On Pardon, Hobbes's Sixth Law of Nature

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Hobbes writes as if he expects disagreement to turn into violence swiftly and surely (L v:3).[1] Ordinary disagreements are seen as tantamount to indictments of immorality and idiocy, allegations that one is a perpetrator or victim of duplicity. Disagreements are furthermore indicative of competing claims to rule. Religious disagreements are especially volatile. Confronted by another who holds different opinions regarding matters divine, a man risks facing the possibility that his beliefs are mistaken. Hobbes appears to agree with Socrates in Plato's *Republic* regarding the unrivaled fearfulness and hatefulness of finding falsehoods deep inside oneself regarding the greatest questions.[2] Disagreements regarding religious matters are readily perceived as condemnations, as adverse judgments regarding the condition of a man's innermost being and his likely ultimate destination, and not merely harmless accusations of folly. In order to fortify one's convictions, avenge one's own, and of course, satisfy one's God and secure heavenly rewards, religious disagreement is frequently met with violence. It is as if that the greatness of God (and by lucky association, the greatness of the godly) shall be confirmed by the enormity of deeds done desperately in His name.

Hardly encouraging men to discover lies in their souls, Hobbes wants them generally oblivious to the possibility there might be some crisis there, that anything might be in need of correction. Hobbes would welcome a superficial diversity of opinion regarding matters divine, diversity being unavoidable anyway and perhaps also advantageous, so long as a fundamental, underlying agreement could be arranged. Accordingly, Hobbes devises a model of religious toleration that is not based on cultivating any great learning or refined qualities of character among men. It is religious toleration grounded in sentiments such as human pride, an enlightened supposition of mutual impotence, downplaying the afterlife, and easy faith in an easygoing God—all reinforcing a prejudice in favor of bodily self-preservation.

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[1] All parenthetical citations in this paper are abbreviated as follows:
L Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)

[2] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 382a-b.

Leviathan presents what is intended as a universal political teaching regarding what is right and necessary in politics at anytime everywhere. It encompasses the proper relationship between religion and politics. Historically, sovereigns and subjects alike have messed this up terribly (cf. L xlii:118; xlvii:18). It is a teaching which proves to be ultimately nonsectarian although not indifferent to religious questions. Hobbes discusses at length the idea of a Christian Commonwealth, but it is an inquiry that leaves the meaning and possibility of such a regime questionable. Thought through, the very expression "Christian Commonwealth" has about as much meaning as "incorporeal substance." The Christian revelation teaches that there are no Christian kingdoms in this world until Christ establishes the one and only (apart from ancient Israel, now long gone) upon his Second Coming (L xli:1, 6).[3] A sovereign may of course nevertheless proclaim one, and his subjects remain obliged to obey. Fortunately, God is ultimately indifferent to modes of public worship.

Hobbes grants to the civil sovereign unlimited authority to command his subjects to worship in whatever manner pleases him, but his guiding counsel to sovereigns, with respect to religious belief, is, as far as possible, to lay off. The difficulty, however, is not only that sovereigns must learn to largely refrain from exercising their authority over religion, but also that subjects must learn that they should not want their own religion overtly politicized. Where the prevailing religion of the people is such that they generally expect or demand official modes of public worship, proceeding prudently requires moderately accommodating their appetites at present while reeducating them. Hobbes's Christian Commonwealth is therefore a provisional idea (cf. L xlvii:18), tailored to his contemporaries. As a lament, Hobbes confesses that he must go on at length and in detail, delineating how to apply his theory in practice given the circumstances, instead of stating his teaching directly and plainly. He writes, "If I had written in uncorrupted hearts, as on a blank tablet, I could have been briefer" (L OL-xlvii:29). The logic of his argument regarding the Christian Commonwealth nonetheless fits within and leads into a broader argument that recommends in the end a nonsectarian commonwealth. Hobbes's argument applies beyond Christendom as the requirements of peaceable living among men are everywhere the same.

Hobbes's conception of philosophy is technological (L v:17, 20, lxvi:1), as befits his emphasis on "peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living" (L xv:40), and the continuing satisfaction of desires which comprises "the felicity of this life" (L vi:58, xi:1). People are happier when they satisfy their own desires through their own "lawful industry" (L xxx:1, cf. xvii:13). Hobbes may grant the civil sovereign the right to attempt to order every detail of his subjects' lives, but he recommends instead maximizing and protecting their liberties, insofar as this may be rendered consistent with continued civil peace. Men can never be satisfied, but in their relatively free pursuit of satisfactions, they may be pacified. Despite Hobbes's stated preference for monarchy, his arguments are exceedingly democratic in the Platonic sense. All men are regarded and to be governed as if they are driven by idiosyncratic desires, their reason being only an instrument for designing the best means to satisfy them while avoiding things imagined hurtful (L iii:4-5; vi:14, 16). Any given man's standards of wisdom, fear, cruelty, justice, gravity,

[3] Hobbes tells us, however, that the future has "no being" and the past, only "in the memory" (L iii:7). He also says that we shouldn't heed prophecies regarding promised miracles "long deferred" (L xxxii:8).

stupidity and the like "can never be true grounds of any ratiocination" since they merely follow from that individual's peculiar passions, experiences and interests (L iv:24). Love and hatred are simply personal expressions of appetites and aversions which lead men to act as their profit and pleasure recommends (L vi:3; cf. xxviii:1). The intellects of men are leveled, as "all men by nature reason alike, and well, when they have good principles" (L v:16). Human spiritedness is harnessed toward the pursuit of effective powers and diverted away from vain considerations of honor or glory. If religious toleration is instituted, one of the leading obstacles to the satisfaction of material desires is quelled.

