

HOBBS AND THE *KATÉCHON*: THE SECULARIZATION OF SACRIFICIAL CHRISTIANITY

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Hobbes and equality: his knowledge of mimetic desire

When reading Thomas Hobbes we immediately recognize that he was writing in the early years of our modern age. Hobbes's world is very different from ancient cultures. This is most clearly demonstrated by the importance in his political philosophy of equality and individualism, concepts which cannot be found in ancient political discourse. Hobbes fully rejected Aristotle's view that nature made some human beings commanders and others slaves (1984, 211). According to Hobbes, all human beings are equal. The same applies to individualism. Whereas Aristotle's main concern was the polis, not the individual, Hobbes takes the individual as the starting point of his political philosophy.¹ The difference between the two views can be seen as a result of the biblical transformation of the world: the biblical message slowly transformed the ancient world as it increasingly replaced ancient concepts of human nature and social life with those of equality and individualism. The biblical impulse did not, however, result in the creation of a peaceful Kingdom of God on earth.

Hobbes's quite doubtful reputation does not stem from his rejection of Aristotle's philosophy but rather from his insight into the deadly consequences of equality. According to Hobbes, the natural equality of human beings means that all have the ability to kill one another:

¹ On Hobbes and individualism, see Louis Dumont 95-9.

Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or of quicker mind then another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others, that are in the same danger with himself. (1984, 183)

Hobbes further argues that the equality of the faculties of mind is even greater than that of the faculties of body:

From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End,. . . endeavour to destroy, or subdue one an other. (184)

In Hobbes's opinion, then, the direct result of equality is the war of everyone against everyone. His description of equality as a state resulting in war immediately reminds one of mimetic theory. Although Hobbes does not explicitly refer to mimetic desire in the above passage, his words reflect the logic of conflictual mimesis: exclusive objects lead mimetic desire to rivalry, violence, and war. Is Hobbes aware of the mimetic problem?

Throughout Hobbes's work one finds clear insights into the logic of mimetic desire.² Hans Achterhuis points to one such instance in a definition of power in Hobbes's *Leviathan*: "Naturall Power, is the eminence of the Faculties of Body, or Mind" (150; Achterhuis 23). Hobbes's observation of human behavior led him to conclude that man always looks to the other, that only by comparing himself with others does he achieve a measure of power. The same is true, Hobbes contends, for honor and prestige:

The manifestation of the Value we set on one another, is that which is commonly called Honouring, and Dishonouring. To Value a man at a high rate, is to *Honour* him; at a low rate, is to *Dishonour* him. But high, and low, in this case, is to be understood by comparison to the rate that each man setteth on himselfe. (152)

² For further discussion, see Palaver 1991, 40-5.

The typical passions of mimetic desire, vanity, and envy are also described in many passages of Hobbes's work.³ According to Stephen Holmes, in his new introduction to Hobbes's *Behemoth*, Hobbes characterizes the human being as imitator, as "L'homme copie."⁴ Hobbes comes close to directly mentioning mimetic desire in a passage of his early treatise *Human Nature, or the Fundamental Elements of Policy*. Here he compares human life with all its passions to a race in which everyone tries to be the first (1966, 53). He explicitly calls the "endeavour to overtake the next" in this race "emulation," a term which Shakespeare also uses for mimetic desire.⁵

Hobbes on Christianity and religious wars

Mimetic theory allows us to understand the development toward Hobbes's world. The biblical message slowly undermined traditional culture as it drastically weakened the cultural protections against the mimetic forces. With the breakdown of traditional society and the rise of equality, mimetic rivalry increased significantly. The sacrificial crisis of the English Revolution was one of the dramatic stages in the development toward our modern world.

Hobbes seems to have been partly aware of the biblical roots of that development.⁶ From a mimetic point of view his history of the English Revolution deserves especially close attention. In consideration of the major political problem of the times—the religious wars—Hobbes did not believe that Chris-

³ On vanity and envy in Hobbes's *Behemoth*, see Stephen Holmes xxx-xxxii.

