Royalist Antagonism and the Writings of Thomas Hobbes, 1640-1651
Questions have long surrounded Thomas Hobbes’s relationship with the royalists of the English Revolution. In 1640, after his first political work, *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes fled for France because he feared that his absolutism would make him a target for dangerous parliamentarian tactics.\(^1\) In France, he worked with the exiled royalists, communicated with friends who were royalists, and debated with royalist thinkers. His early works, then, were congenial enough to the royalist cause that Hobbes was not ostracized from the group. After the publication of *Leviathan* in 1651, however, his place in the eyes of royalists was reversed entirely. It was popular for supporters of the crown to burn copies of *Leviathan* in public after the restoration of 1660,\(^2\) and it is likely that Hobbes himself was not harmed only because of his international stardom.

When we consider broad questions about Hobbes’s relationship to the royalists, other issues arise about Hobbes’s intellectual relationship with the king’s followers. If Hobbes was primarily talking to royalists and reading royalist works between *The Elements of Law* and *Leviathan*, it seems likely that royalists would have had some impact on the changes in his thought. How they influenced his project as it changed from 1640 to 1651, particularly, is a question that I would like to discuss in this paper. This question appears to be of great significance: if Hobbes was lauded by royalists, went through a period where he mostly communicated with them, and then was brought to believe a set of things they did not like, it seems that they might have influenced Hobbes by driving him away from their cause.

What follows will primarily argue that this intuition is true. That is, major royalist influences consistently turned Hobbes away from the royalist cause, specifically in the transition

\(^2\) Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*. 2
from *De Cive* to *Leviathan*. The influence is clear in three cases we will observe, concerning Hobbes’s thoughts on free will, episcopacy, and patriarchalism. These issues are important ones, and ones which had great significance for the royalists of the period.

In order to explore fully how the royalists influenced Hobbes, it is perhaps prudent to paint a picture of who the royalists were and what kinds of things they believed, placing a particular focus on the sorts of royalist positions to which Hobbes was exposed. As the name of the group would suggest, they were supporters of the monarchy and Charles I. Given this, most of them were also supporters of the Church of England, as it was the official state religion of which Charles was head. Royalists did not have homogenous views about religion, however. This paper will primarily consider two widely held royalist views on religion. The first is the importance of divine right episcopacy—the idea that bishops “possess certain spiritual powers which they derive from God alone and not from the sovereign.”

The second is the idea that free will existed, in some way, in humans. Royalist views also came together, to some extent, on ideas about sovereignty. Since royalists supported monarchy, they were normally not congenial to the idea of government by consent. There were royalist contractarians (such as Dudley Digges), but they generally agreed that God provided the ultimate justification for coercive law. After all, they could not forbid citizens to resist the king while at the same time admitting that they had the right to change their government if they so desired. Divine rights theories were also disseminated, with the most famous iterations coming from Robert Filmer’s work.

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3 Charles’s relationship with Catholics is complicated, and I will not go into detail here. He was somewhat sympathetic to Catholics (or at least did not dislike them as much as parliamentarians), but there are confusing questions about their allegiance to him.


Once again, these are broad brushstrokes, and there were certainly figures considered “royalists” who did not subscribe to these positions.⁶ It is accurate, however, to say that many royalists held the views described above, and these particular views will be important in the present study. In this essay, we will look at three cases where royalists, through their intellectual influence, moved Hobbes away from positions that were affirmed by mainstream royalists and the royalist elite. In this way, we will shed some light on changes in his thought and important motivations that may have meaningful implications in his project.

Hobbes’s Political Writings

The timing of Hobbes’s publications, while slightly complicated, is essential to our study since we are looking to examine changes in his thought. His first statement of political thought was The Elements of Law, produced around 1640. Not published in any significant sense, it was simply circulated to Hobbes’s friends and fellow thinkers.⁷ It was a sort of English outline of the main points of his later work De Cive, although the content was certainly not the same: the arguments of De Cive were significantly expanded.

The work we now refer to as De Cive was published twice by Hobbes—a first edition was published in 1642, and the second in 1647.⁸ The first edition had the full title of Elementorum Philosophiae Sectio Tertia de Cive. It has this title because it was the third part of a series about the “Elements of Philosophy,” of which the first two were De Corpore (a work of

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⁶ For example, Charles I himself did not end up supporting divine right episcopacy.
⁷ This idea is disputed by Parkin (see Jon Parkin, Taming the Leviathan, ed. Quentin Skinner and James Tully, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). 20). Even if Parkin is right, however, that The Elements of Law did not just go to Hobbes’s close friends, the circulation was not public and was quite limited compared to, for example, that of Leviathan.
⁸ There was an English translation of De Cive published in 1651, but it will not be useful for the purposes of this study. There are questions about exactly who translated it—specifically, about whether the translator was Hobbes himself. If the translator was not Hobbes, then the book would not be of interest to us because any changes in the thought would be due to someone else’s hand rather than Hobbes’s. I plan to leave these questions aside by focusing on the more definitive statement of Hobbes’s political thought that was also published in 1651—Leviathan. Even if Hobbes translated the English edition of De Cive himself, there is no reason to believe that it was equally or more representative of his views than Leviathan in 1651.
natural philosophy) and *De Homine* (a work about humanity and human nature more generally). The second edition, and those published thereafter, were called *Elementa Philosophica de Cive*, suggesting a sort of independence for the work and a value of it in its own right. As the titles might suggest, both works were published in Latin. For this reason, they were especially important to Hobbes’s reception on the continent since many of his readers there could not access his English works. The distinction between the two editions is subtle but important: Hobbes added annotations to the second edition to reply to criticisms or perceived weaknesses in his theory. Beyond the addition of these annotations, it appears that the arguments of the two editions are similar if not identical.

*Leviathan* presents by far the most drastic changes in the trajectory of Hobbes’s political thought. Compared to the changes from *The Elements of Law* to the second edition of *De Cive*, which tended to be changes of revision and clarification, there were many substantive changes in *Leviathan*. These alterations included fundamental changes to Hobbes’s stated position on free will and religion, as well as slight but significant changes to the content and polemics of his theory of natural rights, for example.