Religious toleration furthermore befits Hobbes's theory of natural right, which may be condensed into the formula "might well used."[4] Of course, Hobbes tries to prevent people from speaking of natural right or justice like this, but his denial of natural justice betrays a certain conception of it and a sense of how to obscure it. Might well used is, above all, might which endures, and it is best exercised indirectly—hence Hobbes's theory of representative government. It requires an attentive cultivation of appearances as much as it does tangibles. It must seem indomitable to outsiders and yet not seem overtly oppressive to insiders. Might used poorly will be lost, and the sovereign who loses his power has no basis upon which to claim that it ought to be given back. It doesn't matter how a sovereign comes by his power, the rule that sustains his right remains the same: ruling as if his power were a self-interested gift of each and every subject under him—meaning his actual subjects, possessing their many imperfections and limited malleability, and not some readily refashioned, idealized version of them. Now, people will always differ in their opinions regarding the religious things. They will always regard their beliefs as their own, and free, and (paradoxically) they will always resist any attempt to control them. Now no man would or should choose for his sovereign one who would "endeavour, both by terror and persuasion, to make him violate his faith" (L xlii:131). It is therefore ill-advised for a sovereign to treat his subjects thusly. The civil sovereign should cultivate a society in which everyone feels free to claim to believe what they want—while restraining them so that nobody happens to insist on belligerent beliefs.

A nonsectarian commonwealth is still a regime in which the civil sovereign retains and exercises final authority over religious matters. The entanglement of religion and politics is inescapable, although it may be removed from view. Politics is never subordinate to religion. There is no "spiritual power" separable from and superior to the "temporal power" (L xxix:12, 15, xxxix:5, xlii:80, 123). Religion may be subordinated to politics through a formally established religion (L xlii:80). When this works satisfactorily, given the complicity of the ruled, it amounts to an outward unity of politics and religion. Even then, Hobbes discourages direct attempts to tamper with the minds of men who seem to stray from what is publicly authorized. Where there is no singular formally established religion, however, there is still always a rule regarding religion emanating from the sovereign authority that determines the boundaries of religious speech and activity. The sovereign's role as "supreme pastor" (L xlii:68-72, cf. xxxix:5) is not forfeited should he refrain from organizing an established church. It is but indirectly executed. It was not Christ who made kings pastors, and so even in rejecting

[4] Hobbes's view may look like Cleitophon's at first glance, but it is closer to Thrasymachus's. He is more adept than Thrasymachus, and more earnest than Glaucon, who gives us a halfhearted barebones Hobbesianism, overly eager for Socrates to defeat it. Plato, *Republic*, 340a-c, 358e-359b.

Christ, or merely distancing himself from Him through abstract formalities, a sovereign does not cease to be his people's pastor. A commonwealth without a formal religious affiliation must still educate its subjects so that an underlying agreement about what the divine does not require or forbid is cultivated and safeguarded. The tolerant state should not tolerate actions done contrary to the law in the name of conscience, under pretense of enthusiasm, or by faith in some text or preacher. To do so only invites further violations by encouraging inspired believers with a precedent and inspiring disingenuous men by providing them with a pretext.

The civil law, even in a secularized society, is inseparable from certain presuppositions and policies regarding religion. There, churches and their hierarchies are given no special exemptions from the law, being treated the same as any other association among men (L xxii:16; xlii:69, 110; xliv:10; xlvii:7). Sovereigns may privilege certain churches or religious orders under the law, but never out of deference to some prior or superior claim held by them. Private religious opinions are equal in status to every other private opinion, and deserve no special accommodation. Oaths do nothing to create or enhance obligations (L xiv:33). A man cannot oblige himself to do something contrary to the civil law simply because he promises God that he will do it (L xiv:23). Religion becomes something of an extenuating factor only when careless precedents in impunity encourage others who would feign faith to violate the law (L xxvii:22), but this is common to all situations in which the "contempt of all laws" is encouraged by failing to uphold them (L xxvii:20). The rules of peaceable living which reason supplies (i.e., the laws of nature), rules which, Hobbes says, may themselves be called divine (L xxvi:24; xxxiii:22, xlii:37, 131, xliii:5, 22 cf. Intro:1, xv:40-41, xxxi:36), are such that that religiously-informed opinions, actions and associations aren't in any way exceptional. They must be subordinated to political authority for the same reasons that apply to everything else. The impossibility of perfect communication leaves agreement uncertain, even among men of goodwill with shared interests. An official interpretation must be imposed and official interpreters appointed due to the endless interpretability and reinterpretability of all things (L xviii:9; xxvi:21, 26; xxix:6; xlii:73), according to the experiences and appetites of every man. The one thing Hobbes wants and expects men to agree on is the idea that men cannot be expected to agree on anything, and yet, everyone must (and wants to) find a way to get along.

Show Hobbes a self-proclaimed Kingdom of God on earth, or any endeavor to manufacture one before Christ Himself returns in glory (L xxxviii:5, 23) and Hobbes will show you a conspiracy. Scripture, on its own terms, establishes no civil laws (L xxxiii:1; xlii:47). Christ and his Apostles never sought to seize worldly authority (L xlii:131; xli:5; xlii:68). The Roman Church's claim to represent the Kingdom of God is plainly the work of "crafty ambitious persons" (L ii:8), a "*confederacy of deceivers*" (L xliv:1; cf. xlvii:17), a transparent profiteering scheme (L xii:32, xlvii:2). The political ambitions of Presbyterians are just as noxious (L xxix:8, xliv:17, xlvii:4). According to John Aubrey's *Life of Hobbes*, Hobbes was an equal opportunity critic of the priestly class, Roman, English and Genevan alike, calling them all "cheats."[5] Men have been everywhere manipulated by those who invent gods and spirits and prey on the common man's "fear of things invisible" (L xi:26-27, cf. xii.20). But to those who would rather "obey God

[5] John Aubrey, *Life of Hobbes*, in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. lxviii.

than men," Hobbes tells them to please do so… when they live in the prophesied Kingdom of God itself (L xxxi: 39). 'Till then, they're not fooling anyone with their self-righteous pride and ambition masquerading as pious subservience.