⁴ Holmes states that "even without schoolmasters, people will acquire their opinions by osmosis rather than by critical reflection—by being dunked in 'the stream' (112) of public opinion. Within a group, a person can be 'passionately carried away by the rest,' which explains the paradox that 'it is easier to gull the multitude, than any one man amongst them' (38). Almost all individuals are 'negligent' (17). *L'homme copie* irrationally imitates the beliefs and behavior patterns of those around him, failing to notice what he is doing. He acts without thinking about it, not in order to save time as economists might imagine, but from mindlessness, distraction, inveterate slovenliness, poor moral character, and an inborn penchant for imitating the preferences of companions" (xvii).

⁵Hobbes's use of the word "emulation" is heavily influenced, however, by the traditional distinction between bad envy and good emulation. His definitions of those passions thus always fall within the context of the traditional concept (1966, 45; 1984, 126, 163, 182, 235, 369, 393). This is also true in part for Shakespeare. At his best, however, Shakespeare challenges the traditional distinction between envy and emulation. The two terms often overlap in his work and refer directly to mimetic desire. The most important passage can be found in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Ulysses speaks of "an envious fever of pale and bloodless emulation" (I, iii, 133-4; see also Shakespeare 78-9, 131; Girard 1991, 163-4).

⁶ On Hobbes's view of Christianity as a dangerous religion, see Holmes xxxiv-xxxvi.

tianity offered a significant improvement over paganism. Quite the contrary. He believed that Christianity is more prone to religious wars than paganism. In his attack against the preaching of Presbyterian ministers, Hobbes argues,

I confess, that for aught I have observed in history, and other writings of the heathens, Greek and Latin, that those heathens were not at all behind us in point of virtue and moral duties, notwithstanding that we have had much preaching, and they none at all. I confess also, that considering what harm may proceed from a liberty that men have, upon every Sunday and oftener, to harangue all the people of a nation at one time, whilst the state is ignorant of what they will say; and that there is no such thing permitted in all the world out of Christendom, nor therefore any civil wars about religion. (1990, 63-4)

Hobbes goes on to argue that the anarchic force of Christianity is rooted in private or individual interpretations of the Bible: the "licence of interpreting the Scripture was the cause of so many several sects . . . to the disturbance of the commonwealth" (22; cf. 3). Hobbes fears religious anarchy so much that—despite his criticism of the Catholic Church—he openly praises the Pope for his resistance to translate the Bible into the vernacular (21).

Hobbes was compelled to find a solution to the anarchical tendencies of his world in order to overcome the problem of religious wars. One would anticipate that he propose a total separation of religion and politics like Paolo Sarpi, the leader of Venice during the Interdict Crisis with whose circle Hobbes was familiar.⁷ Hobbes, however, went a different way. He knew that the seeds of religion "can never be so abolished out of humane nature, but that new Religions may againe be made to spring out of them" (1984, 179). He also thought that civil life needs a certain degree of religion. Though Hobbes clearly recognized the potential danger of Christianity he did not, like Machiavelli, recommend paganism as the appropriate religion to strengthen political life. Nor did he suggest, as would his follower Henry Strubbe, the adoption of Islam. Hobbes tried to find a solution within Christianity itself.

Holding back the apocalypse: the *katéchon* (2 Thess. 2)

Before we deal with Hobbes's solution to the dangers of civil war, we must briefly address the question of the history of Christianity in the light of René Girard's insight into the social and historical consequences of the Bible.

⁷ On Hobbes and Sarpi, see Richard Tuck 10-11, 82, 87, 89.

According to Girard, the biblical exposure of the scapegoat mechanism undermines all culture. This means that a culture based on the Bible is ultimately impossible. Girard believes that Christian history has an apocalyptic dimension which contains two related meanings: Christianity reveals the violent roots of culture (apocalypse as revelation) and, at the same time, it destroys the cultural restraints which prevent the unleashing of mimetic violence and thus open the way for chaos and violence (1987b, 249-62; 1991, 282-3).⁸ The revelation of the scapegoat mechanism can potentially cause destruction, war, and even the end of the world (apocalypse as destruction).