John Bramhall and Free Will

The transformation of Hobbes’s position on free will from *The Elements of Law* to *Leviathan* gives an excellent example of how royalists drove Hobbes away from their cause. Much of the change in Hobbes’s thought was due to his debate with John Bramhall, an Anglican bishop, who participated in a debate with Hobbes between the publication of *De Cive* and that of *Leviathan*. This encounter did much to move Hobbes from the somewhat obscure and mild positions in *The Elements of Law* to the full-on determinism he would embrace in *Leviathan*. To
understand Bramhall’s effect on the changes, let us begin by looking at Hobbes’s discussions of liberty in his three political works.

In *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes’s discussion of liberty was somewhat confusing but not clearly controversial. It was not as controversial, at least, as the strongly deterministic position that he would later take. In *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes writes:

“VOLUNTARY actions and omissions are such as have beginning in the will; all other are INVOLUNTARY or MIXED. Voluntary such as a man doth upon appetite or fear; involuntary such as he doth by necessity of nature, as when he is pushed, or falleth, and thereby doth good or hurt to another; mixed, such as participate of both; as when a man is carried to prison he is pulled on against his will, and yet goeth upright voluntary, for fear of being trailed along the ground: insomuch that in going to prison, going is voluntary. To the prison, involuntary.”

Here, Hobbes has given an idea of what “voluntary” action is, in his view. There are suggestions of determinism, as Hobbes describes “voluntary” actions as ones that are based on “appetite and fear,” which does not seem to leave much room for ideas such as reflection or choice. Nevertheless, Hobbes does not state a deterministic position directly, and the fact that he mentions both voluntary and involuntary actions could be read to leave room for some choice or reflection after all. In the same chapter, he writes further:

“Appetite, fear, hope, and the rest of the passions are not called voluntary; for they proceed not from, but are the will; and the will is not voluntary. For a man can no more say he will will, than he will will will, and so make an infinite repetition of the word will; which is absurd, and insignificant.”

This passage is complicated. Hobbes said, previously, that the property of being “voluntary” depends on whether something begins in the will. Then he says “the will is not voluntary,” which seems to indicate that he is supporting the idea of necessity, but actually just means (as is clear upon review) that the will does not have its origins in the will. As he notes, that would indeed be

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10 Ibid. 48
incoherent. Although he says that the passions “are the will,” he does not say that these are the only things that are the will. There is therefore no clear statement of determinism. In fact, by referring to things that come from the will as “voluntary,” he seems to be implying that we do have choice over them.

Hobbes carries on with similar views in De Cive, and in fact even says less about the freedom of the will than he did in The Elements of Law. He writes the following:

“Liberty (to define it) is simply the absence of obstacles motion; as water contained in a vessel is not free, because the vessel is an obstacle to its flowing away, and it is freed by breaking the vessel.”

This quote introduces Hobbes’s famous idea of freedom as the absence of restrictions to motion, but it still says nothing about an idea of determinism. Hobbes goes on to write that “all slaves and subjects are free who are not in bonds or in prison.” These ideas raise more questions about exactly how valuable of a thing “freedom” as Hobbes conceives of it might be, but there is no idea that actions are pre-determined wrapped up in this text. Leviathan, on the other hand, contains this famous passage:

“Liberty and necessity are consistent… in the actions which men voluntarily do, which, because they proceed their will, proceed from liberty; and yet, because every act of man's will and every desire and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continual chain (whose first link is in the hand of God, the first of all causes), proceed from necessity.”

There was no question about Hobbes’s view after this: he was a determinist. A man was “free” if his range of motion was not restricted—if he was not tied down or physically

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12 Ibid. 111
constrained—but his actions were “determined” in every reasonable sense of the word.

Everything proceeded from a cause, and thus happened of necessity.

Royalist thinkers were, in general, not congenial to the position in *Leviathan*. Edward Hyde, the noted royalist and historian, wrote that “Mr. Hobbes is so great an enemy to freedom, that he will not allow man that which God hath given him, the Freedom of his Will.”⁴ Hyde went on to say that Hobbes’s thoughts about free will showed that “he thinks it to be more glory, to discover that to be right reason, which all other men find to be destructive to it, and that the sudden and rough bustling in of a new truth, will raise his fame, as it hath done that of many other Heretics before.”⁵ Hobbes’s position in *Leviathan* had clearly offended royalists more than the obscure arguments of *The Elements of Law*.

This change was caused in no small part by the Anglican clergyman John Bramhall. Bramhall, a respected and well-known supporter of the king, crossed Hobbes’s path in Paris during 1645. Hailing from Yorkshire and educated at Cambridge, he was Wentworth’s chaplain in Ireland, and was later bishop of Derry.⁶ He had become an adviser to Newcastle, Hobbes’s one-time employer, and he supported royalist theory through his writing.⁷ His publications included, for instance, an attack on Henry Parker’s *Observations*, called *The Serpent-Salve*. Like many other royalists, Bramhall had fled to France during the throes of the war in England. He met Hobbes in Paris sometime during 1645 at Newcastle’s house there.⁸ At the request of Newcastle, Hobbes and Bramhall held a debate in his house on the matter of human psychology and free will, evidently so that “Newcastle and his brother… [could] bring together two men

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⁵Ibid., 97
⁶Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, 37
⁷Ibid., 37
⁸Ibid., 38
with very contrasting views on the same subject.”19 We have seen Hobbes’s views on
determination, and Bramhall was a staunch defender of the idea that the will was not wholly
determined. The debate then, was no doubt quite lively.

Their verbal exchange resulted in both Hobbes and Bramhall drafting papers to explain
their positions about the freedom (or unfreedom) of the will. Newcastle apparently asked
Bramhall to write such a paper, and Bramhall agreed on the condition that Hobbes write a similar
paper.20 Hobbes’s original reaction to Bramhall, originally written in 1646, was titled Of Liberty
and Necessity, and it was published in 1654 without Hobbes’s permission (much to his
frustration). The original documents that Bramhall sent to Hobbes, on the other hand, have been
lost. Hobbes’s Of Liberty and Necessity, however, contains a point-by-point refutation of the
paper that Bramhall originally wrote, and thus, most of Bramhall’s arguments can be extracted
from Hobbes’s response.

