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Hobbes contra Bellarmine

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In the pope's private chapel on All Saints Eve in 1614, an elderly Robert Bellarmine joined a group of fellow cardinals and Pope Paul V for Vespers. At the time an advisor to the Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition, Bellarmine could not have known he was being closely watched by a visitor, then in his late twenties, who would go on to compose the most important political treatise in the English language. The tutor to William Cavendish seems to have made a special point of bringing his pupil to see the Cardinal, whom his travel journals describe as a "little, lean old man" distinguished for his "rank" and "learning."[1]

Some thirty-five years later Thomas Hobbes would complete his observations of Bellarmine, granting him the distinction of being the only modern author identified by name in *Leviathan*. Its forty-second chapter subjects to sustained criticism the third section of Bellarmine's *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus hujus temporis Haereticos*.[2] Hobbes devotes most of his attention to Bellarmine's defense of papal supremacy in the *Controversia de summo Pontifice*, but we see evidence that Hobbes had read widely in the *Controversiae*, including the volumes on Christology, in his commentary on the Nicene Creed, published as an appendix to the 1668 Latin edition of *Leviathan*.[3]

Why Bellarmine? One answer points to a political legacy still potent three decades after his death. Hobbes identifies Bellarmine as "the champion of the papacy against all other Christian Princes and States," an assessment reflecting Bellarmine's status as the outstanding Catholic participant in an international debate over the church's relation to

[1] Thomas Hobbes, "A Discourse of Rome," in *Three Discourses*, ed. Noel Reynolds (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 96.

[2] The *Controversiae* were published originally in Ingolstadt in three volumes between 1586 and 1593. They were revised several times and circulated in different editions. See *Ven. Cardinalis Roberti Bellarmini Politiani SJ Opera Omnia*, ed. J. Fevre, 12 vols. (Paris: Vives, 1870-1874).

[3] Hobbes criticizes Bellarmine's interpretation of *persona* in his defense of classical Trinitarian theology. See *Leviathan*, Appendix, i.83. All subsequent quotations from the Edwin Curley edition, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).

early modern states.[4] Bellarmine was a skilled defender of papal primacy and Hobbes and his student would have almost certainly heard of Bellarmine during their time together at Cambridge, where anti-Bellarmine lectures and sermons had been a staple for decades. Bellarmine had also made significant personal interventions into English affairs. He entered the paper war ignited by James I's Oath of Allegiance in 1606, arguing that Catholics must acknowledge the pope's power to depose heretical sovereigns.[5] Given this, Hobbes's interest might be simply explained by Bellarmine's salience in seventeenth-century English politics. As an apologist for the pope's "indirect power" over temporal authorities, Bellarmine could only appear emblematic of the political ideas feared by the author of *Leviathan*.[6]

This answer is plainly true and perfectly unsatisfying. Hobbes wrote in the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War and the English Civil War and with the express intention of identifying threats to civil order. In targeting Bellarmine, however, it is not at first glance clear that Hobbes has aimed wisely. Hobbes's treatise is gratuitously polemical and shows only sporadic concern to fairly depict, let alone seriously engage, the arguments of his opponents (including those, such as Aristotle, well-known enough to make his distortions obvious). Had Hobbes wanted to find a Catholic author more amenable to his purposes, a militant more easily framed as a danger to peace, he had no shortage of propagandists to choose from. Rhetorically, Hobbes would have been better served by examining an author whose words could more easily be turned to incriminating effect. But Bellarmine's prose,

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[4] *Leviathan*, 42.135.

[5] Designed to expose and prey on divisions among English Catholics after the Gunpowder Plot, the Jacobean Oath required Catholics to abjure as "impious and heretical" the doctrine that popes could depose an excommunicated sovereign, thereby releasing Catholic subjects from their obligation of obedience. In a number of works, including *Basilikon Doron* (1610), Bellarmine defended the pope's deposing power as *de fide*, maintaining that the Oath required not only a profession of civil obedience in temporal matters, which Bellarmine was happy to grant, but a rejection of the pope's spiritual authority over temporal affairs, which he thought no faithful Catholic could allow. Paul V had himself condemned the Oath immediately after its issue as containing "many issues that are openly contrary to faith and salvation." Quoted in Stefania Tutino, *Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570-1625* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing 2007), 139. Hobbes was a student at Magdalen College Oxford when James issued the Oath (the University would, alas, publicly burn copies of *Leviathan* in 1683).

[6] J. P. Sommerville comments that "The main issue which divided the two sides… was whether people ultimately owed allegiance to the secular governments of their countries, or, at least in some circumstances, to an international institution separate from the institutional states, namely the Roman Catholic church, and its leader the pope." Johann Sommerville, "Papalist Political Thought and the Controversy over the Jacobean Oath" in *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 162. Sommerville is not referring specifically to Hobbes and Bellarmine, but to the broad features of the English debate over papal power.

serene, scholastic and impersonal, afforded no such opportunity, and Hobbes avoids quoting him almost entirely.

Politically, Hobbes could appeal to no textual evidence that Bellarmine promoted seditious activity or questioned the legitimacy of secular authority. The *Controversiae* are conceived as austerely academic exercises, intended to show how theological disputes can be understood only within a comprehensive account of Catholic doctrine. Bellarmine is deeply concerned that politics had made theological debate with Protestantism unproductive, and he carefully avoids challenging established authorities or advocating any particular exercise of papal power in temporal matters. These irenic features of his work, in fact, aroused suspicions of their own. If Bellarmine's papalism worried Hobbes, it raised much different anxieties among certain of his fellow Catholics. His doctrine of the pope's "indirect power" was thought by ultra-papalists to improperly diminish the pope's standing, a concern shared by no less than Pope Sixtus V, who considered placing parts of the *Controversiae* on the Index in 1590.[7]

So why Bellarmine? A better answer looks beyond politics and toward theology. Hobbes's attack on Bellarmine is arguably the most mature expression of a debate between temporal and spiritual authority that had grown steadily in sophistication since the eleventh century.[8] In the pages of *Leviathan*, it can for the first time be fairly described as a debate between the church and the fully modern state. Its most interesting feature is that, unlike previous iterations, it is not fundamentally about rival jurisdictions. Hobbes instead challenges Bellarmine with a rival account of Christianity itself, one that aims to show how classical forms of Christian theology need to be reformed by enlightened modes of thought. Hobbes argues that the pope's "indirect power"—his alleged spiritual authority over temporal matters that involve man's supernatural end—reflects a defective understanding of both revelation and reason.

