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**Laurens van Apeldoorn** and **Robin Douglass**, eds. *Hobbes on Politics and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018. 297 pages. \$70.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198803409)

A cursory glance at the secondary literature on Thomas Hobbes reveals something quite curious. Although Hobbes wrote a lot on Bible passages, Bible figures and theological matters, scholars have largely neglected Hobbes's account of religion and its influence on and relation to his politics. In *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, Hobbes devotes 2 of the 4 parts to discussing the Christian commonwealth and the kingdom of darkness. These parts include discussions of angels, demons, biblical hermeneutics, heaven, hell, the Trinity, and more. It is not only in these 'religious' sections that Hobbes discusses religion, however, for he includes chapters on miracles and the kingdom of God, among other religious topics, in his less-obviously religious parts of the book. Nevertheless, *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* includes only one chapter on Hobbes on religion. Many studies on Hobbes focus exclusively on his psychology, ethics, or politics and rarely include a sustained discussion of how these areas relate to religion. John Rawls, in his *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, taught that Hobbes's 'secular political and moral system is fully intelligible ... when theological assumptions are left aside.' Reading the contributions to *Hobbes on Politics and Religion* is a nice reminder of the significance that religion, specifically Christianity, had for Hobbes and every other political thinker in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

True, there has been a lot of scholarly discussion of Hobbes's personal religious convictions, or lack thereof. Was he an atheist or devoted, albeit peculiar, Christian? Readers interested in this timeworn question will be disappointed because this book is about bridging Hobbes's political theory with religion. The editors are clear that the chapters engage Hobbes's 'treatment of religion as a political phenomenon or with the political dimensions of his engagement with Christian doctrines and their history' (Introduction, 4-5). To this end, the book does a wonderful job of treating the various ways in which religion and politics intertwine for Hobbes. However, this goal is a *very broad* goal, one that covers a large variety of topics. Indeed, a reader of the book will soon be perplexed by how each chapter relates to the others. For instance, the last chapter of the book discusses the religious grounding of Hobbes's account of the duty to not act on conscience against the sovereign's commands, while the penultimate chapter compares and contrasts Hobbes's account of religious pluralism with Rawls's. The biggest problem with this book has nothing to do with the content. The standard of scholarship in this publication is superb, with each contributor being both informative and engaging in their exploration of complex themes and concepts. The biggest problem is that it is difficult to bring the chapters into discussion with one another. Here are what I see as the four major themes uniting this book:

### **Theme 1: Public religion and private life**

The first theme engages questions about how Hobbes conceived of the sovereign's religious role. In chapter 1, Johan Olsthoorn argues that Hobbes adopted a 'theocratic turn' in *Leviathan*, defending 'the startling thesis that the sovereign is by divine right the supreme pastor, responsible for the spiritual well-being of her citizens' (24). This startlingly theocratic bent resulting in Hobbes's claim that 'Christian Kings are still the Supreme Pastors' (L, 42, pg. 852) itself results from Hobbes's understanding of political authorization and representation. That the sovereign is rightfully the supreme pastor raises the question of individual religious liberty. How does the sovereign, *qua*

pastor, promote religious uniformity? Can the sovereign even hope to eliminate or at least mitigate religious dissent? Teresa Bejan in her chapter, 'First Impressions: Hobbes on Religion, Education, and the Metaphor of Imprinting,' argues that the sovereign can mitigate religious divisiveness through education, specifically, through the imprinting 'in the public mind through preaching and teaching' (54). On this reading, Hobbes apparently thought that the sovereign could largely mitigate religious dissent. Franck Lessay's in his chapter, 'Tolerance as a Dimension of Hobbes's Absolutism,' argues—in apparent contrast to Bejan—that the sovereign will tolerate religious disagreement in the private sphere: 'the sovereign's authority must go hand in hand with broad tolerance by reason of the specific nature of religion' (78).