Hobbes's principal complaint about the Roman church has to do with its interference in the political life of nations. A civil sovereign is at liberty to make the Roman rites and those alone permissible in his commonwealth—but even then, Rome still cannot claim any rightful authority over him and his subjects (L xlii:70). So long as Rome meddles in civil business, however, it is imprudent for a sovereign to establish the Roman church in his country. On his own terms, Hobbes can offer no principled objection to the establishment of Presbyterian worship when they happen to acquire rule. It is regrettable insofar as its inability to become what it promises would contribute to its certain failure. A regime which pretends to prepare the kingdom of God had better come through! It is better for every nation to have its own Church, and one that concedes that the Kingdom of God is not of this world and cannot be brought about through human effort. Every commonwealth constitutes its own church in principle anyway (L xxxiii:24; xxxix:4-5; xlii:79-80), though many states ruinously fail to recognize this. Hobbes supports the Church of England as established by his king (L Ded.Let,; xxxi:1; OL-xlvii:28; R&C:14). He also finds himself at liberty to criticize its institutions and interpretations, insofar as his criticisms are not expressly forbidden by his civil sovereign (L xxii:15). His criticisms reveal that a nationalized, established church with prescribed and proscribed creeds and ceremonies is not simply best, but at best next-best.

Better than granting any single church direct authority over religious matters within the commonwealth, however, would be to allow every subject the freedom to worship as he would, within the law, constraining every man's religion equally in the abstract. Only religious activities which disturb the peace should be treated prejudicially, simply because all activities which disturb the peace must be treated with prejudice.[6] All religions should always teach peaceable living, and not simply after they have made the whole world submit. The desire to see the whole world submit to one's own religion is the neurotic, furthermost consequence of the apprehension that it might be false, inducing a need to produce concrete proof that it must be true. So it is not enough to persuade sovereigns not to impose a religion. Subjects must be persuaded not to insist on having a religion imposed on them—or rather, people must be persuaded not to insist on imposing their religion on others, as nobody wants to be ruled by any religion but their own. The men who have been manipulated by the crafty and ambitious men who dominate religious institutions must be released not only from the influence of their priestly masters, but also from their private zeal.

Hobbes tells us that "*to declare hatred or contempt of another*" is against the (eighth) law of nature (L xv:20). Indeed, in a fully developed Hobbesian regime, nobody would hate or be hated (cf. L R&C:4). To the end of bringing it about, however, Hobbes readily insults those who represent the foremost obstacles to its realization—among whom he counts martyrs. Martyrs may seem courageous, if courage is only a passion which exhibits "contempt of wounds and violent death" (L R&C:2). But they act to fortify their faith precisely because they perceive its fragility and fear its phoniness. That

[6] See the recommended prohibition on witchcraft, advanced not because witches actually cause mischief but because they intend it (L ii:8).

they might find something hateful in themselves is too fearful for them to risk. It is not enough for them to insist that society is so wrong that it deserves to be abandoned or destroyed. They must complain that God Almighty is on their side, too. Out of this sad, responsibility-dodging self-indulgence, fancying themselves extraordinarily special, they promise themselves incomparable rewards for succumbing to their weakness. They flee from life frustrated that the world does not flatter them. Hobbes finds that nothing is so "unmanly" (L xviii:3; cf. xxi:16) as seeking martyrdom. Martyrs are like big babies or little girls. Whatever else anyone thinks about the divine, nobody should believe that God wants anyone to die or kill for Him. Well, he allows people to die for the sake of God (L xxi:16; xxxi:23), but dismisses them as nothing special, just another instance of someone deciding to forfeit their right of nature by not defending themselves. They shouldn't look for praise in this world for such foolishness—and others shouldn't give it to them. God (ironically?) isn't all that impressed by self-sacrifice as a form of worship (L xxxi:36). The church certainly shouldn't be canonizing martyrs and encouraging others to follow their example (L xlvii:12). If a government neither endorses nor menaces anyone's personal faith, it is less likely that they would feel a strong enough impulse to act alone or in combination with others to gesture toward its downfall with such histrionics. That is the hope of the nonsectarian regime. That Hobbes would teach sovereigns to forego imposing religion on people, the error which creates so many martyrs, is suggested by one of the most striking manifest blunders in *Leviathan*. He asks,

> But what infidel king is so unreasonable as, knowing he has a subject that waiteth for the second coming of Christ (after the present world shall be burnt), and intendeth then to obey him (which is the intent of believing that Jesus is the Christ), and in the meantime thinketh himself bound to obey the laws of that infidel king (which all Christians are obliged in conscience to do), to put to death or persecute such a subject? (L xxxi:23)

Of course, there would be a long list, all idiots. Religious persecution is always unreasonable, so long as the religious are willing to leave peaceably and law-abidingly. To punish those who use religion in order to excuse unlawfulness is not to persecute religion, but simply, to punish criminals—although such punishment is entangled with the presupposition that their conception of the will of God is mistaken.

