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**POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF HOBBS'S *LEVIATHAN* AND THE THESIS OF  
ORTHODOX VISION OF THEOCRACY**

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**Abstract:** The history of the people of God is tightly dependant on receiving the Law, as, by fulfilling it, Israel remained within the realm of knowing God. The institution of the monarchy was obliged to stay faithful to the law of God in order for the State of Israel to remain within God's favour. In that context, the king had a duty to his people to remain faithful to God, as embracing idolatry would have been a danger to the very religious, social and political stability of Israel. The Christian perspective of the early 1st century, marked by the political context of the rule of the Roman Empire, continues the Judaic paradigm as to the relation between the political and the religious authority, but adds certain nuances to it (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). For this very reason, the Leviathan proposed by Thomas Hobbes does not have a correspondence in the Jewish-Christian world. The birth of a political system based on society voluntarily renouncing its most basic rights, established by God in the Torah, only for an utopian peace with civil security blatantly contradicts the politics revealed by the Scriptures: christian doctrine requires abiding by political power and not showing an obedience that precedes spiritual corruption. That is why, for a better cooperation between State and Church, we propose here the Thesis of Orthodox vision of Theocracy.

**Key words:** Torah, people of God, civil authorities, Politics and Theology, Church-State relationship, ancient paradigm, Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Orthodox Thesis.

## 1. Introduction

Preoccupied with social and political themes of particular consequence with respect to the old concern for defining the relationship between the State and the Church in precise terms, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who was also engaged in the religious, political and social issues of his time, conceived a three-part philosophical and scientific project result in *Leviathan*. Unlike those of his works (*The Elements of Law* and *De cive*) in which the art of rhetoric with a focus on persuasion is missing due to a flat, tedious style, *Leviathan* is by comparison a rhetorical masterpiece (Raylor 2018, 255). Almost a century earlier, medieval political philosophy was centred on the conflict between individual or public freedom and institutional control (Dewey 1974, 8). The English Civil War (1642-1651) and the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), which broke out in the context of the crumbling of the old, 17<sup>th</sup> century social, political and scientific order on the one hand, and of the birth of a new paradigm on the other, determined English thinker T. Hobbes to publish *Leviathan*, a work in which he meticulously tackles the theme of the legitimation and limitation of the public exercise of power within a state or civil community (*commonwealth*), abiding strictly by natural laws (Dyzenhaus and Poole 2012, 186-187). In order to avoid a new civil war and in pursuit of human peace and happiness, he proposes the institution of an indisputable sovereign power generically called "the Leviathan" – the sea monster found in *Job* 41:33. By means of this symbolic image of a monster that has no match, a myth pinned at crossroads between what some consider having been an ancestral reality and others nothing but pure fiction (Stoica 2017, 65); Hobbes provides the collective mentality with the picture of an insurmountable authority, which subordinates even the authority of the Church to its interests, thus ensuring unmediated state protection to the civilian population on the basis of a civil contract through which the latter relinquishes all of its rights (Anghel 2017, vii-xv). The foundation of Hobbes' thinking is, according to some scholars, profoundly enlightened, liberalistic and even totalitaristic (Williams 2009, 91-8; Oakeshott 1975, 142-44). Posterity suspected him of atheism, with some even declaring him an atheist, although he never publicly renounced the doctrine of the Anglican Church, whose member he was, but merely spoke against decadent clericalism (Sorell 1996, 347-48).

Although the contemporaries and, at the same time, direct successors of Hobbes' vision (Rousseau, John Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Thomas Jefferson, etc.), initially regarded with suspicion the perspective of renouncing natural right in favour of a supreme authority which would ensure general peace and stability on the basis of a signed social contract, nevertheless adhered to the proposed model, not without reservations

and necessary additions. For example, Locke and Montesquieu insisted on the necessity of having a separation of state powers in order to avoid seeing all power seized by one person, who, out of overzealousness, might trample over citizens' rights, thus climbing his way towards a totalitarian form of rule labelled by specialists as political absolutism, of the same type as Hobbes's Leviathan. Up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, most political philosophy theorists built their own interpretations and systems by approaching the Hobbesian doctrine directly, particularly its symbolic dimension (Parkin 2007, 50; List and Pettit 2011, 8; Mintz 1962, 149-51; Finn 2006, 55-6; Rinesi 2003, 32-4).

Aside from aspects regarding Hobbes's life and work, however, we will look into the political and religious implications of such a project, mainly from a biblical perspective, in order to question the moral validity of an "ideal society" of this kind, which propounds a type of relationship between the State and the Church that solely advantages the former. The novelty of our research resides in the fact that we embark upon a diachronic approach of the history of salvation, starting from the Mosaic Law, the catalyst of human rights in their original form offered by God through the Law. We insist that the respect of these fundamental human rights should cut off corruption and the misuse of power from all social structures. For only in such terms of fulfilling the Torah can we speak about a fruitful relationship between civil and religious authority. Outside this legal dimension, the relation of equity risks becoming one of subjugation and ostracism of the religious part for, according to T. Hobbes and to other social reformers, the Church must be dominated by the purely subjective interests of a corrupt statal authority. In broad lines, this is the political theology, rooted in the Bible, that we propose for the man of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which we call "The Thesis of Orthodox Vision of Theocracy".

