

Reply to Professor Martinich

The editor of this journal has invited me to reply to Professor Martinich's reply to my reply to his reply to my article, on the condition that I should be brief. I shall try to be very brief. Our discussion has probably reached a point at which we can expect diminishing returns. I shall try also to avoid even the slightest hint of irony, though I am not sure I can succeed in that. I am surprised that Prof. Martinich, who sees so little irony in Hobbes, should find so much in "Calvin and Hobbes."

I did think his definition of "orthodoxy" was plausible, taking the term "plausible" in the sense of "having an appearance or show of truth, reasonableness or worth" (OED, sense 3). That's also, of course, perfectly consistent with thinking the criterion of the creeds too weak. The Church of England, from the time of Elizabeth, has made acceptance of the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds *one* of the 39 Articles which define membership in that Church. But Martinich exaggerates when he says that that was *the* criterion of orthodoxy used by the Church. The 39 Articles cover many other issues as well, including (as Hobbes points out in the Latin Appendix, i, 95) God's incorporeality. As a sometime member of that Church, I wonder if Martinich has given thorough consideration to *all* that it requires of its adherents.

I welcome Martinich's clarification of his use of the term "Calvinist." It was silly of me to think that he intended it to imply substantial agreement with the theology of John Calvin. I see now that he intended it to imply only acceptance of the doctrine of double predestination. This is a generous criterion. Aquinas himself may qualify. (Cf. *Summa theologiae* I, qu. 23.) But if Calvin's doctrine implies the predestination of the reprobate to *eternal* punishment, Hobbes may not. (Cf. *Leviathan* xlv, 26, cited in my paper on 259.)

I must protest, however, that I myself did not say that we should regard self-contradiction as a sign of irony (275 of Martinich's paper). I said merely that *some readers might think that frequent* self-contradiction is a sign of irony (263 of my paper). But I acknowledged, of course, that Martinich might make, "with justice," the reply he actually does make, that authors often contradict themselves (264 of my paper). Whether Hobbes contradicts himself in *all* the passages Martinich claims he does is too large a question to enter into here. I was not persuaded by all his examples; but if they fail, I'm sure others can be found.

In spite of what Martinich says (278 of his paper), I do still think Hobbes thought revealed religion was dangerous to the political order. Of course he will *say* that the divine law is perfectly consistent with natural law. But he is very concerned that some ministers of religion will persuade their followers that the divine law may be *inconsistent* with the *civil law*, and that, faced with such inconsistency, we must give priority to the divine law. The whole point of Part III of *Leviathan*, as I argued in the Introduction to

my edition (xl–xliv), is to remove the threat to sovereignty implicit in Acts 5:29 (“We must obey God rather than man”). Moreover, I do not think Hobbes was so optimistic as to imagine that his theory of religious language would forestall the possibility of believers taking the Bible to commit them to belief in demons or in the geocentric theory of the solar system (cf. L viii, 26).

The central issue between us, however, concerns the doctrine of the Trinity. Martinich thinks Hobbes ventured into those treacherous waters because he wanted “to show the power of his novel theory of personhood by using it to explain the doctrine of the Trinity” (279 of his paper). Surely this assumes that Hobbes actually thought Christian theologians might accept his explanation of the Trinity. With the benefit of hindsight *we* know that if he thought that, he was very much mistaken. The interesting question is: could Hobbes, when he wrote what he did, without the advantage which our temporal perspective gives us, have been so naive as to believe that theologians would accept a theory according to which Moses, *and* the high priests and kings of Judah, *and* the apostles and their successors (including, presumably, the popes),¹ all have equal status with Jesus? I think it’s very unlikely, but I suppose it’s possible.

Martinich thinks that if Hobbes had intended to subvert the doctrine of the Trinity, he would have replied to criticism of his theory by saying: “So much the worse for the doctrine of the Trinity.” I suppose he might have, though it does seem a tad dangerous to say that at a time when an open denial of the doctrine of the Trinity might land him in jail on charges of blasphemy.² If all he intended was “damage control,” it seems that he could have achieved that more readily by simply admitting error, correcting the relevant passages of the English *Leviathan* in the way he did, and *not* undertaking an extended analysis of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Appendix to the Latin *Leviathan*.