Additionally, the publication of Hobbes’s Of Liberty and Necessity caused Bramhall to
dash off his Defence of True Liberty in 1655. This work was a republication of Hobbes’s
manuscript with Bramhall’s own responses interspersed. An additional work of Bramhall’s from
1658—“The Catching of Leviathan,” an appendix to his Castigations of Mr. Hobbes—fills out
many of the arguments we can assume he made in 1646 at Newcastle’s house.

With these works, then, we can gain a full view of Bramhall’s positions in the extended
argument with Hobbes, of Hobbes’s responses to Bramhall, and thus of the influence that
Bramhall had on Hobbes before he started writing Leviathan. In the first document he sent

19 Ibid., 39. Also, see The Hunting of Leviathan (Samuel Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1969).) for details of the debate between Hobbes and Bramhall, and Hobbes and His Critics (John
Bowle, Hobbes and His Critics (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1969).) about the details of the following
written bickering.
20 Parkin, Taming the Leviathan., 39
Hobbes, Bramhall argued with “both scripture and reason.” He began with a somewhat predictable claim:

“Either I am free to write this discourse for liberty against necessity, or I am not free. If I be free, then I have obtained the cause, and ought not to suffer for the truth. If I be not free, yet I ought not to be blamed, since I do it not out of any voluntary election, but out of inevitable necessity.”\(^{21}\)

With this passage, Bramhall foreshadows many of the arguments he will later make. The assertion takes direct aim at Hobbes’s “compatibilist” position that actions could be both free and determined.\(^{22}\) Hobbes disputes Bramhall’s attack by asserting that “It is enough to his freedom of writing that he had not written it unless he would himself,” highlighting his position that people are free as long as their actions are not physically constrained. Hobbes goes on to defend his position more fully:

“It may be his Lordship thinks it is all one to say, ‘I was free to write it’ and, ‘It was not necessary I should write it.’ But I think otherwise. For he is free to do a thing, that may do it if he have the will to do it, and may forbear if he have the will to forbear. And yet if there be a necessity that he shall have the will to do it, the action is necessarily to follow; and if there be a necessity that he have the will to forbear, the forbearing also will be necessary.”\(^{23}\)

The will, then, according to Hobbes, is the last desire or urge that overcomes all the others, and causes a person to act. He is saying that as long as a person can allow his will to determine his actions, he is free. This is the case even if the will is determined by necessity—and in fact it must be, says Hobbes. This is because a person cannot “will that he will” something: it seems that this would produce some kind of infinite regress, as he indicates. What was unclear in *The Elements of Law* Hobbes makes plain in this text.

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\(^{22}\) Chappell discusses compatibilism in Ibid. xi

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 16
Bramhall moves, then, to make scriptural arguments about free will. One of the most interesting, and one to which Hobbes responds at length, concerns God’s direct statements in the bible:

“If there be no true liberty… what are all those interrogations… we find so frequently in holy Scriptures… but feigned and hypocritical exaggerations? ‘Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded that thou shouldst not eat?’ And he said to Eve, ‘Why hast thou done this?’ And to Cain, ‘Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance cast down?’ And ‘Why will ye die, O house of Israel?’ Does God command him openly not to eat, and yet secretly by himself or by the second causes necessitate him to eat?”

In essence, Bramhall is saying that if all actions are determined, it makes little sense that the bible contains God’s castigations, or his questions about why anyone has done anything. This is especially the case if actions are either determined by God, or known by God in advance, as Hobbes will soon suggest. He would seem to be saying that God asks people questions for rhetorical purposes, while really knowing that they were determined to do what they did. This question was placed close to the more typical observation about God’s will as it relates to necessity: if all actions are determined, then “Adam before his fall had no true liberty,” which is a difficult and uncommon theological position to take. The results of this position, although Bramhall does not spell them out, could include the conclusion that God was responsible for original sin, or that original sin was not a sin at all.

Hobbes first responds to the argument about the fall of Adam by clarifying his view about universal causality and necessity.

“That which I say necessitates and determines every action… is the sum of all those things which, being now existent, conduce and concur to the production of that action hereafter, whereof if any one thing now were wanting, the effect could not be produced. This concourse of causes, whereof every one is determined to be such as it is by a like concourse of former causes, may well be called (in respect they were all set and ordered by the eternal cause of all things, God Almighty) the decree of God…. Nor does the

24 Ibid., 3
25 Ibid., 20.
26 Ibid., 3
concourse of all causes make one simple chain or concatenation, but an innumerable number of chains joined together, not in all parts, but in the first link God Almighty.”

Hobbes is here saying that he believes necessity comes from a chain of causes, and that God is the ultimate cause of all things, something like a “first mover.” God, then, might not will every single sequence in the chain to occur, but He does will the causes of them all. In this sense, the will of God determines all actions, even if it does not determine every single action directly. This is significant to Hobbes’s view because, were he not to agree to this, he could deal with the problem of Adam’s liberty by saying that God might not have been the cause of Adam’s malefaction.

Instead, Hobbes replies to Bramhall’s assertion about Adam by writing, “I make not only the effect but also the election of that particular effect to be necessary.” Following this statement, Hobbes argues that Adam did have “true liberty,” in the sense that he actually did make a choice (even though what choice he made was determined). Additionally, he argues that “the last dictate of the judgment, concerning the good or bad that may follow on any action, is not properly the whole cause, but the last part of it,” indicating that the bearer of responsibility for Adam’s acts is Adam, and not God. He then goes on to tackle the issue of how God, with his knowledge or cause of men’s actions, can command one thing while knowing that people will do another, or asking them why they performed various transgressions. Hobbes answers this charge mainly by suggesting that the will of God is not to be questioned, and that the status of God’s action is unfit “to be measured by human wisdom.” It is, in Hobbes’s view, inappropriate for mortals to ask why God has done something or asked someone something, especially if the aim of men is to ask if God has done the right thing.