Leviathan's critique of Bellarmine has nevertheless drawn little theological attention.[9] It is no secret why: Few scholars are inclined to take Hobbes's religious positions with full seriousness. As a major book by two Catholic scholars recently put it, Hobbes's "theological

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[7] Far from being thought a "reactionary crusader battling anti-papal princes," Bellarmine was regarded as "too liberal, or better yet, Whiggish, for some members of the curia." John Vella, "Was Robert Bellarmine Ahead of His Time?" *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (April 2012): www.hprweb.com/2012/04/was-robert-bellarmine-ahead-of-his-time/. The death of Pope Sixtus V in August of 1590 allowed members of the Congregation of the Index to quietly remove Bellarmine's writings from submission.

[8] See Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State: 1050-1300* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

[9] Exceptions include Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," *History of Political Thought* 16, no.4 (1995): 503-31 and Johann Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context* (New York: Palgrave, 1992), 113-119. My debts to Springborg's seminal article will be apparent.

explanations are not just entirely superfluous, but directly contrary to [his] philosophy."[10] Whether Hobbes wanted readers to take his own positions seriously is debatable; whether he wanted readers to take Robert Bellarmine seriously is not.[11] Hobbes devotes special attention to Bellarmine because he sees Bellarmine as his strongest and most threatening long-term theo-political rival. Hobbes sees in Bellarmine's work not a traditional defense of papal supremacy (or at least not simply that) but, as Patricia Springborg has suggested, a modern anti-Leviathan in competition with Hobbes's own.[12] This makes Hobbes a more astute and appreciative reader of Bellarmine than many of the Jesuit's Catholic critics. Hobbes does not contest the arguments of the ultra-papalists, since they had, in a sense, already done Hobbes's work for him by modeling the temporal authority church on that of early-modern nation states. Consider the possibility, then, that Bellarmine captures Hobbes's attention because, far from being a reactionary voice of the Counter-Reformation, Bellarmine's arguments look forward to a new form of Christian community, a modern "empire of souls" whose claim to authority is exclusively spiritual.

My goal in what follows will be to introduce the main features of Hobbes's attack on Bellarmine. Doing so will require us to penetrate three strata of theological argument underlying Hobbes's political program: (1) Bellarmine's political interpretation of Scripture, (2) the metaphysical principles on which that interpretation depend, and (3) the institutional framework sustaining Catholic habits of mind.[13] Carl

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[10] Scott Hahn and Benjamin Wiker, *Politicizing the Bible: The Roots of Historical Criticism and the Secularization of Scripture 1300-1700* (New York: Herder, 2013), 299. Hahn and Wiker argue that Hobbes's theology is "entirely politicized" (336) and thus "glaringly manipulative" (329). They reflect a popular, if not unchallenged view, that the theological reflections found in the second half *Leviathan* are disposable—useful for providing a false appearance of theological respectability, perhaps, but of little enduring significance in their own right. For my own reading of Hobbes's theology, see Matthew Rose, "Hobbes as Political Theologian," *Political Theology* 14, no.1 (2013): 5-32.

[11] Hobbes himself insists that his religious arguments provide the essential scriptural and theological warrants for a "Christian commonwealth," a community founded on the "supernatural revelations of the will of God." *Leviathan* 32.1. Hobbes anticipates that readers will find his views unorthodox and makes no attempt to camouflage them. In the dedicatory epistle he notifies readers: "That which perhaps may most offend are certain texts of Holy Scripture, alleged by me to other purpose than ordinary they used to be by others." Hobbes repeats this concession in the Review and Conclusion.

[12] See Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine."

[13] Hobbes outlines the errors of his "enemy" that he will confront: "The enemy has been there in the night of our natural ignorance and sown the tares of spiritual errors. And that, first, by abusing and putting out the light of the Scriptures… Second, by introducing the demonology of the heathen poets, that is to say, their fabulous doctrine concerning demons, which are but idols or phantasms of the brain, without any real nature of their own distinct from human fancy (such as are dead men's ghosts, and fairies, and other matter of old wives' tales). Thirdly, by mixing with the Scripture divers relics of the religion and much of the vain and erroneous philosophy of the

Schmitt famously observed that "nobody refuted Bellarmine better than [Hobbes]."[14] Although doubts on that score remain, Schmitt was right that a goal of *Leviathan* was to accomplish just that. Let's see how Hobbes tried.

THE POLITICS OF SCRIPTURE

Bellarmine: The Pope's Indirect Power

Hobbes begins with a rebuttal of Bellarmine's interpretation of the New Testament. The role that Scripture plays in their dispute is substantial, if also somewhat conventional, given how predictable the use of proof-texts had become in theological controversy. Bellarmine is often regarded by detractors as part of the "repressive intellectual machinery" of the Counter-Reformation.[15] The reputation, though undeserved, does reflect that he is in some ways an unoriginal thinker. Bellarmine works in a scholastic style that emphasizes the methodical, and some might say exhausting citation of authorities. His strategy is to announce a dogmatic position and then to offer commentary through an extensive listing of passages drawn from Scripture, the Fathers, and conciliar documents.[16] Bellarmine is not, however, simply a cataloguer of received authorities. He puts his prodigious knowledge of Catholic sources in service of an innovative ecclesiology that, in Hobbes's estimation, defended the papacy "as strongly as possible."[17]

Bellarmine's revolutionary proposal concerns the pope's "indirect power," an idea discussed by earlier thinkers but which becomes in Bellarmine's hands the centerpiece of Catholic doctrine. The theory is rooted in what looks to be a traditional Catholic exegesis of the New Testament. Bellarmine begins by drawing a clear distinction between temporal and spiritual authority. As to the former, the New Testament offers an unmistakable affirmation of the natural goodness of civil authority (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13-15; Titus 3:1). Bellarmine's intellectual formation was Thomistic—his first academic appointment in Louvain was to lecture on Aquinas—and he maintains that temporal authority "follows necessarily from the nature of man." And since God is the author of human nature, civil authority can be said to flow from "divine law." The Scriptures "attest that kings are ministers of God and

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Greeks (especially Aristotle). Fourthly, by mingling with both these, false or uncertain traditions, and feigned or uncertain history." *Leviathan*, 44.4. See also Patricia Springborg. "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," 515.