## **2. Political and Religious Pillars of *Leviathan*: A Critical Overview**

The issue of the social contract put forward by Hobbes raises serious questions as to the biblical dimension of human rights. The civil community he proposes is based on the conclusion of a contract, the signing of a convention between the people and the Leviathanic power (XVII). The civil contract proposed by Hobbes is a form of secularisation of the Covenant (*berît*) on Mount Sinai first between God and His people, Israel (Exod. 34), then between God and the whole of mankind (2 Cor. 3). And the spearhead of the secularisation of Yahweh's Covenant is surrogacy: according to Hobbes, just as Yahweh concluded a Covenant with the people of Israel, offering them precise laws to be strictly observed and thus instituting the *commonwealth* of divine right (III), in a similar manner,

the unblemished authority of the sovereign concludes a civil contract with each and every person and, by signing it, the sovereign becomes the one and only master (Guilding 1948, 43-44; Martel 2007, 144-146).

Both Covenants (the old one and the new one) stand for God's determination to save mankind, or at least to those who have proven faithful to their alliance with Yahweh, which was fulfilled through Christ. By contrast, "Hobbes' covenant" not only fails to save anyone, but effectively sets the stage for prohibiting the faith in God and, implicitly, the exercise of that faith. That is because among the 13 powers or rights that Hobbes' sovereign must consolidate in order to maintain his supreme authority – rights obtained legally by signing the contract – is the right to proclaim by royal decree which religious doctrine may be expressed publicly (Springborg 2007, 244-245; Lorberbaum 2007, 82). Consequently, God's Covenant permanently cultivates and enhances human rights, so that man may reach the state of sainthood, while a social or civil covenant, through its profound secular dimension, cancels from the start any right man may have to a life of dignity. Although, as some specialists note, based on Aquinas's theology, Hobbes admits that natural law dictates through reason that man should behave respectfully towards his neighbour, he nevertheless claims that, in order to support that ethical balance, one needs an ultimate dictating authority, as if it were impossible for man to function in such a way out of his own accord (State 1991, 197-198). Coercion and authority thus become the logic of any reasoning, as Hobbes is being extremely reductionistic. For this is where the secularisation of human rights leads the discussion: to the cancelling of any human right in favour of an influential and corrupt power-wielding group which has been established through pilfering, tyranny and generalised demagoguery (Douzinas 2000, 372; Freeman 2004, 382). Under the rule of such a profoundly corrupt civil authority, the ordinary citizen can no longer enjoy the genuine exercise of any right except for the right to "modern slavery".

Practically, the entire legislative system of the *commonwealth* stands on one single pillar: the citizen's obligation to obey the sovereign unconditionally, pursuant to the signed contract, thus ensuring for himself the desires of natural right; it is not at all meant to create a legislative framework of rights and obligations in which moral terms should have coverage. The only "moral concept" still valid is the obligation to obey – clearly a system of government that belongs in totalitarianistic circles if one were to judge by the modern paradigm (Lloyd 2009, 153; Biletzki 1997, 79-80; Gauthier 1969, 41; Ratulea 2015, 27-28).

The critics of T. Hobbes are also sceptical as to the anthropological vision of T. Hobbes, claiming that, based on Calvin's anthropology, the English sociologist tends to exaggerate man's weaknesses, forcefully generalising them precisely to give legitimacy to the future unbeatable state power. Hobbes' entire theory derives directly or indirectly from the dictate of natural law, which has a formal character with respect to external

actions, shaped by a contract or by certain positive laws that require obedience in order to maintain social peace (Martinich 1992, 74-75; Collins 2005, 11). For Hobbes, this unwritten law of self-conservation is man's supreme motivation to abide by natural law. Given that it is logical for man to act according to his own interests, based on the interference of self-conservation, he can only behave according to these parameters. According to H. Warrender, natural law, the source of all obligations, is a law revealed to logic and interpreted by each person individually (Warrender 1957, 250-251; Chappell 1999, x-xii). Hobbes confuses this matter claiming that natural law is part of civil law in all communities and that it can only be interpreted by the supreme authority, which basically cancels free will: the Hobbes-Bramhall controversy is significant in this respect: the former is a determinist who considers that each human action has an *a priori* cause – thus eluding the biblical postulation of free will – and the latter is an incompatibilist who believes that human action is not linked *a priori* to anything, the actions of man being purely free. This masks the mad will of maintaining the commonwealth solution inalienable, together with the supposed right of the sovereign to serve in the Church, according to the *rex-sacerdos* principle, even if he does not have the grace of apostolic succession (Wright 2006, 166).

Basically, the history of the relation between State and Church was marked by the idea of the subordination of the Church to the State. In fact, this was also the maxim of the Enlightenment in France for example: political authority derives from nonreligious sources, amending any theological reasoning because of the ideology (Frunză 2015a, 109; Malcolm 2002, 200-229; Bulman and Ingram 2016, 42-43). The great mistake of Hobbes' system regarding the relation between Church and State was that, against the backdrop of certain social deviations of the Catholic Church, he proposed a simulacrum by blending together State and Church in an eclectic form, where political authority held the supremacy, aiming at taking God's place in society (the flaws of anthropocentric philosophy).