Girard maintains that only the misreading of the Bible—the sacrificial reading—prevented the immediate outbreak of the apocalypse. That reading enabled historical Christianity to build a culture which somewhat resembled ancient cultures; it enabled Christian culture to continue to prevent the outbreak of mimetic rivalry and violence and, consequently, to delay the apocalypse. Girard points out that the Bible specifically mentions the deferral of the apocalypse in Luke's distinction (21:5-36) between a Judaic and a worldwide apocalypse (1987b, 251).

There is another very interesting biblical passage in which this deferral is also mentioned: the text in 2 Thess. 2:1-12 which deals with rebellion and destruction during the reign of the "man of lawlessness" that precedes the second coming of Christ. The reign of the "man of sin," or the Antichrist as he is often called in the traditional interpretation of this passage, will not begin, however, in the immediate future, for something (2 Thess. 2:6), or someone (2 Thess. 2:7), is restraining him: "And you know what is now restraining him, so that he may be revealed when his time comes. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but only until the one who now restrains it is removed."⁹ The biblical term for the restraining power is *katéchon* (κατέχων), to hold back, to hold fast, to hold in possession, to bind, to restrain.

Many myths refer to a power or a person like a *katéchon* which keeps chaos in check (see Kittel 829-30; Dibelius 43-52). Most often it is represented as a dragon or a monster who is chained or bound. In Egypt the god Horus, for example, was called a binder of the dragon (*katéchon drákonta*). In the Bible itself, we find several passages that refer to this mythic image. Job asks if he is a dragon who needs to be watched over by a guard (7:12; cf. 3:8). Also in the book of Job God is depicted as the one who holds the Leviathan

⁸ For discussion of Girard as an apocalyptic thinker, see Palaver 1995, 100-1.

⁹ On the history of the interpretation of 2 Thess. 2:6-7, see Wolfgang Trilling (94-105) and Maarten Menken (108-13).

with a rope (41:1-2). In the New Testament, the best-known passage is in Rev. 20:2-3.7-10 concerning the chaining of the dragon: an angel "seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for thousand years. . . . After that he must be let out for a little while" (NRSV).

Although there have been many different interpretations of the *katéchon* throughout Christian history the most important was its identification with the Roman Empire. The theologians Hippolytus and Tertullian were the first to interpret the *katéchon* in this way. After the disintegration of the Roman Empire the *katéchon* was identified with the Empire of Charles the Great, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (cf. *Translatio Imperii*), or the Catholic Church.¹⁰

Mimetic theory can help to explain the idea of the *katéchon* as the institutional or political outcome of the sacrificial reading of the Bible. It is the sacrificial culture that emerged after the pagans had become christianized, the culture that contains violence through violence. Many elements of the medieval Catholic Church, for example, clearly show signs of the *katéchon*. This does not mean that the Catholic Church as a whole was sacrificial, but rather that it was characterized by numerous controls that served to slow down the process of the biblical disintegration of culture.¹¹ The hierarchical institution of the Church and the Catholic resistance against the translation of the Bible, for example, helped to keep the subversive and shattering truth of the Bible in check.¹²

One of the most powerful portrayals of the Catholic Church as a *katéchon* can be found in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Although Dostoevsky does not use the term *katéchon* in his famous legend of the Grand Inquisitor, he clearly describes a church that functions as a *katéchon*. The

¹⁰ An interesting political interpretation of the *katéchon* in our own century has been given by the German law scholar Carl Schmitt. Schmitt recognized several persons or institutions throughout history that acted as a *katéchon*: Byzantium, the medieval Holy Roman Empire, the Emperor Rudolf II, the jurist and historian Savigny, the philosopher Hegel, the British Empire, the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph, the Czechoslovak President Masaryk, the Polish Marshall Pilsudski, the Jesuits, and the Catholic Church. On Carl Schmitt's interpretation of the *katéchon*, see Palaver 1995, 101-4.