[14] Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 83.

[15] Stefania Tutino, *Empire of Souls: Robert Bellarmine and the Christian Commonwealth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7.

[16] For example, "On the Temporal Power of the Pope" begins with Bellarmine announcing that his purpose will be to assemble a "supercouncil" of orthodox testimonies. Robert Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority,* trans. Stefania Tutino (Hackett: Indianapolis: 2012), 124.

[17] *Leviathan*, 42.81.

from Him they have the authority to judge." Biblical revelation thus confirms the conclusions of right reason: temporal authority serves the natural end of man.[18]

Bellarmine's second line of interpretation concerns spiritual authority. Scripture also recognizes an authority that transcends the order of nature: "Christ did not come to build a political kingdom, but a spiritual and heavenly one."[19] Human beings have a twofold end—a natural and supernatural end—and an appropriate authority governs each. Scripture reveals that our spiritual end is rightly governed by the church and "the ecclesial monarchy of the Roman Pontiff," a claim Bellarmine bolsters with traditional Catholic proof-texts (Matt 16:18-19, Luke 22:31, and John 21:17). Bellarmine thus draws from Scripture two ideas, which lay the ecclesiological foundation for his political theology. First, Christ established a visible, institutional church with genuinely juridical power. As a juridical power, the church has a proper "object" or sphere of authority. Bellarmine claims that this sphere is Christian "consciences," understood to include both inward belief and its external expression. He adduces biblical passages that the he takes to confirm the legislative authority of the church over the souls of the baptized.[20] Second, the church has a monarchical constitution, being headed by the pope who possesses all authority necessary to pursue and protect the common good of it subjects.

Such claims rehearse post-Trent apologetics and Bellarmine takes them as uncontroversial, indeed incontestable, for Catholics. His original insight, however, is to notice that the church's teaching stood in need of clarification. While there could be no debating that the church

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[18] Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 22, 43. Bellarmine closely follows Vitoria, who similarly argued, "If public power is founded upon natural law, and if natural law acknowledges God as it only author, then it is evident that public power is from God." Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, eds. A. Padgen and J. Lawrence (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10.

[19] Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 11. "Christ instituted the ecclesiastic magistrate and He distinguished Him from the political magistrate" (12).

[20] The church can, for example, require a public profession of faith and even dispose of believers' material possessions: "[T]emporal goods… are nevertheless subordinated to spiritual goods, and temporal authority itself is subjected to spiritual authority…. It is not true that some temporal goods cannot be taken away through excommunication" Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 358. Bellarmine defends this claim by arguing that "the apostles had the right to receive laymen's temporal goods" (see 1 Cor 6:1-4; 9:11-13). Drawing from a passage in 1 Corinthians ("the saints shall judge the world") Bellarmine also holds that the apostles could "order Christians to appoint Christian judges in civil trials, so as not to go to the courts of pagan magistrates" Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 162. Harro Hopfl recently argued that Bellarmine's appeals to Scripture yield only "ambiguous and inferential warrants" for his positions. Harro Hopfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c.1540-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 355.

enjoyed primacy over secular authority, Bellarmine argues that Catholic tradition has left unresolved the precise nature of papal primacy. The ambiguity is whether the Petrine office possesses by divine right any genuinely temporal power or whether its authority is exclusively spiritual. In other words, is the pope's authority only spiritual or is it somehow both spiritual and temporal?[21] Now, in reality, almost no Catholic theologian maintained either extreme. Even ultra-papalists who maintained the pope was by divine right *princeps mundi* acknowledged that he possessed a spiritual authority that transcended his temporal authority; and no theologian, or at least no orthodox thinker, suggested papal authority had no bearing on temporal affairs whatsoever.

Bellarmine's contribution to this debate is therefore one of clarification. He argues that that the "direct object" of the pope's power is entirely spiritual. As a spiritual commonwealth, the church lacks any temporal authority as part of its essential nature; its authority extends only to matters essentially related to the supernatural end of man.[22] However, Bellarmine also recognizes that temporal and spiritual matters can be distinguished, but not completely separated, since civil affairs can bear on human salvation. Bellarmine clearly has in mind the stated or implied teachings of secular law on religious and moral matters. Do temporal authorities have responsibility over such things? Yes and no. Bellarmine argues that secular authorities must "protect" and "defend" true religion. This does not, however, grant them authority to "judge" and "teach" in religious matters. "Christ committed the task of governing the Church to Peter and the Bishops, not Tiberius and his prefects."[23]

Temporal authority *qua* temporal authority has no spiritual power. How then can civil authorities exercise responsibility over the spiritual good of citizens? They can do so only under the guidance of the pope, who alone has legitimate authority to order temporal affairs when and where they concern human salvation. He does so not a civil ruler—the pope *qua* pope has no temporal authority—but merely *indirectly*, that is, as a "secondary object" of his spiritual power. As Bellarmine puts

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[21] Regarding the pope's authority over temporal matters, "it is not an opinion, but a certainty among Catholics that it exists, even if there is no lack of debate over what this authority is and what kind of authority this is, that is, whether it is in itself and properly temporal, or rather indeed spiritual but it may dispose of temporal matters." Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 159.

[22] This does not mean that church cannot exercise a kind of de facto temporal authority over, say, the Papal States. It simply does not do so by divine law.

[23] Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 80. "Christian princes are obliged… to see to it that the faith that the Catholic bishops and especially the Supreme Pontiff teach to be the true one is preserved." Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 82. Bellarmine refers to Hezekiah, Josiah, and Darius (among others) as examples of temporal authorities who rightly exercised temporal authority in religious matters.

it, "the pontifical authority is properly and in itself a spiritual authority, and therefore it directly deals with spiritual matters as its primary object. But indirectly, that is, whenever spiritual matters are concerned, by inference and by necessary consequences, as we say, it deals with temporal matters as its secondary object."[24] Thus, although the pope is the head of a spiritual commonwealth and can act only in defense of the spiritual good of believers, he can and must intervene in civil matters that pertain to the supernatural end of man. Bellarmine asserts, for example, that the pope can have heretics punished, depose heretical sovereigns, and release Catholic subjects from their obedience to wayward civil authorities.[25] For Bellarmine, then, the spiritual and the temporal orders are incommensurable, but not wholly separate; there is a point at which they intersect—and it is over such matters that the pope exercises "indirect power."[26]

Hobbes: The Papacy—No Spiritual Power

Hobbes takes aim at Bellarmine with a reading of Scripture that moves from the deliberately conventional to the strikingly original. His goal is to collapse the distinction between civil and ecclesial authority and then to deny the spiritual power of the papacy altogether.