27 Ibid., 20
28 Ibid., 21
29 Ibid., 20
30 Ibid., 22
There are more questions, more responses, and more polemical jabs in the debate between Hobbes and Bramhall. With only our brief view, however, we can see quite clearly how the argument had a decisive impact on the transition of Hobbes’s thought from *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive* to *Leviathan*. Let us have a thorough view of the material from *Leviathan* on free will.

“*Liberty* and *necessity* are consistent; as in the water that hath not only *liberty*, but a *necessity* of descending by the channel; so, likewise in the actions which men voluntarily do, which, because they proceed their will, proceed from *liberty*; and yet, because every act of mans will, and every desire, and inclination proceedeth from some cause, and that from another cause, in a continual chaine, (whose first link is in the hand of God, the first of all causes), they proceed from *necessity*…. And therefore God, that seeth and disposeth all things, seeth also that the *liberty* of man in doing what he will, is accompanied with the *necessity* of doing that which God will, & no more, nor lesse. For though men may do many things, which God does not command, nor is therefore author of them; yet they can have no passion, nor appetite to anything, of which appetite God's will is not the cause.”

The first idea in this paragraph, that “liberty and necessity are consistent,” and that *all* causes of the will are determined, was not stated plainly in any of Hobbes’s previous works. A clear and bold statement of this consistency, I believe, came out because of the debate that he had with Bramhall and the way that it caused him to develop his position. We need only remember Hobbes’s strong statement of the consistency of liberty and necessity in the first passages of his reply to Bramhall in 1645, as discussed above.

Additionally, we have the idea expressed that “every desire, and inclination proceedeth… in a continual chaine (whose first link is in the hand of God, the first of all causes).” This passage, including the “chain” metaphor, is also copied very closely from his dialogue with Bramhall, down to the detail that God controls the “first link.” Also relevant is that Hobbes describes the will of God as removed from the last details of the chain. In his debates with Bramhall, he had said that there were “innumerable chains,” all related to the first chain, which

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31 Tuck, ed., *Leviathan*, 146-147
God controlled, and in this passage, he writes that men do “many things which God does not command,” but that they can have “no passion, nor appetite to anything, of which appetite God’s will is not the cause.” These qualifications, and the separation of God’s immediate will from the final actions of humans, are very similar in the two works and demonstrate that the written debate with Bramhall must have been in Hobbes’s mind when he wrote Chapter 21 of *Leviathan*.

Bramhall, in challenging Hobbes’s views on free will and necessity, caused him to adopt a fuller and more coherent statement of the position he held on the matter. When Hobbes wrote *Leviathan*, his discussion of the topic seems to have been heavily influenced by the dialogue with Bramhall. As we have seen, this strand of thought displeased many royalists greatly; Bramhall’s influence thus presents an example of a royalist turning Hobbes away from widely held royalist views on a most significant matter.

The Anglican Clergy and Episcopacy

Our second example deals with episcopacy, the ruling right of bishops in church matters. This idea was a major topic in the religious discourse of the English Revolution, and Hobbes weighs in on the matter throughout his works. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes the following of church officials:

“All Pastors, except the Supreme, execute their charges in the Right, that is, by the Authority of the Civill Soveraign, that is, *Iure Civili*. But the King, and every other Soveraign, executeth his Office of Supreme Pastor by immediate Authority from God, that is to say, *in God's Right*, or *Iure Divino*.”

Hobbes was saying that religious officials operated with “civil right,” and that only the sovereign had power to govern in ecclesiastical matters by “divine right.” All power that was held by religious officials, then, was delegated to them by the civil sovereign. Hobbes went on to say that the sovereign could baptize, preach, and administer communion—essentially, that there was no

32 Ibid. 374
need at all for ecclesiastical officials unless the sovereign chose to have them.\textsuperscript{33} This claim cut to the heart of widely held royalist doctrines about episcopacy. Although, again, there was dispute about the matter, many royalists—and specifically those surrounding Hobbes—affirmed the idea that “clerics possess some purely spiritual powers which they derive directly from God,” even if “these powers in no way conflict with the monarch’s temporal sovereignty or with his supremacy over the church.”\textsuperscript{34} Many royalists, then, affirmed precisely the \textit{iure Divino} that Hobbes denied in \textit{Leviathan}.

This was not always the case for his earlier works, however. Although Hobbes is somewhat obscure on the matter in \textit{The Elements of Law}, he issues a very different sort of message in the first Latin edition of \textit{De Cive}:

\begin{quote}
“[T]o decide questions of faith, i.e. questions \textit{about God}, which are beyond human understanding, one needs God’s blessing (so that we may not err, at least on essential questions) and this comes from \textsc{christ} himself by \textit{laying on of hands}…. It would go against equity if we were left alone to err by ourselves on essential matters. Our Saviour promised this Infallibility (in matters essential to salvation) to the \textit{Apostles} until the day of judgment, i.e. to the \textit{Apostles} and to the \textit{Pastors} who were to be consecrated by the \textit{Apostles} in succession by the \textit{laying on of hands}. As a Christian, therefore, the holder of sovereign power in the commonwealth is obliged to interpret holy scripture, when it is a question about the \textit{mysteries of faith}, by means of duly ordained \textit{Ecclesiastics}.”\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Although Hobbes does not use the words “\textit{iure divino}” in this passage, it seems very easy to interpret the “laying of hands” “from Christ himself” as a statement of divine authority. At least, it is clear that Hobbes is not reducing the clergy to civil authorities as he would in \textit{Leviathan}.