Hobbes endeavors to depoliticize religion, while politicizing it fully, homogenizing and thereby taming its most politically salient aspects. Hobbes is ready with extensive counsel on what should be done with the sovereign's right to render official interpretations of all doctrines and order religious institutions within his commonwealth. Protestant Christianity is the material he works with, but Hobbes's effort to reinterpret and restructure Christianity is less like that of the many other reformers of his own era than Plato's philosophical attempt to refashion the religion of the Greeks in the *Republic*. Accordingly, what he is up to is hardly specific to seventeenth century Christianity in England. He knows full well that his contemporaries—especially bishops and other preachers—will take his teaching personally, but he is talking past or beyond them more than he is talking to or against them. His interpretation involves examining doctrines regarding what is needful in this life and what to expect in the next life, reworking the virtues of the faithful, remodeling ecclesiastical offices, and even revisiting the history of the church and raising questions about the origins, status and purposes of the Scriptures themselves. Hobbes knows that there is no strictly literal interpretation of

Scripture that makes sense of the whole of it. One must apply criteria for deciding when to read Scripture literally and when metaphorically. The idea of a Kingdom of God is a metaphor (L xxxi:2), as is everything that seems to speak of a hell (xxxviii:11, 14). Mainly, Hobbes seeks to render Scripture consistent with his materialistic conception of the cosmos (e.g., L viii:26, xxxiv:23; xliv:25; xlv:8). The Scriptures as a whole are not "perspicuous," and there can be no "infallible science" of reading them (L v:22). Hobbes nonetheless insists that he has avoided texts of "obscure or controverted interpretation," focusing only on "plain and agreeable" passages (L xliii:24; cf. xliii:24). Scripture is read so that it accords with "the articles of the law of nature" which are evident to anyone who "pretends but reason enough to govern his private family" (L R&C:13). (Hobbes reduces politics to large-scale household management.) Hobbes maintains, "there is nothing in this whole discourse… contrary either to the Word of God, or to good manners, or tending to the disturbance of the public tranquility." (L R&C:16). Note that these disjunctions suggest that the word of God on its own might offend good manners and disturb the peace unless it is deliberately read in accordance with them.

Hobbes reminds the reader that "all the faith required to salvation is declared to be easy" in Scripture (L xliii:14), which also "commands avoiding such disputes" over minute particulars (L xlii:25). If faith is easy there is little worth quarrelling over. He proceeds by reducing religion to the relief of man's estate, or consolation for it. This allows people to live the lives of comfort, prosperity and security they would be glad to live anyhow, while adding furthermore a sense that God not only permits this but approves of it. Each man should also see that God approves not only of his life but (nearly?) everyone else's too, and therefore approves of his approval of them—or more precisely, He would disapprove of his disapproval of them. Hobbes argues that for all the different interpretations of Scripture one finds among Christians, so long as they all hold the fundamental premise that "Jesus is the Christ," then they agree on everything that matters (L xxxvi:20; xlii:13, 34; xliii:2-3, 11-16, 18). All the doctrinal superstructures and institutional orders men erect on top of that foundation are, Hobbes argues, a matter of indifference to God, and as such, they should be a matter of indifference to men, too (L xliii:16-18, 22; xliv:33). God forgives people for their ignorance and errors which follow from their merely human efforts at trying to understand Him, and so should we all. This is a forgiveness that God would give even without repentance, since everyone is permitted to think they understand Him rightly and are not required to apologize for maybe getting Him wrong—although maintaining a level of modesty regarding the certainty of one's own understanding is sensible.[7]

[7] For those whose sirens go off at the slightest tincture any "exclusivity" in the works of an old-timey philosopher like Hobbes, it looks like Hobbes is still "privileging" Christianity. But Hobbes's effort to defuse Christianity is hardly peculiar to it. It is one instance of a more general effort to defuse all religiosity. It runs contrary to the thrust of the entire Hobbesian project to assume that his vision ends at the reconciliation of Christian sects with each other, as if he anticipates interminable quarrel between those who prefer different prophecies. Hobbes proceeds from Christianity, the religion which is most germane and opportune. To presuppose that it is in principle impossible to interpret other religions in a manner consistent with Hobbes's political teaching is both to forget how much adjustment Christianity itself has undergone, to designate other revelations as mere purveyors of misery and perpetuators of war, and to acknowledge their adherents as madmen, the enemies of all mankind, themselves included.

Hobbesian Christianity is as undemanding in practice as it is in its tenets. Active, personal charity is replaced with passive, indirect charity. Having the mere "*Desire* of a good to another" is reckoned as charity (L vi:22). The Golden Rule is replaced by the Silver Rule (L xv:35; xxvi:13), so that abstaining from doing harm comes to constitute virtue. Indeed, gaining the habit of doing good unto others is positively discouraged in the Hobbesian system. Men find it "hateful" to be the recipient of another man's charity (L xi:7). And so the state is expected to mete out all charity (L xxx:18).[8] Its benefits should be impersonal. Charity is thereby subsumed by justice, and directed wholly toward this-worldly objectives. Appetites and aversions are not to be compared so long as they are peaceable. Any assistance is charitable whenever another's appetites are satisfied and his aversions are averted. There are no grounds upon which to guide, alter or refine anyone's appetites, let alone any basis to have a man undergo any hardship for his own benefit. Individuals are supposed to become more self-involved and relatively indifferent to each other. When the sovereign is entrusted to take care of us all together, private efforts to care for particular individuals become improper and suspicious.