¹¹ For discussion of the long tradition in Christian history which increasingly suppressed all apocalyptic elements see Jacob Taubes 76; Hans Blumenberg 54; John Pocock 177. See also Johann Metz, a representative of the new political theology who emphasizes the importance of the apocalyptic dimension of Christianity (149-58).

¹² Elias Canetti describes in a very powerful way the importance of slowness and calm in the Catholic Church and points to the hierarchy as one of the elements that help to create slowness. Dangerous and accelerating processes are mummified. Canetti also narrates how carefully the Catholic Church protects the holy word (172-6).

Grand Inquisitor represents a medieval Church that has given way to the temptations of Satan and has based its power on three principles: miracle, mystery, and authority. His reason for building a church with the help of Satan is not, however, sheer lust for power. Rather, the Grand Inquisitor wants to prevent chaos, and even cannibalism. Dostoevsky's legend tells us that Jesus returned to earth in sixteenth-century Spain and appeared in the town of Seville where some one hundred heretics had been burned the previous day. Upon immediately recognizing that Jesus was a very dangerous threat to the world the Inquisitor represented, he arrested Jesus and sent him to prison. His initial intention was to burn Jesus at the stake as a heretic the following day, but after conversing with Jesus throughout the night the Inquisitor decides instead to set him free. The last words in the legend show clearly that the Grand Inquisitor is a *katéchon* (Girard 1983,128): he opens the door and says to Jesus, "Go, and come no more... come not at all, never, never!" The words are the exact opposite of those which appear at the conclusion of the Bible, in the prayer of the early Christians who implore, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). This is the same prayer "Marana tha" that also ends the first letter to the Corinthians (16:22). Whereas the early Christians longed for the second coming of Jesus, the Grand Inquisitor hopes that Jesus will never again appear. He fears the chaos and destruction that may come with Him. Like the *katéchon*, the Inquisitor tries to hold back the apocalypse.

Hobbes's Leviathan: the secularized *katéchon*

Let us now turn back to Hobbes. Hobbes's solution to the religious and political crisis of his time was the proposal to establish an absolute power that could prevent the outbreak of civil war. According to Hobbes, the civil sovereign should be the ruler of both politics and religion; he should be civil sovereign as well as head of the Church and sole interpreter of Scripture. If we study Hobbes's political philosophy carefully, we will realize that his state functions like a *katéchon*: it provides for the permanent prevention of chaos and violence.¹³ Hobbes's state does not have a positive goal: "For there is no such *Finis ultimus*, (utmoyst ayme,) nor *Summum Bonum*, (greatest Good,) as is spoken in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers" (1984, 160; cf. Voegelin 254-6; Adam 1992, 38-9). The aim of Hobbes's state is the restraining of the apocalyptic state of war.

¹³ That Hobbes's state is a *katéchon* is also suggested by Armin Adam (1990, 98) and Jürgen Moltmann (30).

There are deep theological roots to Hobbes's *katéchontic* solution to civil war. His image of God, for example, stresses God's absolute and irresistible power.¹⁴ Hobbes most clearly affirms God's omnipotence in passages in which he argues that God's natural right to rule over people and to punish them for offending the laws derives from His irresistible power:

To those . . . whose Power is irresistible, the dominion of all men adhaereth naturally by their excellence of Power; and consequently it is from that Power, that the Kingdome over men, and the Right of afflicting men at his pleasure, belongeth Naturally to God Almighty; not as Creator, and Gracious; but as Omnipotent. And though Punishment be due for Sinne onely, because by that word is understood Affliction for Sinne; yet the Right of Afflicting, is not alwayes derived from mens Sinne, but from Gods Power. (1984, 397-8).