Of course, if what he said in the Latin Appendix did not provoke any further suspicions of unorthodoxy, there would be no harm in adding it. But I had thought that (among other potential problems) Hobbes must have intended irony when he wrote (falsely) that the Nicene Creed contains “no admixture of Greek philosophy.” This seemed a subtle (but not too subtle) way of making the point that the Creed which the Church of England (in art. 8) requires its members to accept does not conform to the Church’s requirement (in art. 6) that nothing be required of its believers except what there is good scriptural authority for, and hence no adherence to doctrines which require for their articulation unscriptural concepts derived from Greek philosophy.

Martinich acknowledges that the term *homoousios*, which does occur in the Nicene creed, is unscriptural; I think he acknowledges that it is derived from Greek philosophy (though not, it seems, from the philosophy of Aristotle!); but, he says, I’ve neglected the import of a restrictive clause which indicates that *homoousios* is not the term of philosophical art Hobbes is talking about here. What relative clause, you may ask? Well, in the second passage I quoted, Hobbes has one of the characters in his dialogue express surprise that “the Nicene Fathers, so many of whom were philosophers, did

¹ See footnote 22 in my paper.

² As late as the eighteenth century Thomas Woolston was jailed on that charge for publishing a book denying the miracles of Jesus.

not bring into the creed itself those terms of art *which they used in their explanations*" (Appendix i, 90, my emphasis). So instead of claiming, falsely, that no terms from Greek philosophy occur in the Creed, what the character is doing is calling attention, correctly, to the fact that the Creed does not use the Greek terms for species, genus, essence, etc., to explain what it means by *homoousios*. The presence of the term *homoousios* is unobjectionable because Constantine ordered its addition to the Creed, which, as sovereign, he had a right to do.

I will not try to exhaust the problems involved in this explanation. Let me mention three: (1) it's not true that *homoousios* is the only philosophical term the Creed uses; it does contain the Aristotelian term *ousia*, which Hobbes translates by *essentia*; so if A is wondering about the absence from the Creed of technical terms such as "essence," he is wondering about a non-fact³; (2) while it may be true, from the standpoint of Hobbesian political philosophy, that Constantine had the authority to require his subjects to embrace formulas for which there was no good scriptural authority, this does not mean that there will be no problem for someone who accepts, as Hobbes is supposed to do, the *sola scriptura* principle, that Christians are not required to believe anything except what there is good scriptural authority for; the Creed still illustrates the delicate balance you must strike in trying to be a good Hobbesian and a good Protestant at the same time⁴; (3) in the first of the two passages I cited there is no relative clause available to muddy the waters by suggesting the possibility of a restrictive interpretation; Hobbes says simply (and in his own person, since this is not a dialogue) that the Nicene Creed contains "no admixture of Greek philosophy at all."⁵ What has happened to the principle of holistic interpretation when Martinich can concentrate all his fire on one passage, and completely ignore the other?

One final point. I would not be as sanguine as Martinich is that there is no irony in the passage he quotes from the "Answer to Bishop Bramhall" (EW IV, 316). It sounds as though Hobbes is there claiming (falsely) that the church distinguishes the three persons of the Trinity in the same way he did in the English *Leviathan*. Moreover he does claim for that account of the Trinity the advantage that it explains how, contrary to what some "heathen scoffers" had suggested, it is not contradictory to say that God is one and three. If Hobbes then abandons that explanation, he does seem to leave us without any reply to the heathens, i.e., he seems to leave the heathens in possession of the field. But I would not be thought to suggest that anything is a *sure* sign of irony.

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³ Martinich might reply that, strictly speaking, *ousia* is a biblical term, since it occurs in Luke 15:13; but the sense it has there (property, possessions) is not the sense it has either in the Creed or as a technical term in Aristotelian philosophy.

⁴ Martinich might reply that the subject of a sovereign who requires acceptance of the Nicene Creed can conform externally, while privately maintaining a reservation about the Creed which he keeps to himself. This would be in the spirit of Hobbes's treatment of the case of Naaman, in L xlii, 11. But this implies that the subject's true position would not be orthodox by Martinich's criterion of orthodoxy.

⁵ See L xlvi (OL), 10. This passage occurs in a sequence of six paragraphs which Hobbes added in the Latin version of ch. xlvi, which have no analogue in the English *Leviathan*. See my edition, 470-73.