Hobbes begins by questioning not only the primacy of spiritual power, but its very existence. This, he offers, is the teaching of Romans 13 and its injunction to submit to authorities. Bellarmine had read Paul as saying that temporal authority was ordained by natural law and was for the same reason subordinate to the spiritual order. But Hobbes reads Romans as commanding obedience solely to civil authority.[27] This is confirmed by the life and ministry of Christ. Hobbes proposes that Christ claimed no spiritual authority and founded no

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[24] Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 185.

[25] "For in Scriptures and tradition we find the ecclesiastical primacy of the Roman Pontiff most clearly established, and in this primacy the most ample authority to rule, bind, loose, and absolve anybody, even kings and emperors, is contained…. From this principle, therefore, it follows clearly enough that the Pope has authority to dispose of temporal matters." Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 161; "[I]t is lawful that heretics… be removed from the Church and punished with death by the secular judge" Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority*, 103. Bellarmine references Deuteronomy 13; Matthew 7 and 18; Romans 13; Acts 5, 13, 20; John 10; 2 Timothy. Cf. Aquinas, *ST*, IIaIIae 10.10.

[26] "[T]he ecclesiastical authority is separate from the political: in fact, the authorities of Popes and kings are not the same, but they are different. Yet because, as we said before, the ecclesiastical authority, which is spiritual, is superior to the political and temporal authority and must direct temporal authority toward the supreme end of eternal life, thus it can dispose of temporal goods insofar as they concern spiritual matters" Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority*, 163.

[27] Concerning Romans 13, Hobbes says that "if the apostle had meant we should be subject both to our own princes and also to the pope, he had taught us a doctrine which Christ himself hath told us impossible, namely, 'to serve two masters'." *Leviathan*, 42.102.

spiritual kingdom. Christ issued no laws, exercised no coercive power, and left no juridical authority to his apostles. "The end for which the apostles and pastors of the Church have their commission from our Savior: which is not to rule by command and coaction, but by teaching and direction of men in the way of salvation in the world to come"[28] Hobbes therefore flatly denies that the Bible acknowledges the Christian church to be a spiritual authority at all: it simply lacks any meaningful jurisdiction or law-making power. The New Testament teaches that there is only civil authority and that Christians are to be submissive to it. Christ "hath not subjected us to other laws than those of the commonwealth;" he "left no new laws to oblige us in this world."[29]

Bellarmine had argued that Christ's authority was not essentially temporal and Hobbes agrees emphatically: Christ's kingdom is not of the present world. But Hobbes makes a crucial move by reducing the teachings of the New Testament to a single article of faith: that "Jesus is the Christ."[30] And this comes with a steep eschatological proviso, because what Hobbes means is that Jesus *will someday* return as the Christ. Hobbes insists that Christ did indeed announce the arrival of the Kingdom of God in his own person, but that kingdom will commence only when he returns. Hence, there is at present no spiritual commonwealth and the Kingdom God is in temporary suspension. When Christians profess that "Jesus is the Christ," Hobbes says they are witnessing to their faith in Christ's future reign in a world to come. To be a Christian means to be "obliged to obey [Christ] for king… whensoever he should be pleased to take the kingdom upon him."[31]

Hobbes arrives at this position in part by borrowing from Calvin a reading of Matthew 16 which sees Peter's confession of personal faith as the creed on which the church is built. Against Bellarmine's claim that Christ handed to Peter all authority which he (Christ) possessed as a man, Hobbes counters that Christ gave the apostles no legislative power, commissioning them only to preach and teach about God's coming kingdom on earth. The early church had no juridical authority (what it would later have was given to it by temporal authorities). It has no power to bind, no power to excommunicate, no power to depose. "Christ hath not left to his ministers in this world… any authority

[28] *Leviathan*, 42.31. Hobbes defines a church as "a company of men professing Christian religion, united in the person of one sovereign, at whose command they ought to assemble, and without whose authority they ought not to assemble." *Leviathan*, 39.4. Hobbes therefore denies there is a universal church.
[29] *Leviathan*, 42.43. Christ commissioned his apostles and disciples to proclaim his kingdom to come, not a present kingdom—"in which there is nothing of power, but of persuasion. He sent them out as sheep unto wolves, not as kings to their subjects."
[30] *Leviathan*, 36.20.
[31] *Leviathan*, 41.3.

to command other men."[32] In support of this reading of Scripture, Hobbes claims to be defending the practices of primitive Christianity. He insists that the pre-Constantinian church was a voluntary association of individuals lacking coercive power. "There is therefore no other government in this life… but temporal."[33]

Hobbes's unique biblical insight is to attempt what many Christians would regard as going about things backwards. Christian theologians have traditionally interpreted the events of the Old Testament as typologies or prefigurations of the New Covenant. Hobbes, however, sees the events of the New Testament as prophetic revelations of how God will one day reconstitute ancient Israel.[34] He is guided in this by his belief that the Bible reveals the divine form of politics, "the peculiar government of God."[35] Hobbes sees in the history of Israel a divinely established government—a holy community in which God himself ruled as king by pact over his people through his lieutenant Moses. In this perfect community (on which the Leviathan is modeled) the people consented to obey the laws promulgated by God's official representative. As the second half of *Leviathan* meticulously details, Hobbes believes this to be politics is its truest, most rational, and theocratic form—something like the sacred template for all human societies. Now, what Christ adds to the politics of the Old Testament is merely prophecy—the promise that he will return to re-found this lost community and rule from the seat of Moses. In the meantime, Christians are to express their faith in Christ's future rule through the practice of peacefulness and outward obedience to their temporal sovereigns.