That even mild forms of loving others are curtailed in the Hobbesian scheme is only the tail end of the effort to eliminate all forms of zeal. At its worst, zeal leads people to think that they have a right to kill someone else in the defense of and for the glory of God (L R&C:10-11). But God doesn't need any man to work on His behalf to save anyone or defend Him. There's really not anything a man can do to affect the inward disposition of other men's hearts—the domain of God's care and concern. The thoughts of men are free, Hobbes maintains (L xxxvii:13; xl:2; xliii:22), and "belief and unbelief never follow men's commands" (L xlii:11). The minds and hearts of men are by other men imperceptible and impenetrable (L xl:2; xlii:43, 80), and they stubbornly resist being manipulated. A man can't read what is in another's heart, nor could he know if he had worked any effect on it anyhow, irrespective of what someone might do or say (L xlii:19). Men excel at fooling themselves and others regarding what they believe. As God is not honored by phony worship, one should not want others to engage in it, and everybody hates being made to offer it. The subjectivity of language, given the uniqueness of each man's experiences compounded by the diversity of the objects of their passions, means that men may even speak the same words and think that they agree with each other and yet believe entirely different things. We always "conceive the same things differently" given our different affects, prejudices and bodily constitutions (L iv:24). Thus, one cannot read another man's heart. To suppose one may read another's heart is tantamount to judging him, and this, of course, is something thou shalt not do. Accordingly, the power of the law does not reach "to the very thoughts and consciences of men" (L xlvi:37). Sovereigns should in the end heed Hobbes's recommendation to any "teacher of Christian doctrine" to "abandon" his subjects (into God's judgment), even when they proceed "obstinately" in a life they deem "unchristian" (L xlii:31). A sovereign may try to command belief, but it is ill-advised. It is contrary to the law of nature to force a man to "hazard his soul" (L xlvi:37), as "in every man his own religion" is naturally prior to "civil society" (L xiv:31). All men are, as far as anyone knows,

[8] Hobbesian reasoning has persuaded many Christians that the proliferation of social welfare programs represents a way of practicing charity in the secular world, when they are but engines of Machiavellian liberality.

orthodox to themselves but heterodox to each other—and this includes a man's coparishioners, preacher, and sovereign. The upshot of the subjectivity of minds and the freedom of thought is that it does not matter whether a man's sovereign is his avowed coreligionist. As far as anyone knows, no matter what he says or does, like everyone else, every person who wields sovereign authority may well be a heretic, infidel or fraud, from any given man's point of view. Hobbes looks to strip categories like heretic and infidel of all political significance. If a man obeys his sovereign because he apparently shares his faith and appears all piety he obeys for the wrong reason and is furthermore likely to forfeit more liberty than is necessary to one who already wields power enough.

Trying to communicate anything to other people is problematic in itself simply, and evidently so when it comes to the most mysterious things. Like anything else, faith becomes increasingly inarticulate the less it is expressed. As religion becomes privatized every attempt to communicate it becomes awkward and eyebrow-raising. The slightest hint of proselytizing becomes an odious harassment. So people learn to brush the dust off their feet preemptively (cf. L xlii:44), without bothering to start spreading the gospel, since trying avails nothing, or at least nothing good. Everybody should be skeptical of anyone else who claims to know how God wants him to behave (L xxxvi:19). Yet, nobody should mind that anyone else happens to think that they know what God wants of them. This does not require outlawing religious speech or behavior in public but it does involve educating people so that they are discouraged from it, apologetic regarding it, and uncomfortable with it. Constructing this ethos requires shaping attitudes and opinions, using an indoctrination that looks like a refusal to indoctrinate.

Men naturally find disagreement offensive and offended parties are naturally prone to strike back. People naturally endeavor to end disagreements by eliminating those who have dared to disagree rather than by defending their ideas, and not simply because it seems easier. If mere disagreement on its own enrages men, suffering correction seems worse. People would naturally rather persist in their own errors than have them challenged, let alone exposed. Men may however insulate and shelter their opinions better through forgiveness instead of aggression. Forgiveness carries Christian connotations and credentials convenient for Hobbes's immediate purposes. It also allows the person doing the forgiving to feel pride and remain undisturbed. If forgiveness is given peremptorily, if it were cultivated as an anticipatory response to differences to be deemed indifferent without examination, the person being forgiven need not even suffer the indignity of knowing that they've been forgiven.

Hobbes's sixth through eighth laws of nature are most pertinent to this analysis. The sixth law, on pardon, recommends forgiving those who repent their past offences, "upon caution of the future time" (L xv:18). This is a rationally calculated forgiveness. It is not forgiveness for those who remain hostile. Hobbes does not recommend trusting that others will reform and disarm themselves in the face of generous goodwill. It is forgiveness from a position of strength, where one has more to lose than to gain from reprisals. Enemies should be forgiven their trespasses after they cease preparing to trespass some more, when they give up trying to win. This may mean that both sides recognize that no decisive victory is foreseeable on either side. Hobbes is aware that there are times when it is prudent for a sovereign to forgive even rebels and usurpers, even utopian religious zealots, should they cease their rebellion. Hobbes recommends that men should not punish old enemies who now only want to live in peace. Forgive them, if they

will end their pointless struggle. This will require accommodating them so that they do not resume their struggle. Needless to say, within a commonwealth, nobody should be administering any punishments, or pardoning them, except the sovereign and his magistrates (L OL-xxx:16). Fortunately, on a personal level, once men see that their souls are in no danger from each other, they may forgive one another and live together in peace. Men should forgive each other their thoughts, even if they offend. When men seek revenge, they seek to make someone "condemn some fact of his own" (L vi:34). The desire to make someone recant their faith is always inimical to peace. Hobbes further observes that the very desire for revenge is harmful to the subject of that desire as well as its object (L viii:8)—and not simply because acting on it often yields adverse repercussions, but because the passion of revenge "hurteth the organs" (L viii:19). The passion of vengeance is self-destructive, thus contrary to the law of nature. Like drunkenness (cf. L xv:34; xxviii:8), it carries with it its own natural punishments. Hobbesian men will be more forgiving, more accepting of others, for the sake of their own health.