The “Infallibility” of those who were “consecrated by the Apostles” expressed in \textit{De Cive} is a far cry from \textit{Leviathan}’s bishops who were reduced to “Civill ministers.”\textsuperscript{36} As Johann Sommerville writes, the work in \textit{De Cive} “looks very much like standard Anglican doctrine,” and “is

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33 Ibid. 374  \\
34 Sommerville, \textit{Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context}, Sommerville  \\
35 Tuck and Silverthorne, eds., \textit{On the Citizen}., 233  \\
36 Tuck, ed., \textit{Leviathan}. 374
\end{flushright}
strikingly different, at least in appearance, from what Hobbes says in *Leviathan.*"  
37 Although small changes start to creep in during the second edition of *De Cive,* they are largely inconclusive and do not articulate the doctrine that Hobbes puts forth in *Leviathan.*  
38 We must ask, then, what caused the serious change from the position in Hobbes’s earlier publications to that which he would espouse in 1651.

The answer can be found in Hobbes’s general anger with members of the Anglican clergy and his perception of their misdeeds. As early as 1641, it is clear that Hobbes was not happy with the Anglican bishops, even if he had not worked out his theoretical attack on episcopacy. In a letter to William Cavendish, third Earl of Devonshire, he writes, “I haue seen the Nottinghamshire petition against BBs. In it there are reckoned vp abundance of abuses committed by Ecclesiasticall persons and their Officers, w[ich] can neyther be denyed nor excused. But that they proceed from ye Episcopacy it selfe, i{s} not so euidently proued.”  
39 The “Nottinghamshire petition against BBs” Hobbes refers to was “a pamphlet consisting mainly of Puritan objections to Laudian policies in the church,”  
40 and it apparently helped Hobbes focus his criticism of the “abuses” that could “neither be denied nor excused.” However, as we can see, Hobbes did not think “Episcopacy itself” caused the problems. Nevertheless, he goes on to say that he approves of plans to replace bishops with lay commissioners because of the “covetousnesse and supercilious beauior” of the people in ecclesiastical positions.  
41 These two positions, that episcopacy itself may not be the problem—but that the bishops have behaved so

37 Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context,* 120
38 Parkin discusses this matter (Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan,* 58–59), but I am not totally convinced that the text he discusses is conclusive at all. From his account, it appears that some clerics were uneasy with the passage, but they seemed to think that they could have been misinterpreting it. In any case, it seemed not worthwhile to pursue the matter at length due to my space constraints in this essay.
40 Ibid. 121 (Footnote 1)
41 Ibid. 120
badly that they should be replaced—do not tell us whether he thought episcopacy was a bad idea on general principle, or whether he was opposing it because it produced bad church governance in England in the 17th century.

As time went along, Hobbes’s anger about the bishops, and his position on episcopacy, became clearer in his correspondence. He conducted an apparently lengthy and significant correspondence on the matter with Robert Payne, a friend and one-time chaplain to the Earl of Newcastle, Hobbes’s former employer. During the course of the correspondence, Payne tried to convince Hobbes to change his views on episcopacy before the publication of Leviathan. In a letter sent to Hobbes in 1649, Payne sheds some light on perhaps the ultimate motivation of Hobbes’s position on the subject:

“Yet somewhat I conceive might be sayd, if not to justifiye at least to excuse those actions of our Bishops which in your opinion seem to deserve blame. I confesse for those whose designe it was to throw down therby to possessse themselves of their revenues and power in the state, it was necessary and not hard to represent all their actions in the foulest shape; therby to make their persons and office odious to the people whose hands they wer to use in that godly worke. But one who hath no such designe nor any quarrell to that whole tribe upon provocation from some one or tow of them, might allow them a fayrer interpretation.”

Payne here tries to talk Hobbes out of letting his “blame” of some Anglican bishops control his perception of the issue completely. Additionally, he mentions that a person who does not have “provocation from some one or two of them” might be fairer: this indicates that a particular bishop or two had maddened Hobbes. Jon Parkin suggests that “There are a number of candidates for Hobbes’s antagonists,” and that “Cosin and Bramhall are high up the list.” It is not really important who they were, however; what is important to note is that Payne places this material in the beginning of the letter, before he discusses any substantive theory with Hobbes.

42 Collins, "Christian Ecclesiology and the Composition of Leviathan: A Newly Discovered Letter to Thomas Hobbes.", 217
43 Ibid., 230
44 Parkin, Taming the Leviathan. 69
This seems to indicate that the personal anger Hobbes felt about the Anglican clergy was driving his position on the issue more than any of the substantive theory involved. His clashes with the Anglican bishops themselves, then, would drive him away from the mainstream royalist position that he had adopted previously. This example fits in well with my assertion that the royalists themselves turned Hobbes away from the royalist cause.

It has been argued that Hobbes’s repudiation of episcopal power was instead simply a logical extension of his Erastian thought—his more general views that the state is supreme in matters of religion. These views about state supremacy over the church colored many of his religious statements in *Leviathan*, and thus could have caused the development of the idea that the bishops must be subordinate to the sovereign. This may be the case. There are two problems with this view, however, that need to be discussed. First, much of Hobbes’s Erastian thought had already been developed in *De Cive*, and it peacefully coexisted with his apparent support of *iure divino* episcopacy in that work. Given that he could hold the two positions at once, it seems unnecessary that he would have shifted his position on episcopacy because of his Erastian views. Second, the dominant royalist position at the time was one of at least some agreement with Erastian thinking as well as *iure divino* episcopacy, demonstrating that it was not unacceptable to hold the two positions. It seems, then, that the best explanation we have for Hobbes’s shift on this matter was his anger with the Anglican royalist elite.

Robert Filmer and Patriarchalism

Views about “patrimonial” rule had been present in Hobbes’s writing since *The Elements of Law*. Hobbes famously declared in *The Elements* that the mother, and not the father, has “the title to dominion over a child,” because dominion “proceedeth not from the generation, but from

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46 Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England, 1603-1640*, 209. Sommerville here discusses the dominant royalist view on the matter, as well as some responses to possible contradictions in the view.
the preservation” of offspring, and it is usually first within the mother’s power to “save or destroy” a child.\textsuperscript{47} Much has been made of Hobbes’s grant to women of this important right, and the subject is certainly interesting. As important as these views might be, however, we will be more concerned with the means by which the power over the child is acquired, no matter who is doing the acquiring.