In support of his argument, Hobbes refers to God's final speeches in the book of Job (38:1-41:34). The reason for Job's affliction was not his sins, Hobbes contends, but God's power:

And Job, how earnestly does he expostulate with God, for the many Afflictions he suffered, notwithstanding his Righteousnesse? This question in the case of *Job*, is decided by God himselfe, not by arguments derived from *Job's* Sinn, but his own Power. For whereas the friends of *Job* drew their arguments from his Affliction to his Sinne, and he defended himselfe by the conscience of his Innocence, God himselfe taketh up the matter, and having justified the Affliction by arguments drawn from his power, such as this, *Where wast thou when I layd the foundations of the earth*, and the like, both approved *Job's* Innocence, and reprovved the Erroneous doctrine of his friends. (1984, 398)

If we examine this image of God carefully, we recognize, as Othmar Keel suggests, that the God of the final speeches in the book of Job strongly resembles the Egyptian God Horus, the *katéchon drákonta*. Both are gods who hold the principles of disorder, the chaos-monsters Leviathan (or the crocodile) and Behemoth (or the hippopotamus), in check. They are gods who act as a *katéchon*. Girard's interpretation of the God of the final speeches shows us

¹⁴ For specific discussion of Hobbes's image of God, see Palaver 1991, 242-90.

also that this God is rooted in the scapegoat mechanism, that it is, in other words a mythic God (1987a, 141-3). The *katéchon* and the scapegoat mechanism are structured by the same logic, by the restraining of chaotic violence through violence.

Hobbes's use of the biblical images of the principles of disorder, of Leviathan and Behemoth, suggests that he is at least in part aware of the fact that the remedy for chaos is rooted in chaos itself. Hobbes's Behemoth, in accordance with the biblical usage, is a symbol for the civil war. His Leviathan does not symbolize disorder, however, but order: Leviathan is the name of Hobbes's own political program. Mimetic theory helps to explain this reversal of a principle of disorder to a principle of order, for it shows us that sacrificial order itself is a product of chaos.

Hobbes's political concept, the powerful state, resembles his image of God in many ways.¹⁵ Just as the God of the final speeches of Job or the God Horus have to restrain the chaotic monsters, Hobbes's state has to prevent the outbreak of chaos or civil war. As Carl Schmitt notes, the purpose of Hobbes's state—which originates in the war of all against all—is the permanent prevention of that war (1994,22). The analogy between Hobbes's image of God and his concept of the state and of sovereignty is an example of secularization, or political theology, in the Schmittian sense. As Schmitt explains, "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure" (1988, 36). Schmitt uses Hobbes as one of his examples of political theology.¹⁶

Schmitt's concept of political theology is very important to an understanding of secularization. From the perspective of mimetic theory, however, one has to ask as well what kind of theology has been secularized. Hobbes's transfer of the theological concept of the *katéchon* to the secular realm of politics,

¹⁵ R. Halliday et al. state, "For Hobbes, the lesson of *Job* contained an important political message: the absolutism of the mortal God is an imitation of the irresistible power of the immortal God" (433).

¹⁶In Schmitt's opinion, the theology of Hobbes's era caused him—despite his nominalism, his natural-scientific approach, and his reduction of the individual to the atom—to remain "personalistic and [to] postulate an ultimate concrete deciding instance, and . . . also [to] heighten his state, the Leviathan, into an immense person and thus point-blank straight into mythology" (1988,47). The belief in a sole, all-powerful God governing the world undergirded the personalistic and decisionist position of Hobbes.

for instance, is not a secularization of the true spirit of the Gospel. It is the secularization of a sacrificial theology.

A transfer of sacrificial theological concepts can also be seen in Hobbes's political philosophy if we compare his concept of the state with the medieval Catholic Church. Hans Barion, a scholar of canon law, makes an interesting observation in comparing the frontispiece to Hobbes's *Leviathan* with the symbolization of the medieval hierocratic *societas Christiana* (499-500). According to Barion, Hobbes's *Leviathan* is a reversal of the medieval concept: Hobbes's *Leviathan* wields in his right hand the sword of secular power and in his left a bishop's crozier. Barion claims that a crozier in the right hand and a sword in the left hand would be a perfect symbolization of the medieval *societas Christiana*. It would symbolize the unified body of medieval Church with Christ as its head governing both the spiritual and the secular realm.