The seventh law, against cruelty, defined as excessive revenge, deals further with calculating how to respond to which offenses with force, and to what extent. Hobbes argues that you should exact retribution for something only to the extent necessary to secure future peace. It is "vain-glory" to seek revenge merely to satisfy an appetite for vengeance (L xv:19; xxviii:7). Hobbes admits that revenges and punishments are always a return of "evil for evil" (L xv:19; cf. xxviii:1), and therefore that evil may be used for good. This follows from his subjectivist definition of evil (L vi:7). In civil society, private revenges should be brought to an end (L xxvii:20; xxviii:3; R&C:11). And punishments administered by rightful sovereigns are no longer properly called revenge (L xxviii 10). They must always be forward-looking, aiming to correct past offenders by preventing future offenses by them or others who would otherwise be inspired by their impunity. Likewise, the "correction" (L xv:19) of the offender sought through punishment, which checks their future behavior, is not, in some Platonic sense, an improvement of that person's character or soul. Those who endeavor to impose their religion on another by force are to be checked, but only enough to prevent similar attempts. There is no direct way to force them to change their foolhardy opinions and unruly desires. It would be better if they did not develop them in the first place. They might reform themselves, discovering that refraining from religiously-inspired misdeeds benefits them more than perpetrating them. If men use their faith as a pretense for unlawfulness, they must be dissuaded through correction without impugning their faith. Hence the need to design a science of punishment, a rational and impersonal procedure for the administration of revenges, carefully calculated for the sole purpose of maintaining civil peace. Punishments should be sufficient to deter without being inconsistent or excessively cruel (L xxvii:8; xxviii:9; xxx:23)—which means not trying to do something they cannot accomplish, like read a man's heart or transform it.

The eighth law, already mentioned, against contumely, requires men to refrain from showing hatred for each other. This is not as demanding as a commitment to love one's enemies. Still, not hating other men isn't always easy, even if they only simply but deeply disagree about important things. The success of the norm of toleration involves an underlying agreement that certain differences are superficial and negligible and treating them accordingly. The toleration Hobbes recommends is ultimately an indifference to the

beliefs of others because others may be regarded as being ignorant or in error in ways which can't be helped, are harmless to other men, and irrelevant to God. If men may be persuaded to regard the different beliefs of others as blameless and understandable "errors and infirmities" (L R&C:1) they ought to judge others less harshly and forgive them more readily. The views of others would be deemed worthy of neither scorn nor serious contemplation. One could even admire someone else for sticking to their own convictions, however ridiculous they may seem, while remaining confident in one's own. It does not require or recommend respectful dialogue between those who disagree—that asks and risks too much. Hobbes says that hatred should not be shown "*by deed, word, countenance, or gesture*" (L xv:20). This is the ideal of the tolerant society. How demanding! This law of nature governs not only our deliberate speech, but also our less voluntary responses. It depends on having educated people so well so that they genuinely feel that others are not hateful. Then they won't indicate anything which may be construed as hatred by anything as minor as a glance or a twitch. A rare type of person may succeed at pretending never to hate, But the Hobbesian society asks everyone to never betray hatred, and accordingly, cannot rely on trusting ordinary people to be good pretenders. Hatred is especially problematic because it is the principal passion which leads men to violate the law too readily unless punishments are certain and severe, and even sometimes where they are (L xxvii:18)—and it is best to execute few severe punishments. Now we see how far Hobbes's teaching actually does reach into the minds of men. Men need a common education so that they will share a basic understanding of what matters and what does not, what counts as an offense and what does not, even though their disparate experiences and the diverse objects of their passions will lead them to have opinions and desires which differ. This means, however, that their education involves managing their formative experiences, steering their desires, and influencing their passions, preferably in ways that make them promiscuous and nonjudgmental. In order to persuade people that nobody should be regarded as hateful, it is helpful to persuade them that God does not regard anybody as hateful, that God loves everyone equally and accepts them as they are. To be sure, the concept of hell must be dispensed with, as it is in Hobbes's interpretation of Scripture. And science should become "the *way*" (L v:20) to man's felicity, to his salvation, a condition in which his appetites are continually satisfied without having to endure any suffering (L xxxviii:15).

Other laws of nature speak to the issue of religious toleration. The fifth law requires us to accommodate ourselves to all others (L xv:17)—which would mean not stubbornly insisting on one's own differences, including one's beliefs, as if they were special. Indeed, one should be relaxed and flexible, glad to alter what one thinks, casually, without reflection, so that one comes to accept the beliefs of others as, if not one's own, then at least okay for them. The ninth law, against pride (L xv:21), leads to a similar conclusion. In acknowledging everyone else as one's equal, one becomes disinclined to judge other people adversely in God's sight. The pride that Hobbes objects to is not absolute but relative. He allows everyone to remain proud of themselves (they will anyways, whether he allows it or not)—to have high "self-esteem," as we would say today—so long as they esteem everyone else highly too. An opinion of man's equality could mean supposing that everyone is equally corrupt. Hobbes trusts rather that men would more readily prefer to believe that people, including themselves, are quite alright—and that they're not really to blame for the ways in which they're sometimes not.