The main line of Hobbes's attack is now coming into view. Bellarmine had steadfastly maintained that the Bible had endorsed Petrine authority as "properly and itself spiritual,"[36] but Hobbes strikes at the biblical roots of Bellarmine's theory by denying that there *is* such a thing as spiritual power. A close reading of *Leviathan's* forty-second chapter shows, in fact, that Hobbes never refers to the church as a spiritual authority, only as an "ecclesiastical authority." He writes in a revealing passage:

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[32] *Leviathan*, 42.10. To possess real jurisdiction, Hobbes explains, means that an authority has the power "to make laws" and "with the sword of justice to compel men to obey." *Leviathan*, 42.111.

[33] *Leviathan,* 39.7.

[34] *Leviathan*, 32.2. God will do so "after the coming again of our blessed Savior."

[35] *Leviathan*, 40.11. God's kingdom "is a real, not a metaphorical kingdom," a "kingdom of God on earth." *Leviathan*, 35.11. Cf. F.C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes: An Interpretation of Leviathan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964) and A.P. Martinich, *The Two Gods of Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes on Religion and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[36] Bellarmine, *On Temporal and Spiritual*, 152.

> But I understand when [Bellarmine] saith [the pope] hath it *indirectly*, he means that such temporal jurisdiction belongeth to him of right, but that his right is but a consequence of his pastoral authority, the which he could not exercise unless he have the other with it; and therefore, to the pastoral power (which *he* calls spiritual) a supreme power civil is necessarily annexed; and that thereby he hath a right to change kingdoms, given them to one, and taking them from another, when he shall think it conduces to the salvation of souls.[37]

It is not that Hobbes intends to depoliticize the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible is for him entirely political: "Scripture was written to show unto men the kingdom of God, and to prepare their minds to become his obedient subjects."[38] And it is precisely because the Bible anticipates the future reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth that Christians are to refuse any claims to spiritual authority as biblically unfounded.

THE POLITICS OF HYLOMORPHISM

Bellarmine: Soul and Body, Spirit over Flesh

So why was Bellarmine so mistaken about the political teachings of Scripture? Hobbes does not dispute Bellarmine's reading of Catholic tradition, which he regards as irredeemably corrupt, but instead argues that Bellarmine had been misguided by flawed metaphysical assumptions. Bellarmine failed to see that human reason (like revelation) denies the existence of spiritual beings or powers of *any* kind. Hobbes knew his biblical exegesis was controversial and almost certainly insufficient to persuade readers by itself. He also had to defeat the metaphysical foundations on which erroneous (and politically dangerous) readings of Scripture had rested.

Here we reach *Leviathan*'s attack on Scholastic philosophy, arguably the central target of the treatise. Hobbes famously makes a series of arguments against "the vain philosophy of Aristotle" and in defense of materialism, often thought to reveal if not their author's atheism, at least his undisguised hostility to Christianity.[39] Hobbes is indeed an enemy of religious enthusiasm and all manner of traditional spiritual practices. He thinks religion is largely, though not entirely, born of

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[37] *Leviathan*, 42.121, emphasis added. The passage is tendentious, as Hobbes claims the pope tries to "annex" civil power to his "pastoral" power—precisely what Bellarmine denies.

[38] *Leviathan*, 8.26.

[39] *Leviathan*, 46.18. Of Aristotle, Hobbes notoriously complains that "scarce anything can be more absurdly said in natural philosophy than that which is now called Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; nor more repugnant to government than much of that he hath said in his *Politics*; nor more ignorantly than a great part of his *Ethics*." *Leviathan*, 46.11.

fear, anxiety, and ignorance.[40] Yet his materialism goes hand in hand with a belief that many scholars have hesitated to take with full seriousness. Hobbes is convinced, in short, that his non-dualistic metaphysics allows for a recovery of the genuine truth of Scripture. As we have seen, he reads Scripture as the story of God's once-and-future kingdom on earth.[41] Scripture is emphatically political—it is the revelation of God's purposes for divine and human government in secular history—but its teachings have been obscured by pagan philosophy. To discover the original message of the Bible, Hobbes insists, one must remove the speculative varnish of Greek philosophy and its belief in an immaterial order of reality. There is "no mention at all of incorporeal substances in the scriptures," Hobbes writes. "That whole doctrine has its origin in Greek philosophy."[42]

As a student of Aristotle and Aquinas, Bellarmine approaches the Bible with metaphysical assumptions that Hobbes therefore believed had contaminated early Christianity. And it was precisely such assumption, Hobbes recognized, that grounded the church's claim to be a spiritual empire with jurisdiction over Christian souls.[43] Two Aristotelian commitments inform Bellarmine's papalism, both of which Hobbes targets. The first is that human society is expressive of a divinely established created order. Bellarmine aims this argument at radical Protestant claims that the legitimacy of temporal authority depends on the personal holiness of rulers, rather than natural law.[44] The second is that nature is hierarchically ordered in itself and transcended by spiritual authority. These claims allowed Bellarmine to argue that a Christian commonwealth, with its ranking of different stations of life, reflected higher and predetermined patterns of cosmic authority. A Christian community "was a single organic unity administered in separate temporal and spiritual jurisdictions, in which each citizen,

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[40] Hobbes defines religion as "Fear of power invisible." *Leviathan,* 6.36. I survey various leading interpretations of Hobbes's understanding of religion in "Hobbes as Political Theologian," 13-19.

[41] Scripture was written "to convert men to the obedience of God." *Leviathan*, 33.20. Any appeal to "spirit" in the Bible is merely metaphorical—it describes, say, a disposition of the mind, an eminent ability, or religious zeal. *Leviathan*, 34.4-5, 36.16. As for the nature of God himself, Hobbes understood God to the "one… eternal, infinite and omnipotent… cause of all things." *Leviathan*, 12.6. In the Appendix to the Latin edition of *Leviathan*, Hobbes composes a dialogue in which he appears (while speaking in the third person) to say that God is a corporeal being.

[42] *Leviathan*, 34.17

[43] As Stefania Tutino rightly notes, Bellarmine's "position on natural philosophy was an integral component of his political and theological views of the authority of the pope." Stefania Tutino, *Empire of Souls,* 274.