Schmitt interpreted Barion's insight systematically. According to Schmitt, Hobbes's state is the clear antithesis to the Catholic Church in which important elements of the structure of the Church were transferred to the state. Schmitt therefore calls Hobbes's political theology the "completed Reformation" (1982, 169, 172; 1970, 110, 121).

Schmitt's insight into the relationship between the Reformation and Hobbes's transfer of concepts of the Catholic Church to the state may help to explain why Hobbes did not use the term *katéchon* in his writings. Medieval Christianity called itself the successor of the Roman Empire and the *katéchon*. Like Pope Leo, Thomas Aquinas, for instance, identified the Catholic Church with the *katéchon* (see Bornemann 570). The Reformation made this interpretation impossible. Though most of the Protestant authors identified the Roman Empire with the *katéchon*, they did not think that a transfer of the Roman Empire to the Catholic Church had taken place. They identified the Pope with the Antichrist whose power had arisen out of the ruins of the Roman Empire (Bornemann 417). According to this tradition, the *katéchon* had already been removed. Regarding the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation they claimed that nothing but the mere title had remained from the Roman Empire.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Hobbes did not identify the Catholic Church with the Antichrist (1984, 580-82). In Hobbes's view, the Pope of Rome could not be called Antichrist, for he believed that the Antichrist had not yet come. Nevertheless, he shared the Protestant belief that no transfer from the Roman Empire to the Catholic Church had taken place. According to Hobbes, the Catholic Church "is no other, than the *Ghost* of the deceased *Romane Empire*, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof: For so did the

Papacy start up on a Sudden out of the Ruines of that Heathen Power" (1984, 712). The Reformation had put an end to medieval Christianity. There was no longer a real successor to the Roman Empire. The Catholic Church was not able to function as an institution that could create order in Europe. Religion became instead a source of wars. Hobbes, therefore, had to find a secular institution that could at least locally secure peace and tranquillity. He proposed the secular state as a creator of peace.

The differences between Hobbes's secular state and medieval Christianity can explain his break with the *katéchon-tradition* of the Roman Empire (see Schmitt 1991,273 [Oct. 1,1949]). Hobbes's state can, nevertheless, be called a *katéchon*. As a secularized concept, transferred to the state, the concept of the *katéchon* can be seen as a structuring principle in his political philosophy.¹⁷

The most powerful insight into Hobbes's secularization of sacrificial theology can be found in Carl Schmitt's recently published private notes. On May 23, 1949 Schmitt wrote the following aphorism:

Thomas Hobbes's most important sentence remains: Jesus is the Christ. The power of such a sentence works even if it is pushed to the margins of the conceptual system of an intellectual structure, even if it is apparently pushed outside the conceptual body. This deportation is analogous to the domestication of Christ undertaken by the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoevsky. Hobbes articulated and provided scientific reason for what the Grand Inquisitor did: to make the effect of Christ harmless in the social and political sphere; to de-anarchize Christianity but to leave to it at the same time some kind of legitimating effect in the background and in any case not to do without it. A clever tactician gives up nothing, at least as long as it is not totally useless. Christianity was not yet spent. Therefore, we may ask ourselves: who is closer to Dos-

¹⁷ My thesis which maintains that major elements in Hobbes's political philosophy are secularized concepts of sacrificial theology confirms John Milbank's claim that a heretical, or in his words "perverse," theology helped to determine Hobbes's new political philosophy. According to Milbank, especially nominalist theology that emphasized God's "potentia absoluta"—God's infinite power, which is only knowable to a formalism of logic—is brought to a peak in Hobbes's emphasis on God's irresistible power. Hobbes's sovereign's absolute power is nothing but a reflection of God's absolute power. The closeness of Hobbes's concept of sovereignty to this image of God ensures it theologically (see Milbank 14-5, 21, 25) A reference to Schmitt's *Political Theology* demonstrates that Milbank sees a close relation between his interpretation of the theological base of Hobbes's political philosophy and Schmitt's secularization thesis.

toevsky's Grand Inquisitor: the Roman Church or Thomas Hobbes's sovereign? Reformation and Counter-Reformation point in the same direction. Tell me your enemy and I tell you who you are. Hobbes and the Roman Church: the enemy is the gestalt of our self-questioning. (1991,243)

In this aphorism Schmitt draws a parallel between Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor and Hobbes's Leviathan which indirectly shows that the *katéchon* does not only prevent chaos, but holds back the kingdom of Christ as well. Politics structured according to the sacrificial logic of the *katéchon* has to be separated from the spirit of the Gospels in order to function properly. The nonsacrificial spirit of the Gospels and politics, which is sacrificial in the broad sense, cannot exist together.

Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor asked Jesus openly and directly to go away. The Leviathan also excludes Jesus from politics. That exclusion can be best seen in Hobbes's clearly political interpretation of the prophetic Kingdom of God: "I find the *Kingdome of God*, to signifie in most places of scripture, a *Kingdome properly so named*" (1984, 442).¹⁸ In order to prevent any dangerous influence of religion on current politics, however, Hobbes introduced a temporal scheme. According to Hobbes, the prophetic Kingdom of God ended when Saul was elected king and will be restored after the second coming of Christ. Hobbes claims that Christ's office to be King will not begin until the general resurrection and he refers to John 18:36 ("My kingdom is not from this world.") as a biblical proof (495, 514, 517, 542, 587-8, 595). In present times, which is the period between Saul's election and Christ's second coming, there is no prophetic Kingdom of God on earth. Only God's natural Kingdom remains, wherein God governs by natural reason. In this period of time politics has to rely fully on natural reason alone.

Hobbes's interpretation of the Kingdom of God results ultimately in a complete separation of politics and religion. Religion becomes a private matter and for Hobbes's, the privatization of religion has a *katéchontic* function: it helps to keep the anarchic and shattering truth of the Gospels out of from politics.

The privatization of religion is, then, the *katéchon* of our modern world. The Reformation was the final blow to the *katéchontic* role of medieval Christianity, for rivalling factions inside Christianity itself changed religion as

¹⁸ For specific discussion of Hobbes's interpretation of the Kingdom of God, see Palaver 1991,290-337.

a principle of order into a principle of war. Only a secular institution like Hobbes's state—an example of the secularization of the concept of the *katéchon*—could now fulfil the old role of the *katéchon*.

The Judeo-Christian death seed destroying Hobbes's system

Though there are clear parallels between Hobbes's Leviathan and the Grand Inquisitor, there is also an important difference. The belief in miracles was one of the three principles on which the Grand Inquisitor based his church. In Hobbes's Leviathan too, the civil sovereign is the sole judge of the truth of a miracle (1984, 477). Hobbes, however, remarks that this applies only to public confession. "A private man has alwaies the liberty, (because thought is free,) to beleeve, or not to beleeve in his heart, those acts that have been given out for Miracles" (478). Throughout his book *Leviathan*, Hobbes distinguishes between inner faith and public confession. People have to obey the commands of the civil sovereign only in all their external actions; their inner faith and thoughts are free:

In summe, he [the Civill Sovereign] hath the Supreme Power in all causes, as well Ecclesiasticall, as Civill, as far as concerneth actions, and words, for those onely are known, and may be accused; and of that which cannot be accused, there is no Judg at all, but God, that knoweth the heart. (576)

It was Carl Schmitt, an admirer of the Grand Inquisitor throughout his life, who most vehemently attacked this individualistic reservation in Hobbes's Leviathan in 1938. According to Schmitt, the inner reservation in Hobbes's political philosophy "became the seed of death that destroyed the mighty Leviathan from the inside and killed the Mortal God" (1938, 86).

What caused Hobbes to include this individualistic reservation? Since the end of the Second World War, Schmitt's book on Hobbes has become infamous for his open antisemitism. He accused liberal Jews like Spinoza and Moses Mendelssohn of having seen the break in Hobbes's theory and having used it to ultimately destroy the concept of the state. Antisemitism, however, is neither really the proper term to understand Schmitt's position, nor does it help to explain Schmitt's criticism of Hobbes's Leviathan.