Forgiveness, construed as a kind of indifference, does not settle disputes, for it does not engage in them at all. It has supposed from the first that there can be no civilized way of approaching these debates, that civilization requires averting our attention from the questions they raise, so that nobody gets upset over them. It works only when agreement has been reached regarding certain prior assumptions, most notably the primacy of civil peace and God's inscrutability. Because of His incomprehensibility, and given the subjectivity of language and experience, religious faith is to be reduced to mere subjective opinion, conjectures regarding which no standards (except the prejudice in favor of peace and comfort) apply. God too is regarded as generally indifferent and forgiving, so long as men behave as civilized people should. In places, Hobbes indicates that the one necessary article of faith, "Jesus is the Christ," may have complicated doctrinal implications, and he lists a few casually but without demonstration or elaboration (L xliii:3, 18). He knows that he cannot spell them out in an indisputable fashion. He claims that may be "deduced… with more or less difficulty"—but that's the whole problem, isn't it? He effectively lets his every reader fill them in for himself according to his own predilections. One thing which Hobbes sometimes but inconsistently attaches to the article "Jesus is the Christ" as being necessary to salvation is repentance (L xxxviii:25; xliii:4, 18). His own arguments empty this secondary component of significance. To be sure, the absolution given to men who repent by officeholders in the church is irrelevant to God, since men may lie, and priests have no real authority to forgive a man if God would not (Lxlii:19). But Hobbes analyzes Scripture and finds that repentance is but a "counsel" (L xxv:10) or an "invitation" (L xlii:45). Repentance is collapsed into the endeavor to obey God (L xliii:19, 21), which, as we know, in this world, requires only obedience to the civil sovereign. God ends up being a model of forgiveness as indifference—granting men forgiveness before they ask for it, and as a result, they needn't ask for it. To imitate God, therefore, is to adopt this attitude of indifference toward every man's spirituality, no matter how strange it seems, so long as people get along in this life. Repentance may be recommended for its salutary affects, not to satisfy God, but to help a man to live more contentedly. Confessions cannot be coerced, but well-educated subjects will voluntarily seek to have their antisocial tendencies treated by those agents of the sovereign whose assigned task it is to keep the populace comfortably well-adjusted.

Hobbes argues that the three "knot[s] on Christian liberty" (dogma initially established by the assemblies of presbyters, the authority of bishops, and the establishment of the papacy) have been dissolved in England at the time when *Leviathan* is first published in English. Believers have reverted to the condition of the original Christians, whose "consciences were free, and their words and actions subject to none but the civil power" (L xlvii:19).

> And so we are reduced to the independency of the primitive Christians, to follow Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos, every man as he liketh best. Which, if it be without contention, and without measuring the doctrine of Christ by our affection to the person of his minister… is perhaps the best. (L xlvii:20; cf. xlii:25, 34-35)

It is best, Hobbes indicates, because "there ought to be no power over the consciences of men but of the Word itself," and "because it is unreasonable… to require of a man endued with reason of his own, to follow the reason of any other man, or of the most voices of many other men" (L xlvii:20; cf. v:3). Reconciling these reasons is not

straightforward. What should be authoritative, to each man, with respect to religion, is what he personally finds to be a reasonable interpretation of the will of God. We already know that each man's reason is but an instrument used by him for the satisfaction of his own particular appetites and passions, derivative of his experiences. Each man should therefore be free to conceive of God in the manner that pleases him most, wherein God encourages him in the satisfaction of his preferred appetites and does not insist on anything which is not to his taste. Every man should pick and choose which parts of Scripture he likes best, and allow everyone else the same freedom to read Scripture selectively or not at all. All religion is reduced to personal spirituality, as every religious tradition and organization is stripped of any authority, all devotion to texts and institutions is exposed as mere devotion to men rather than to God Himself (L vii:5-7; cf. v:4; xi:17; xxxii:6; xxxiii:21; xliii:6). A man should follow whichever apostle or minister he likes best, but on his own terms, not theirs, and therefore without too much devotion. Indeed, given that men's appetites change as his experiences change (they undergo "continual mutation" (L vi:6; cf. xv:40)—a neutral-sounding way of putting it, as Hobbes would not want to pass judgment as to whether they become more refined or degraded), every person's own assessment of God's will is apt to fluctuate throughout their life (and everyone is generally satisfied most with the opinions they presently hold). The political reasons why independency is best are the same reasons for everything else he recommends—it is most conducive to civil peace. It discourages large congregations of likeminded men. The caveat that it would be best "if it be without contention" establishes the boundaries around which acceptable independent interpretations of the will of God must be distinguished from the unacceptable. A man should believe what and follow whom he will, but shun all controversy. It is true that Hobbes's explicit approval of independency is dropped in the Latin version of *Leviathan*, after the reestablishment of the episcopacy in England (cf. L OL-xlvii:29). The retraction is of little significance, because the ideas and arguments which lead to his recommending independency remain in place. A man needn't conclude with or repeat an explicit *therefore* when all of his premises point to it.

Official independency is a prudent concession to reality rather than an unrealistic attempt to transform it. The "diversity as there is of private consciences" (L xxix:7) needs management, not abolition. People not only have different experiences, and so the objects of their appetites differ (L vi:4). Men differ with respect to wit, meaning the levels of swiftness, steadfastness, and creativeness in their thinking (L viii:2). Among "the most part of men," Hobbes indicates, "they have the use of reasoning a little way"—and even then, sound reasoning is seldom used "in common life, in which they govern themselves, some better, some worse, according to their differences of experience, quickness in memory, and inclinations to several ends, but specially according to good or evil fortune, and the errors of one another" (L v:18). They also differ in the degree to which their thinking is scientific (L xiii:2)—their ability to discern necessary causes, or their ignorance of them. Hobbes tells us (without demonstration) that reasoning about natural cause and effect leads men to discover a first cause, which may be called God (L xii:6). But the exact nature and will of God is something science cannot discover. From "the different fancies, judgments, and passions of several men," have followed "ceremonies so different that those which are used by one man are for the most part ridiculous to another" (L xii:11; cf. xii:24). Moreover, different people have different opinions