Those means, notably, do not involve consent. As mentioned above, the mother acquires her dominion because she preserves the child, and the dominion that comes from the care of the child after its birth is absolute. Hobbes writes, “Children therefore, whether they be brought up and preserved by the father, or by the mother, or by whomsoever, are in most absolute subjection to him or her, that so bringeth up, or preserveth them.”

Hobbes extends this idea to “Patrimonial Kingdoms:”

“And the whole consisting of the father or mother, or both, and of the children, and of the servants, is called a FAMILY; wherein the father or master of the family is sovereign of the same; and the rest (both children and servants equally) subjects. The same family if it grow by multiplication of children, either by generation or adoption; or of servants, either by generation, conquest, or voluntary submission, to be so great and numerous, as in probability it may protect itself, then is that family called a PATRIMONIAL KINGDOM, or monarchy by acquisition; wherein the sovereignty is in one man, as it is in a monarch made by political institution. So that whatsoever rights be in the one, the same also be in the other.”

The justification of a patrimonial kingdom is an application of the process by which a parent comes to have dominion over a child. As with the process of a parent gaining dominion over a child, the formation of a patrimonial kingdom does not involve consent. Hobbes contrasts the process with sovereignty that comes about by “institution,” and emphasizes that the two methods of gaining sovereignty are completely different.

Hobbes holds to this line of argument in \textit{De Cive}, almost verbatim. There is one change in this part of his theory, however: Hobbes associates paternal authority with the authority of a

\textsuperscript{47} Toennies, ed., \textit{The Elements of Law, Natural & Politic}. 103
conqueror. He writes, “by right of nature the victor is Master of the conquered; therefore by right of nature Dominion over an infant belongs first to the one who first has him in their power.”48 This association did not take place in The Elements of Law; although Hobbes there spoke of authority by conquering and patrimonial authority, he did not link the two in any reasonably close way.

As now seems characteristic, Hobbes’s view shifted dramatically with the authorship of Leviathan. The account of parental authority and patrimonial kingship had changed completely:

“The right of dominion by generation is that which the parent hath over his children; and is called PATERNALL. And is not so derived from the generation, as if therefore the parent had dominion over his child because he begat him, but from the child's consent, either express or by other sufficient arguments declared.”49

This is clearly a change from The Elements of Law and De Cive: parents now receive dominion over their children because of consent. The implication seems clear, also, for patrimonial kingdoms: if the dominion of the parent is gained by consent, so too with the patrimonial sovereign. Hobbes goes on to make a qualification about patrimonial authority:

“Private bodies regular and lawful are those that are constituted without letters, or other written authority, saving the laws common to all other subjects…. such as are all families, in which the father or master ordereth the whole family. For he obligeth his children, and servants, as far as the law permitteth, though not further, because none of them are bound to obedience in those actions which the law hath forbidden to be done…. during the time they are under domestic government, they are subject to their fathers and masters, as to their immediate sovereigns. For the father and master being before the institution of Commonwealth absolute sovereigns in their own families, they lose afterward no more of their authority than the law of the Commonwealth taketh from them.”

He is saying, then, that fathers can “govern” in some sense, as long as they gain their powers before a commonwealth is formed, and as long as the commonwealth does not take their powers away from them. The sense in which Leviathan’s fathers have control over their families bears

48 Tuck and Silverthorne, eds., On the Citizen.. 108
49 Tuck, ed., Leviathan. 139
no resemblance to the fatherly kingship in *De Cive* and *The Elements of Law*, where he says of government by consent and patrimonial kingdoms, that “whatsoever rights be in the one, the same also be in the other.” Hobbes has come, then, to recognize the consent-free “patrimonial kingdom” as something that is no kingdom at all.

In *Leviathan*, his treatment of authority by conquest is again linked to paternal authority. Hobbes writes, “It is not therefore the Victory, that giveth the right of Dominion over the Vanquished, but his own Covenant.”\(^50\) His view on conquest had shifted in the same way that his view on paternal authority had. Now both resulted from the covenant of the subject, motivated by his fear.

This change, from natural authority to consent, seems somewhat insignificant on first view. It could be explained simply as a fine-tuning of Hobbes’s theory to reflect the ultimate importance of consent in political legitimacy. But dismissing the importance of the changed idea misses the rise of patriarchalism between the second edition of *De Cive* and the publication of *Leviathan*. Patriarchalism was a political theory that argued broadly that legitimacy in governing passed from Adam, “the father of all flesh,”\(^51\) to his “descendants,” who were modern sovereigns. People had a duty to obey the king because he was, in essence, a “father,” and thus they should honor him following God’s commandment to do so. On this view, political authority was not derived from consent, but from the pattern of descent explained by God. The English Revolution’s most powerful proponent of patriarchalism, Robert Filmer, explained his position in the later-published *Patriarcha*:

> “And indeed not only Adam, but the succeeding patriarchs had, by right of fatherhood, royal authority over their children…. I see not then how the children of Adam, or of any man else, can be free from subjection to their parents. And this subjection of children

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\(^{50}\) Ibid. 141

being the fountain of all regal authority, by the ordination of God himself; it follows that
civil power not only in general is by divine institution, but even the assignment of it
specifically to the eldest parents, which quite takes away that new and common
distinction which refers only power universal and absolute to God, but power respective
in regard of the special form of government to the choice of the people.”52

There are disputes about whether Patriarcha had been circulated before its publication in
1680—it is possible that Hobbes and others had read some form of Patriarcha before Leviathan
was published. Even if this was not the case, however, Filmer’s position had been clear in his
earlier works, such as The Anarchy of Mixed and Limited Monarchy, which was published in
1648. In it, he writes, for example,

“All God ordained Adam to rule over his wife… Here we have the original grant of
government, and the fountain of all power, placed in the father of all mankind.
Accordingly we find the law for obedience to government given in the terms of ‘honour
thy father.’”53