Another topic that falls under the 'public religion and private life' theme is how to handle the conflict between what an individual believes and what the sovereign commands. In chapter 15, S.A. Lloyd discusses Hobbes's principle that we have a duty to obey the sovereign's command at the expense of our personal conscience. Lloyd argues that, while this is an important principle for political theory, it is grounded for Hobbes in religious claims that God exists and Scripture contains God's words (271). This is an area in which Hobbes's political theory is grounded in religion, an area that has been largely neglected by philosophers wanting to 'secularize' Hobbes.

## **Theme 2: Determinism and religion**

Hobbes is widely regarded as a determinist about free will of a compatibilist stripe. He claims that human beings act for self-preservation and that free will just is the last movement of the appetite in a series of alternating appetites and aversions. Not surprisingly, this raises interpretive and historical questions. Alexandra Chadwick's chapter, 'Hobbes on the Motives of Martyrs,' discusses the interpretive challenge of reconciling Hobbes's claim that the desire to gain eternal life can motivate actions inimical to bodily well-being with his claim that bodily self-preservation is the primary motive of all. Chadwick's solution is to argue 'those who choose martyrdom are mistaken' about salvation and their own nature (80).

Another topic that falls under the 'determinism and religion' theme is the historical question of whether Hobbes originated his particular flavor of determinism or whether he borrowed from or was inspired by his familiarity with Calvinism. Alan Cromartie's chapter, 'Hobbes, Calvinism, and Determinism,' argues that Hobbes's determinism 'was neither derived from early doctrinal instruction nor from a subsequent study of the [Protestant] writers he referred to' (113). In this area, Hobbes is quite unique and thus all the more interesting.

## **Theme 3: The Bible and Dogma**

Another area of fruitful research regards Hobbes's use of scripture and his relation to Christian teaching. In chapter 7, Alison McQueen highlights 17<sup>th</sup> century thinking about Israel and Moses, and how the story of Moses and the Israelites was used differently by defenders of Monarchical rule and parliamentarians. McQueen argues that Hobbes subverts the parliamentarian appeal to the polity of Israel under Moses to support his position of monarchical rule. In chapter 8, Paul Davis focuses on Hobbes's translation and use of scripture. Specifically, he focuses on Hobbes's tendency to take liberties to reconcile the Bible to his political philosophy, i.e., translate biblical passages in a way that is consonant with his personal views. In chapter 10, Glen Newey argues, in apparent contrast to Davis, that Hobbes's marshalling of scriptural support for his deflationary account of the Trinity was likely because he thought he was right.

#### **Theme 4: Reception**

The final discernible theme regards Hobbes's reception. Chapters 11 through 14 discuss Hobbes's influence on his contemporaries and historical development. In chapter 11, Jon Parkin discusses how 'Hobbes's work clearly did allow a variety of readers to engage with recognizably Hobbesian principles and to assimilate them in a variety of different denominational settings' (199). This, Parkin suggests, reveals that Hobbes saw the future of religion to be one in which 'various forms of Christianity could be remodeled along Hobbesian lines' (199-200). In chapter 12, Elad Carmel picks up on this idea of Parkin, highlighting that Hobbes was a 'resource and ally' of the deists against the "priestcraft" (217). In chapter 13, Jeffrey Collins discusses how Hobbes came to be viewed as a forerunner in the process whereby 'European politics freed itself of the 'murderous tendencies' of 'religion' (238). In chapter 14, Daniel Eggers compares and contrasts Hobbes (and Hobbesian-inspired thinkers) with Rawls on moral consensus in the face of religious diversity.

These four themes do not neatly capture all the chapters, and there is difficulty in trying to fit the chapters together under these themes. As noted already, this is the biggest hurdle that confronts the reader—navigating the chapters in relation to one another. This difficulty is to be expected given the broad topic of the book. Regardless, this collection is a splendid example of high scholarly standards and is a must read for Hobbes scholars.

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