regarding the nature and will of God, even if they happen to be reading the same texts and attending the same schools and services. Everyone has different experiences which they may regard as religiously significant. They are apt to regard God as the immediate cause of this or that event, both in the world around them and in their own minds, out of an ignorance of natural causes interpreted as a lack of natural causes and therefore evidence of supernatural causes. Even supposing "sense supernatural" is really real, "God speaketh not in that manner but to particular persons, and to divers men divers things" (L xxxi:3), and consequently, there is "occasion of feigning of as many gods as there be men that feign them" (L xii:6). Men are all equally free to doubt the claims others make regarding their own religious experiences (L xxvi:40). Everyone is their own judge of other people's interpretations of their preferred texts and personal experiences. The judgments of men can only be indirectly shaped through education. The sovereign who has the opportunity to institute official independency would have to shape men's attitudes and prejudices so that they feel welcome to devise innocuous beliefs of their own and allow them in others, but unlikely to take seriously (and likely to find objectionable) any expression of faith that looks like an assertion of privilege or discriminating judgment—anything that crosses the line from indifferent difference to significant disagreement. Men cannot be left entirely "at liberty to take for God's commandments their own dreams and fancies" since they would then "despise the commandments of the commonwealth," and so "agree[ment] upon what is God's commandment" must be cultivated (L xxvi:41). Men should feel as if they are free to believe what they want, while the interpretation of their dreams and the expression of their fancies is constrained within the boundaries of civilized behavior. Hobbes imagines that a tolerant society may be built, or built again. The ancient Romans "made no scruple of tolerating any religion whatsoever in the city of *Rome* itself, unless it had something in it that could not consist with their civil government" (L xii:21). The Romans even tolerated unbelief, Hobbes is quick to point out. Then every man's religion could be a "novelty" to himself but neither cause of "trouble nor disorder in a state" (L R&C:14).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to address in extensive detail the undercurrent of theological criticism that appears throughout Hobbes's teaching, raising questions regarding the truth of Christianity specifically or of any religion whatsoever. Hobbes knows that the way to reform a religion is to reinstitute it from within, with the consent and for the palpable benefit of the faithful, rather than come as a conqueror, looking to overwhelm it from without. So, what if his treatment of Christianity is intended to undercut faith, if not dismantle it outright? I resist passing judgment on Hobbes himself, as regards the sincerity of his professed faith and his interpretations of Scripture. Although he may be the author of certain arguments, his opinions and intentions are not authoritative. The logical consequences and practical effects of his teaching interest me far more than the private opinions of the man himself. When, however, one sees that Hobbes's arguments point toward a nonsectarian commonwealth with no established church and then considers the realities of attempts to generate such a regime, whether or not one thinks that secularized society is good or bad for religion, one might be tempted to project back onto Hobbes the intention to cause all that has followed, and admit or suspect the sincerity of Hobbes's own faith accordingly. I don't think that this knowledge can be had, nor would having it settle anything. Setting Hobbes's beliefs aside, it is still a fair question in the abstract whether or not the privatization and outward depoliticization

of religion merely tames it or eventually extinguishes it. If the latter, then of course, pious men, either within societies undergoing secularization, or more importantly, in societies not presently secularized, are apt to resist it. The commonwealth with no established religion would not endure if religious men came to feel dominated by officious irreligion. While Hobbes may well think that the various religions of men are all mistaken, religion cannot be abolished among men (L xii:23). He recognizes and respects this better than many radical secularists who have enjoyed the establishment of non-establishment and yet remain unsatisfied.

Hobbes may encourage toleration as indifference at home, but because his reasons for this domestic policy are political, he does not forget the political in international affairs. His call for toleration is not based on high-minded moralistic humanism, which explains why his project isn't quite utopian. He provides men with the theoretical principles of the "everlasting" commonwealth (L xxx:5), but he hardly imagines that perpetual peace is a sure thing. He does not anticipate dependable perfection. Domestic order requires constant vigilance, and external threats cannot be wished away. And so, he sees the need to promote toleration at home, for civil peace, and strength abroad, for civil defense. This raises the question of whether or not, in practice, over time, a people accustomed toleration-as-acceptance, indifferent differences, and forgiveness based on an assumption of blamelessness and impotence will be able to remain resolute in the face of obstinate external enemies. Does toleration necessarily engender soft nihilism? Hobbes admires a man who neither hates nor is hated by anyone and yet retains "a courage for the war" in defense of the commonwealth (L R&C:4). A commonwealth must defend itself. As the sixth through eighth laws recommend, this will require pardoning enemies who repent sincerely and cease their hostilities, when forgiving them does not embolden them. It means exacting only sufficient vengeance to prevent future dangers from enemies and those who would emulate them, foregoing all cruelty. It means not showing or expressing hatred even for those against whom one must defend oneself. When the sovereign determines that lasting peace cannot be had, he must defend his subjects, sometimes employing preemptive measures. That said, if his subjects, given the experiences, appetites, passions and opinions to which they've been educated, determine that their sovereign does not use his might well, especially if his actions seem to endanger them more than they protect them, they may well rebel without right. That said, among foreign powers, those who suppose themselves to be in possession of the one true interpretation of God's will and a right to rule in accordance with it must be taken seriously on their own terms. Even before the reestablishment of the Church of England, Hobbes anticipated that the knots on religious liberty could be retied. And while Hobbes makes religious liberty look plausible and even probable, he worries that the Kingdom of Darkness may return (L xlvii:34).