Filmer did not originate patriarchalism, nor was he the only proponent of it during the
Revolution, but he gave it one of its strongest statements during the Revolutionary years.
Although patriarchal theorists had been somewhat active in the first twenty years of the 17th
century, Filmer’s tracts were the first serious attempt to invoke patriarchal authority since then.54
They were also generally the most lasting statement of patriarchalism, prompting the authorship
of Locke’s Two Treatises of Government much later in the century.55 An entire literature of
patriarchalist (or at least partly patriarchalist) theories developed from 1640 to 1649, attempting
to ground kingly authority in the line of descent from Adam, the biblical obligation to “honor thy
father;” or other, similar values.56

52 Ibid. 6-7
53 Ibid. 138
54 Ibid. xvi-xvii
55 Peter Laslett discusses this idea extensively in his introduction to Peter Laslett, ed., John Locke: Two Treatises of
56 See, for example, Robert Grosse, Royaltie and Loyalite, 36.
Again, patriarchalism leaves no room for consent in legitimizing political authority. Until *Leviathan*, Hobbes at least left room for the sort of kingdom that the patriarchalists were discussing—Hobbes’s “patrimonial kingdom” was essentially analogous to Filmer’s “patriarchal” one. Indeed, Hobbes’s ideas would have been more congenial to Filmer than to other patriarchalists: Filmer, unlike others, argued that patriarchal dominion began in the family, and the Hobbes of *De Cive* and *The Elements of Law* agreed with him on this point. Although Filmer would not have been enthusiastic about the balance of Hobbes’s theory, which argued that political authority could be, and often was, derived from consent, he could at least take solace in the fact that Hobbes was congenial to the patriarchal position in some cases.

As we have seen, however, *Leviathan* removes the possibility that Filmer and the patriarchalists could have read Hobbes and felt comfortable about his arguments. Filmer, in fact, acknowledged Hobbes’s objectionable ideas in his *Observations Concerning the Originall of Government*, published in 1652:

> “‘Dominion paternal’ not attained ‘by generation but by contract’, which is ‘the child’s consent, either express or by other sufficient arguments declared’. How a child can express consent, or by other sufficient arguments declare it before it comes to the age of discretion I understand not; yet all men grant it is due before consent can be given… Also, where he saith the ‘father and the master being before the institution of commonweals absolute sovereigns in their own families’, how can it be said that either children or servants were in the state of *jus naturae* till the institution of commonweals?”

Hobbes’s positions do not actually seem inconsistent on this matter—he specified carefully in *Leviathan* that he did not consider patriarchal dominion to be similar to state sovereignty in a relevant way. The important thing to note, however, is that Filmer is expressing distaste with

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57 Sommeville discusses this matter on page xxi of his introduction to Sommerville, ed., *Patriarcha and Other Writings*.

58 Ibid. 191-192
Hobbes’s assertions about consent in patriarchal authority. This is understandable, given Filmer’s views on the matter.

It is then clear that Filmer was reading Hobbes, and we will see that it is just as clear that Hobbes was reading the patriarchalists. We can ascertain this influence from textual changes from *The Elements of Law* and *De Cive* to *Leviathan*, between which Hobbes would have had a chance to read Filmer’s publications, such as *The Anarchy of Mixed and Limited Monarchy*, as well as other written by those who supported patriarchalist theories. Most importantly, Hobbes includes in *Leviathan* the phrase, “God hath ordained to man a helper,” intended to contradict religious theories—such as the patriarchalists’—about how the father had natural dominion by generation. This piece of the text, or anything like it, was absent from both *De Cive* and *The Elements of Law*. In both of these works, however, Hobbes argued against the “Generation” hypothesis.

So we know that Hobbes rebuked the idea that *God* had something to do with generation and patrimonial authority for the first time in *Leviathan*. The argument that God gave Adam authority over his wife, and that man thereby had authority over his wife and child by generation, is distinctly Filmerian.\(^59\) This thought is the founding belief of his political theory. He used it to justify patriarchal kingship—the idea that all kings are the descendants of Adam, and the “fathers” of their people, and that they therefore have authority even without the people’s consent. Without justification from God, Filmer would have had a very difficult time explaining exactly why Adam or his heirs should rule anything at all. This idea, in fact, was so foundational to Filmer’s theory that Locke would spend a great deal of time disputing it many years later.\(^60\) Filmer’s biblical arguments on the matter were quite complex, and looked to both Genesis

\(^{59}\) Ibid. 138

\(^{60}\) See, for example, Laslett, ed., *John Locke: Two Treatises of Government*. 180. Also, see Jeremy Waldron’s forthcoming book on the First Treatise, which will discuss the matter extensively.
(“have dominion over… every living thing that moveth upon the earth”) and the Ten Commandments (“Honor thy father”) for support. Although Filmer is unique in his exact iteration of this argument, other royalist thinkers deployed many similar elements.

In any case, by making Adam “the father of all flesh,” Filmer was supplying a counterargument to Hobbes’s position that Hobbes had not addressed in any of his previous works. It was an argument that had been made before, as we have noted, but it was one that had not been made recently. By acknowledging religious arguments about paternal dominion, Hobbes must have been replying to Filmer and those with similar views. Hobbes used religious references carefully in *Leviathan*, and it would be uncharacteristic for him to have placed one in a familiar argument for no particular reason. With his quip about man’s “helper,” Hobbes was in fact replying to Filmer along the same lines that Locke would many years later. This move closed the gap in his theory for patriarchal accounts of government, and thus moved Hobbes away from royalist thinkers who were patriarchalists. Additionally, by moving further into the territory of government by consent, Hobbes was also making himself less of a mainstream royalist.