[44] "Political authority is so natural and necessary to humankind that it cannot be removed without destroying nature itself." Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority*, 18.

like the members of a human body, had a function and preordained status."[45]

Bellarmine made a powerful analogical defense of this theo-political arrangement. The argument has its roots in hylomorphism and posits a similarity between the composition of the soul and body in an individual human being and the form and matter of a human society. The analogy is as old as Plato, of course, who similarly compares justice in the city with justice in the soul.[46] Bellarmine advances it in a more specifically hylomorphic direction. The first part of the analogy runs as follows: just as a human body requires a soul to account for its principle of life, so must a human community be animated by a spiritual principle to provide its unity and common purpose. Bellarmine explains that a "society is an ordered multitude" (not a "confused and dispersed multitude") and that "it is impossible that a multitude can last long unless there is somebody to hold it together." Bellarmine compares this source of social unity to a "soul holding together and unifying the parts and forces and conflicting elements" out of which a community is composed.[47]

So a society, like an individual human being, is animated by a "soul" that unifies and governs its constituent parts. Bellarmine next pushes this argument to a level that ancient philosophers did not by positing a similarity with distinct spiritual and temporal *authorities*. The second analogy, which Hobbes will declare to be fallacious, runs as follows: just as there can be no society without a soul to rule the body politic, so must a society have a spiritual power to guide its temporal power. Bellarmine explains:

> [T]he temporal and the spiritual authority… are not disconnected and separate things, as two political kingdoms, but are connected so as to form one body; or rather, they present themselves as the body and soul in a man, for the spiritual authority is like the soul, and the temporal like the body.… Therefore the temporal authority must be servant to the spiritual authority and protect and defend it from its enemies, and… the earthly kingdom must attend to the heavenly kingdom.[48]

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[45] Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," 523. "The fact that political authority… is subject to ecclesiastical authority as such, is demonstrated first on the basis of their ends." "Nothing is better known among theologians and philosophers than that there is an order among efficient and final causes, and that the inferior are subordinate to the superior." Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority,* 246, 253.

[46] *Republic* IV.435. Cf. Bernard Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's *Republic*" in *Essays on Plato's Psychology,* Ellen Wagner et al. eds. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1991), 68ff.

[47] Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority,* 19.

[48] Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority*, 85.

Bellarmine therefore concludes that "secular authority is subordinated to the spiritual as the body is subordinated to the soul, and therefore the judgment is not usurped if a spiritual leader interferes in a temporal affair."[49]

This analogy provides the metaphysical foundation for Bellarmine's all-important claim that "the authority that the spiritual commonwealth has over the temporal is not similar to the authority of the French over the English or of the English over the French, but to the authority that the spirit has over the flesh which is conjoined to it."[50]

Hobbes: Materialism and Absolute Authority

Hobbes aims to expose Bellarmine's analogy as fallacious: the relation between temporal and "spiritual" authority is in fact *identical* to that between rival civil powers. Bellarmine fell into this error because he imagined a spiritual dimension to human life, thereby overlooking "the *literal* interpretation of the kingdom of God."[51] To help others avoid this fatal mistake, Hobbes endeavors to demonstrate that human beings can perceive nothing but matter in motion and that any appeal to "immaterial substances" is an idiocy.[52]

Hobbes makes a pair of arguments against the existence of spiritual beings or powers. His targets include not only immaterial agencies, like angels or demons, but also human capacities traditionally understood to be immaterial, such as the speculative powers of the human soul and the infused virtues. The first argument concerns the origins and nature of knowledge, and concludes that everything is mere body: "For the universe, being the aggregate of all bodies, there is no real part thereof that is not also body."[53] Hobbes arrives at this claim through an argument designed to show the superfluities of scholastic epistemology. *Leviathan* is perhaps the greatest anti-scholastic tract ever undertaken, and its success likely depends on the strength of its criticisms of the Aristotelian account of perception.[54] For Aristotle,

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[49] Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority*, 126.

[50] Bellarmine, *On Spiritual and Temporal Authority,* 279.

[51] *Leviathan*, 35.14. Emphasis added.

[52] Hobbes's metaphysics was both anti-Catholic and yet shaped by discussion with Catholics on the Continent like Descartes, Marsenne, and Gassendi. Hobbes wrote a critical commentary on a work of his friend, and Catholic priest, Thomas White, *De Mundo* which shows some of Hobbes's earliest experimentations with a theory of optics and post-Cartesian natural philosophy. Hobbes began writing fairly late in life—his philosophical powers fully awakened only in his forties—and there are few early texts by which to chart development and growth.

[53] *Leviathan,* 34.3. In this and the following paragraph, I am drawing from my "Hobbes as a Political Theologian."

[54] "[T]he refutation of the doctrine of essences was what Hobbes's nominalist philosophic system was geared to accomplish. Correspondingly, Hobbes rejected the traditional view of society as a hierarchically ordered totality composed of a series of competencies." Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," 522.

knowledge is attained through the assimilation of a sensible form by an immaterial soul—through the knower becoming informed by the likeness of the known—an epistemology premised upon the intellect's capacity to correspond to an order of essences that give the world form and structure.[55] Hobbes's rebuttal, prominently placed in the opening passages his treatise, asserts that Aristotle's theory offends reason by needlessly introducing supersensible entities to explain human perception.

Hobbes denies that human knowledge is the result of the human intellect becoming informed or illuminated by immaterial forms. Instead, our ideas are entirely the result of physical sense perception and are nothing but the motion in our minds caused by the pressure of external bodies on our own. *Leviathan* memorably depicts how an "external body" presses against our physical senses, thereby setting in motion our "nerves, other strings, and membranes of the body" until it reaches our agitated minds.[56] Hence there is nothing outside us but bodies in motion and nothing inside us but biological motions. Two things follow. For one, reason cannot provide insight into an order of being, nor can it know universals; human beings cannot, in point of fact, know material objects in themselves at all. Hobbes is thus necessarily led to nominalism, as he claims language is strictly conventional. Hobbes's mechanistic view of thought and sensation also requires him to hold that belief in spiritual powers or entities is absurd, an "idol of the brain."[57] There simply are no credible grounds on which to make sense of "spiritual substances" or "separated forms," such terms only enmiring human beings in incoherent commitments.[58] These arguments prompt Hobbes to reject Catholic doctrines, such as the immortality of the soul, the existence of angels, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, that involve speculative claims about spiritual forms or natures.[59]

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[55] *De Anima*, 424a.

