing viewpoints, but it seems to have support in at least some Calvinistic, or by Calvin inspired, theology. The only thing that (at least in all likelihood) distinguishes Hobbes from the authors of the *Westminster Confession* or Calvin is the fact that he had rather heterodox materialism and scepticism towards several metaphysical matters. However, despite the fact that his heterodox metaphysics, like his views on positive, and possibly natural laws, at times

rendered God distant in relation to humans, at least from a human perspective, the deterministic aspects of his metaphysics fitted rather conveniently with his Calvinistic beliefs. Beliefs that could, whether due to heterodox or orthodox intentions, be as ambiguous as the original teachings of Protestant reformers.

Summary and final reflections: The role of God in relationship to moral humans, in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”

The sole research question this extended essay has set out to answer is what *role* God plays in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, in the book “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, in relationship to humans as moral beings. This question has been complicated, however, by the fact that several of Hobbes’s theological and metaphysical ideas, often expressed in ambiguous terms, have had to be addressed. At times Hobbes appears rather heterodox and secular in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”, and at times he appears almost orthodox. Regarding the concluding answers to the research questions, the following can be said: God’s role in relationship to humans as moral beings appears, in Hobbes’s view, to be one of an (omnipotent) God, being the cause of everything, while at the same time allowing humans to commit moral actions out of their own free will. In the very least human free will is *strongly implied* in “Of a Christian Common-wealth”. There is the paradoxical case of God being a rather distant God in relationship to humans as moral beings, or a *deus otiosus*, of course. This case arises both in the case of metaphysical knowledge of God and in the primacy of temporal power that appears to be able to contradict God’s decrees. However, this may be due to the human perspective on God, rather than with God’s actual workings, in Hobbes’s view, which does not eliminate the fact that Hobbes was most likely very sceptical on several theological matters.

God does play an important part in Hobbes’s philosophy. “Of a Christian Common-wealth” is a prime example of this. God may not intervene in all human affairs, at least not from a human perspective. Also, humans appear to have a lot of self-governance in the waiting for Christ’s second coming, and the establishment of a new divine kingdom on earth. However, this does not by implication mean that Hobbes denied seeing God as the cause of everything. The view may appear paradoxical, and I am doubtful, regarding Hobbes’s secular

views, if this view can be regarded as evidence of a true pious Christian belief. Also, it may have been a paradox Hobbes did not even reflect on. Obviously, there can be another, esoteric meaning hidden in this paradoxical doctrine, on the surface at least seemingly orthodox, but I cannot discern any other *well grounded* solution, based on “Of a Christian Common-wealth” and the textual context employed. One might say God’s role in relationship to humans as moral beings in Hobbes’s book is as ambiguous as large portions of the book itself.

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