It could be argued, however, that Filmer and the other patriarchalists are not responsible for this change. We have seen that after *The Elements of Law*, Hobbes tied paternal authority to the authority of conquerors. So it could be said that Hobbes was more interested in determining how the authority of conquerors came about, and that the transformation of paternal power to include “consent” was just the result of this change. I think, however, that the evidence does not support this reading. Patriarchalism was a newly stated and major political doctrine in the time that the change happened, and this appears not to be the case with the idea of conquerors gaining

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61 This material is found in Genesis 1:28.
62 Sommerville, ed., *Patriarcha and Other Writings*. 139
legitimate coercive authority by consent. Or at least, if the idea of consent as a full-on political theory was new, it was because Hobbes himself was disseminating it. It seems unlikely that he would have changed something relating to his fundamental political theory for no specific reason.

One consideration, however, presents itself as a reason for the change. During the publication of *Leviathan*, it became clear that Parliament was seizing political authority in the wake of Charles’s execution. It is perhaps possible that Hobbes would have changed his position on the authority of conquerors—and thus, the authority of families—in order to take a position on whether citizens should submit to Parliament (the “Engagement Controversy”). He might have been attempting to do one of two things: to cut ties with patriarchal theories of Charles’s day and thus seek acceptance back into his home country, or to make the requirements for Parliament’s governance more difficult by requiring them to get citizens’ consent, rather than saying they were rulers by virtue of having power (*de facto* rulers).⁶³

There are, however, complications with both of these views. *Leviathan* told people that they should submit to Parliament’s rule, but it was, other than that, a reasonably anti-Parliamentarian work. It did not allow justification for the war Parliament had recently fought, and instead encouraged people to submit simply because of “the mutual relation between protection and obedience”: that Parliament was better able to protect them than anyone else.⁶⁴ It has been persuasively argued that Hobbes justified this submission based on principles of government that were present in all of his political works, beginning eleven years before. It

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⁶³ Additionally, this could be explained by appeal to Hobbes’s “doctrine of doctrines,” the idea that he should support the views that the current government has. For more on this, see Kinch Hoekstra’s article in *Leviathan after 350 Years*, ed. Tom Sorell and Luc Foisneau (New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford University, 2004).

seems unlikely, then, that he would have changed this one very small part to make the Parliamentarians happier with him.

Additionally, it is unclear how thick Hobbes’s notion of consent is, and what practical effect the changes he made would have on his political theory. For example, he frequently says that “irresistible power” always implies rule, meaning that it is not necessary for people to consent to those with great power. Quentin Skinner took this to mean that Hobbes was a de facto theorist—that his position was essentially that might makes right, and that people with power could govern simply by virtue of the power they had. If Skinner was correct, then Hobbes’s shift on the authority of families and conquerors actually brought him away from being a de facto theorist and created a tension in his thought by seeming to require greater consent for government. Others have argued that Hobbes primarily grounded political authority on consent. If these scholars are correct, however, there are many inconsistencies in Hobbes’s thought where he describes authority as grounded on things other than consent. It would make little sense for him to iron out this one inconsistency while leaving many others, especially when, as we have seen, he was probably not trying generally to gain favor with Parliament. Much confusion still surrounds Hobbes’s theory of obligation. What is important to note is that an appeal to his theory of obligation is not a better explanation for his shift on paternal authority (and authority surrounding conquest) than is his reaction to patriarchalism.

Filmer and the patriarchalists, then, seem to have turned Hobbes away from natural patrimonial power because of their primarily religious arguments. By removing the possibility of natural patriarchal power from Hobbes’s work, they drove him further toward consent and thus

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66 Skinner, in his later years, has actually been a major proponent of this position as well. See Skinner, Visions of Politics.
further away from the royalist mainstream. Although Hobbes seems still to support the idea of patrimonial structures—and definitely supports submission to conquerors—the justification is not one that would have been pleasing to those in the (former) king’s party.

Conclusion

On the topics of free will, episcopacy, and patriarchalism, it is clear that Hobbes was influenced by royalists to develop positions in opposition to mainstream royalist thought. The importance of this result could be that it gives an answer to some of the questions about what motivated Hobbes’s radical views in *Leviathan*. It must be said that these few positions, important thought they were, certainly did not encompass the full range of changes that took place between Hobbes’s early and late texts. Indeed, many other changes were made from *The Elements of Law* to *Leviathan*, and many of them are not attributable to royalist influence.

The influences that royalist thinkers had on Hobbes’s project are, nevertheless, important and clearly discernable. Although there has been a significant amount of work done on the reception of Hobbes’s views by royalists, as well as influences that parliamentarians had on him, the royalist influences in Hobbes’s thought have been widely neglected. In most cases, discussion of the matter is instrumental to some other topic that is being discussed. This is unfortunate, and leaves out an important part of the development of Hobbes’s ideas.

Indeed, the intellectual relationship Hobbes had with other royalists seems to have been one of frustration and adversity for him. Perhaps even more than helping him develop new ideas, royalists made his nascent positions stronger and clearer, and motivated him to argue more trenchantly for the views he already had. Thinking about his development this way raises new questions about Hobbes’s overall relationship to the royalist cause. In all three of the cases we

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67 See much of Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*. Also, Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*.
have studied, it is possible that Hobbes already had the views expressed in *Leviathan* in 1640. If this is true, it raises the question of whether Hobbes was really ever a royalist in any meaningful sense, except in the sense that he considered himself one. If we follow this path, it could raise questions about how Hobbes responded to the engagement controversy, and whether the views that led him to support the Interregnum government were actually there all along. This interesting question is perhaps put off by the fact we may never know exactly what was in Hobbes’s mind in 1640, and the fact that it is possible that his mind was not even fully made up on some of these questions. The substantial blocks to realizing Hobbes’s mental progress, however, should not stop us from considering what it might have been. Considering thoughts about the origins and development of Hobbes’s project, as with any thinker, allows us to appreciate the project itself more fully.

**Bibliography**


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69 There is debate about whether Hobbes had a consistent theory of obligation, or was in fact simply a turncoat royalist. For the view that Hobbes was a turncoat royalist, see the introductions to Toennies, ed., *The Elements of Law, Natural & Politic,* Tuck, ed., *Leviathan.* For the view that Hobbes’s work was more consistent over time, see, for example, Quentin Skinner’s essay, “Conquest and Consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy,” in Aylmer, ed., *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646-1660.*