[56] *Leviathan*, I. In his Third Objection to Descartes' *Meditations,* Hobbes writes that "a thinking thing is something corporeal. For it seems that the subject of any act—the thing that performs the act—can be understood only in terms of a body or in terms of matter." See Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Rene Descartes,* Vol. II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 123.

[57] "But for those idols of the brain which represent bodies to us where they are not (as in a looking-glass, in a dream, or to a distempered brain waking), they are (as the apostle saith generally of all idols) nothing, nothing at all… and in the brain itself, nothing but tumult." *Leviathan*, 34.3.

[58] "[S]ubstance incorporeal are words which, when they are joined together, destroy one another." *Leviathan,* 34.3.

[59] Hobbes's anti-Aristotelianism is better understood as a kind of anachronistic anti-Cartesianism. What I mean is that Hobbes accepts Descartes' understanding of matter, but rejects the Cartesian understanding of mind and the dualism that follows from it. It is from this reductionist position that Hobbes in turn interprets Aristotle's metaphysics, which now appears to be a kind of mystical Platonism in which the forms take on independent spiritual lives of their own. Since Hobbes simply cannot concede

Hobbes's second line of argument is that Bellarmine's metaphysics is politically dangerous because it has the effect of giving citizens "double vision." When human beings absurdly believe that earthly authorities are transcended by a higher spiritual authority, Hobbes writes, "men see double and mistake their lawful sovereign."[60] Much like Bellarmine, then, Hobbes discerns a parallel between the metaphysical, the anthropological, and the political orders. Our disputants agree: The existence of material and immaterial substances necessitates a distinction between the physical and spiritual nature of human beings; and this in turn necessities a distinction between temporal and spiritual authorities. Hobbes's claim, however, is that the slightest hint of metaphysical dualism leads to rival (rather than complementary) allegiances—and this divided loyalty his theory of absolute sovereignty must strenuously refuse. Hobbes objects to temporal power being rivaled in any way by those claiming to speak for transcendent authorities. For if the demands of the celestial city conflict with those of the earthly city, society is fractured. The allegiance of citizens will be split between earthly sovereigns, on one hand, and presbyters and priests, on the other. "And "when these two powers oppose one another, the commonwealth cannot but be in great danger of civil war and dissolution."[61]

Hobbes's metaphysical arguments are a prelude to his dismantling of Bellarmine's analogical defense of spiritual authority. Bellarmine had argued that a hierarchy of powers in the cosmos authorizes a hierarchy of authorities in a community—for such an arrangement is reflective (symptomatic) of an intrinsic order of nature itself. But Hobbes, believing that his materialism has undermined the Aristotelian order of causes and powers, announces that Bellarmine's argument is fallacious: one cannot "infer a subordination of powers from a subordination of purposes."[62] Hobbes explains:

> One power may be subordinate to another as the art of a saddler to the art of the rider. If, then, it be granted that the civil power be ordained as a means to bring us to a spiritual felicity, yet it does not follow that if a king have the civil power, and the pope the spiritual, that therefore the king is bound to obey the pope, more than any saddler is bound to obey every rider.[63]

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that matter might somehow be informed by mind or intelligence, the Aristotelian-Scholastic account of knowledge must (on his telling) posit a material world inhabited or even possessed by separate immaterial powers. Perhaps recognizing the bizarre nature of this charge, Hobbes suggests that fear of persecution—a second sin against philosophy—led Aristotle to disguise his true beliefs.

[60] *Leviathan*, 39.5

[61] *Leviathan*, 29.15. Hobbes compares this situation to epilepsy, the "possession" of the body politic by imagined spirits.

[62] Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," 522.

[63] *Leviathan*, 42.124.

Hobbes's arguments are no more flagrantly anti-Bellarmine than in their intention to show how a political society can be sustained and justified without appeal to a principle of spiritual order. One might even regard the entire purpose of *Leviathan* as explaining how a body politic could be so conceived.

Hobbes's striking image of a society composed of interlocking springs and mechanisms is an epochal moment in the history of political philosophy. Two millennia earlier Socrates had been asked what a city would be like if his city-soul analogy had simply dispensed with the soul, leaving only body. Such questions should not be posed let alone contemplated, Socrates seemed to answer. Hobbes himself does answer and in responding to Bellarmine inaugurates a new mode of modern political thought.[64]

THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION

Bellarmine's defense of the papacy attempts to strengthen the church's authority by defending its exclusively spiritual jurisdiction. His theology is not, however, only meant to respond to growing disagreement among believers; it also serves to position the church as a global *respublica Christiana* that can shape the development of modern societies from within.[65]

Part of Hobbes's insight is to recognize that Bellarmine's influence extended beyond academic debates over Scripture or metaphysics. Hobbes does not see Catholic ways of reading the Bible and doing philosophy as separable from the broader institutional framework that support them. Some of Hobbes's sharpest criticisms are therefore directed at the schools and curriculum that nurture Catholic modes of thinking. While often considered a philosopher primarily interested in the reform of political institutions, Hobbes concedes that his civil doctrines will remain ineffective, even misunderstood, without a transformation of the scholastic university. *Leviathan* ends with the remarkable admission that political reform awaits the reform of Catholic education.

At issue in the debate between Bellarmine and Hobbes is therefore not only the truth or falsity of church's doctrinal claims. As Stefania Tutino points out, also at issue was the cultural space that its authority could inhabit.[66] Bellarmine is subjected to special scrutiny because Hobbes regarded him as the intellectual figurehead of a network of

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[64] According to Charles Taylor, human society after Hobbes will be increasingly no longer be seen as an organic hierarchy of complimentary functions, but as a mechanism "designed to be productive, instrumentally effective, fostering peace and economic development, and submitted to codes of conduct… aimed at mutual benefit." Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 290.

[65] See Stefania Tutino, *Empire of Souls*, 14.

[66] Stefania Tutino, *Empire of Souls,* 157.

institutions that could not be integrated into the Hobbesian commonwealth. Bellarmine might have been a key theoretical architect of a modern spiritual empire, but his thought also provided a foundation for a very real empire of brick and mortar. It is for this reason that *Leviathan* closes with a diatribe against scholastic education.