Another passage in Schmitt's same book clarifies this claim. Schmitt corrected Leo Strauss, who wrote that Hobbes accused the Jews of causing the dangerous separation of religion and politics (20-1; Strauss 75). According to Schmitt, Hobbes neither fought against Judaism nor against paganism, since both support a unity of religion and politics. In Schmitt's opinion, Hobbes's

adversaries were the Judeo-Christians (*Judenchristen*). It is very unlikely that Schmitt would have corrected Strauss in that way if he wanted to write an antisemitic pamphlet. Schmitt's own adversary was not Judaism as such, but the spirit of the Judeo-Christian Bible. Similarly, Schmitt contends that Judeo-Christian thinking caused the death seed destroying Hobbes's Leviathan. According to Schmitt, Hobbes's political philosophy was not strong enough to prevent the Judeo-Christian destruction of the natural unity of religion and politics (23, 130). As a representative of sacrificial thinking Schmitt knew very well that Hobbes's sacrificial political concept would be in danger in case of any inner reservation. This insight is confirmed by mimetic theory which maintains that every sacrificial system needs unanimity in order to function properly. Any inner reservation would destroy the whole system.

Hobbes's inner reservation was a direct result of the Judeo-Christian Bible that gave rise to modern individualism and equality.¹⁹ Hobbes was too strongly influenced by this spirit in order to create a fully sacrificial political system (see Moltmann 38).

Hobbes's political philosophy ultimately remained contradictory. He could neither satisfy people who looked to the Bible as a guideline for politics, nor could he convince political representatives of absolutism to apply his philosophy. The first probably reacted like Richard Baxter, who remarked that "if any man will but read the Scripture, he need no other confutation of Hobbes" (qtd. in Wooton 232). The second, the absolutist states in Europe, did not follow Hobbes because he was not a representative of the Divine Right of Kings. Absolutism still had some need of religious legitimation. In the Netherlands of the Cranier-Absolutism, Hobbes's Leviathan was even banned (see Schwartz 38).

Hobbes's political philosophy is a typical example of the problematic nature of politics in a culture that is influenced by the spirit of the Bible. There is no easy answer to this problem. According to Bandera, every system tends to be sacrificial (254). A Christian system is not possible in the end. Christianity, however, can introduce a nonsystemic element in order to open up the system to an authentic future. The inner reservation in Hobbes's political philosophy is such a Christian element. It has become one of the roots of modern democracy (see von Krockow 73).

Schmitt, contrary to Hobbes, is a true representative of sacrificial thinking. He tried to close the system completely and therefore tended toward paganism

¹⁹ On the Christian influence on the rise of modern individuality, see Bandera 233-55. On Christianity and equality, see Palaver 1989, 195-217.

or at least toward pagan versions of Christianity. He knew too well that in the end the Judeo-Christian Bible would destroy every *katéchon*.

Two hundred years after Hobbes, Alexis de Tocqueville clearly showed that no *katéchon* can answer the problems of our modern world.²⁰ Like Hobbes, Tocqueville knew the dangers coming along with equality. He did not, however, suggest a *katéchontic* solution. Tocqueville clearly saw that "the gradual development of the principle of equality is . . . a providential fact." It is an "irresistible revolution which has advanced for centuries in spite of every obstacle and which is still advancing in the midst of the ruins it has caused." According to Tocqueville, the gradual and progressive development of social equality has the sacred character of a divine decree. No *katéchon* can prevent this development. "To attempt to check democracy would be . . . to resist the will of God" (6-7).

Regarding the futility of any *katéchon*, Tocqueville is right. Without a *katéchon*, however, we have to change our ways. We have to give up retaliation, violence, and mimetic rivalry in order to prevent our self-destruction.

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²⁰ For related discussion, see Girard 1984, 64, 120, 136-7.; Palaver 1989, 195, 214. Schmitt called Tocqueville the most important historian of the nineteenth century, but he regretted that Tocqueville—due to the agnostic spirit of his time—was not acquainted with the idea of the *katéchon* (1950, 25-33).

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