Hobbes charges the scholastic university with being little more than a colonial outpost of papal authority. He means this quite literally, as he asserts the University of Paris was chartered by Pope Leo III with the intention of undercutting the rightful authority of Charlemagne. The basic problem with scholastic education, quite simply, is that it encourages fruitless speculative disputation. And the problem with that, Hobbes explains, is that it foments such a babble of confusion that only a "spiritual" authority can settle it:

> From masters such as Peter Lombard, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas, was born the theology which they call scholastic, a hodgepodge of Aristotle's philosophy and Sacred Scripture. In the university they teach Aristotle's logic, his physics, his metaphysics, his ethics, and his politics, as if the whole of the sciences were in one man, who was then also the greatest father of the Church, Aristotle. But especially to establish among adolescents a demeanor of deference, they were exercised in public disputations and speeches, by which they could maintain and preach the dogmas of the Roman church. So by sermons of ecclesiastics sent from the universities into almost all the cities, towns and parishes of the Christian world, and by published writings, it was fixed indelibly in the minds of all Christians that there is no other ruler of just and unjust except the dictates of the Roman church, that kinds are not to be obeyed further than is permitted by the Roman church, and kings themselves ought to obey the Roman pontiff like sheep.[67]

Catholic education impedes political reform because it presses students to look to spiritual authorities for guidance and consolation. Unable to settle metaphysical disagreements by reason or temporal authority—indeed, unable to even understand the metaphysical commitments in which they are embroiled—students must look to spiritual authorities and their alleged sacramental powers and gifts of understanding.[68]

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[67] *Leviathan*, 46.14.

[68] During his visit to Rome as a tutor, Hobbes stayed with the English Jesuits and records with dismay their course of study, which he saw as completely dedicated to converting English subjects to a "foreign prince." Thomas Hobbes, "A Discourse of Rome," 96. The pope thus "putteth out the light of nature" and "causeth so great a darkness in men's understanding that they see not who it is to whom they have engaged their obedience" *Leviathan,* 44.3.

The passages lampooning scholastic education are among the most amusing in *Leviathan*. Hobbes clearly relishes the opportunity to caricature his Catholic opponents in the most outlandish way possible. The scholastic university, he says, gives free reign to the speculative imagination, and so comes to corrupt popular religion and civil order. By giving metaphysical standing to spiritual entities like angels, saints and demons, Catholic education enflames the imagination of common believers, who in turn to further populate their world with sprites and fairies. Hobbes calls this make-believe world of folk religion the "Kingdom of Fairies" and he blames scholastic philosophy with providing its intellectual scaffolding. Hobbes thus sees a straight line connecting scholastic education—and its conceptual apparatus of supersensible forms, natures, souls, and essences—and the religious practices of Christian folk religion, which includes everything from divination and alchemy to auricular confession and Eucharistic adoration.

Interestingly, Hobbes does not entirely blame the Roman Church for the contamination of its beliefs and practices by pagan philosophy. It was not those like Bellarmine who invented what Hobbes calls "gentile" thinking, even if he is to blame for its dissemination in European schools. The story Hobbes tells is that "gentile" thinking entered Christian theology from Hellenistic Jews, who brought back from captivity an assortment of mystical doctrines (such as Kabbalah) that corrupted the formerly pure political philosophy of Moses.[69] Hobbes seems to be referring to what we would now call Gnosticism and he traces the origin of Catholic sacramental practices to the corrupting mystical influence of Hellenistic Judaism. So why did the Roman Church adopt pagan views "consistent with Homeric theology, but not with Sacred Scripture"?[70] Because it empowered a priestly caste that maintained its power by keeping believers in fearful ignorance:

> the metaphysics, ethics, and politics of Aristotle, the frivolous distinctions, barbarous terms, and obscure language of the Schoolmen, taught in the universities (which have been all erected and regulated by the Pope's authority) serve them to keep these errors from being detected, and to make men mistake the *ignis fatuus* of vain philosophy for the light of the Gospel.[71]

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[69] Hobbes charges that these Jews "turned the doctrine of their law into a fantastical kind of philosophy concerning the incomprehensible nature of God and spirits, which they compounded of the vain philosophy and theology of the Grecians." *Leviathan*, 46.12.

[70] *Leviathan*, 46.17.

[71] *Leviathan*, 47.16. Not content to limit the reach and influence of Aristotelian philosophy, Hobbes also wants to prevent the teaching of ancient literature and history. Many of the "books of the ancient Greeks and Romans" are dangerous because they

As Patricia Springborg notes, Hobbes saw the Roman Catholic Church much in the same way that Augustine saw the Roman Empire and other pagan empires: "The sure footing on which Catholicism had grounded its theocracy was, like the empires of the Babylonians and pharaohs, a hegemonic metaphysics guarded by a priestly caste."[72] This is a key, if muted, feature for Hobbes's attack on Bellarmine. The Catholic Church becomes on Hobbes's telling a kind of oriental despotism which inspires the devotion of mystified believers through conjured knowledge of secret spiritual realities. *Leviathan* has a great deal to say about the religious traditions of the Persian, Egyptian and ancient Greeks. Hobbes claims that what all these traditions had in common—and what fundamentally connects Catholicism to them—was that they were serviced by a priestly class. It was the great misfortune of Catholic Europe that it too had been overrun by a clerical "confederacy of deceivers" and civil peace will be impossible so long as they interfere with temporal authority through fabricated claims to spiritual authority.

In reading these passages, it is easy to imagine young Hobbes's visit to Bellarmine lurking in the back of his mind. There in the pope's chapel Bellarmine took his seat with a priestly caste that quite literally stood on the ruins of a pagan empire. Surrounded by the cultural achievements of antiquity, Catholic Rome was to Hobbes a spurious spiritual empire, one whose Homeric theology tried to preserve its power through fear, fantasy, and fraud. The Roman clergy, he wrote, were attempting to fill up the "old bottles" of pagan religion with the "new wine of Christianity." Would they succeed? Hobbes is ambivalent about the church in modern Europe. But surely his answer depended in part on the answer to the question, "Would they be reading Bellarmine?" M

provide "a strong and delightful impression" of heroic endeavors in war. For this reason Hobbes says "discreet masters" will be needed to teach old books in politically appropriate and sensitive ways. *Leviathan*, 39.14.

[72] Patricia Springborg, "Thomas Hobbes and Cardinal Bellarmine," 510.