The biblical model of the relation between religious and civil authority has never taken the form of the obedience of the former; on the contrary, in Ancient Israel, the king was subordinated to the precepts of the Torah – the Laws of God; otherwise, the prophet warned him in public about the consequences of his insubordination (1 Kgs. 21:1-16). Later on, in the Christian world under the rule of the Roman Empire, the relation was set in terms of equity and peaceful coexistence (Matt. 22:21). Christ the Lord wanted to make them understand that the State and the Church did not have to be in conflict, nor in mutual subordination, but had to fully cooperate for the good of the community (France 2007, 833-834). In the same vein, Apostles Peter and Paul brought some necessary additions: one must show civil obedience to State authorities as long as they objectively fulfil their duty of rewarding the good and punishing the evil in a society and as long as they do not interfere beyond Christian conscience, dictating

laws that contravene the commandments of the Gospel (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). Subsequently, when the intervention of emperor Constantine put an end to the persecution of the Church, the foundations of the relation between Church and State were laid. The functioning principle is that of full cooperation, the *Byzantine symphony* allowing both institutions to have full autonomy, the State's interference in the administration of the Church being harshly punished - this is why the emperor was symbolically called *episkopos tōn ektos*, meaning "bishop over those outside", with limited power over ecclesiastical politics, yet without giving up the title of *Pontifex maximus* (Chifăr and Boicu 2017, 26-30). Consequently, sociologist T. Hobbes started from a wrong premise in his attempt to outline a *modus vivendi* of the relation between State and Church since, at least at a biblical and subsequently at a Byzantine level, religious authority had never obeyed an apostate civil power.

The critics of T. Hobbes have also been suspicious as to the model of a Leviathan that absorbs ecclesiastical authority, ignoring the ordinary Christian's conscience, in its attempt to achieve infinite power and thus distorting the Trinitarian face of the world (Edwards 2009, 115-116). This model was born against the backdrop of Aristotelian thinking, of the notion of "civil philosophy", divided between ethics and politics, Hobbes putting forward the elimination of ethics from the preoccupations of politics in *De Corpore* - man being in a permanent personal conflict between the psychological and the political (Sorell 1996, 178-179). Due to this way of thinking, Hobbes basically created an artificial person - state power -, under the image of a marine monster called Leviathan, a kind of "mortal god" that no other existing power could oppose (Schmitt 2008, 89-100). This artificial man, rightly called by certain researchers a mythological creation, is in fact what we technically call *The Hobbes Problem*, by which an empirical and normative action is attempted in political science: Hobbes tried to understand how the State could function and what were the obligations of citizens towards public authority (Stone 2015, 2-3). His solution was resolute: a social contract or civil association, by which the citizen wilfully cedes all his rights - which is one step away from totalitarian regimes.

We can definitely say, following this brief overview of the Hobbesian paradigm regarding the relation between civil and religious authority, that this "ideal society" dominated by the arrogance of the Leviathan is not at all ideal for ordinary people. In the Hobbesian state system, the citizen loses all his rights related to freedom and dignity by signing a civil contract and the right of practising faith and religious ideas is nipped in the bud, because political *commonwealth* does not tolerate the cultivation of the faith in God. Thomas Hobbes promoted a "political education" whose object was not the understanding of human nature, but the act of disciplining citizens. The spread of knowledge by logical, unbeatable arguments was not a civic goal for Hobbes, as the political education of citizens

did not aim at promoting the free movement of ideas, scientific ambition being harshly punished, claim the majority of the scholars (Vaughan 2002, 38-39; Marshall 1980, 194; Flathman 2002, 129). All emerge into a sentence provided by scholar Sandu Frunză, who use to say that „nobody cares for intellectuals in politics”, thus, they are more a mythic, magic, symbolic or ritual resource than a necessary physical presence – being used as the mythical symbolism of the scapegoat (Frunză 2015, 246).

### 3. The Thesis of Orthodox Vision of Theocracy

In order to attack and discredit the form of government commanded by God in the Old Testament, namely theocracy, in which the king or sovereign proposed by Hobbes was not the absolute ruler, but the co-regent of Yahweh, the Only Emperor, and the Law revealed on Sinai stood in for a State constitution (Deut. 32:7-9. 44-47); Thomas Hobbes struck at the very key to theocratic success, the institution of biblical prophetism that is (XXXII). The indirect attack to the *sine qua non* institution of biblical prophetism meant denying the social value of theocracy, manifested by the Davidic Covenant (2 Kgs 7:8-9), for the prophets of the Old Testament supported it as the only revealed form of rule, accomplished in its Archetype Messiah, the eternal King of Israel (Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 37:24-25; Dan. 9:25; Amos 7:8; Zeph. 3:5). Discrediting prophetism meant, beyond question, discrediting theocracy in Israel. This is because God's justice (Ps. 96:10) manifested itself in the chosen people in two ways: it showered those who did good with His blessing and punished evildoers (Semen 1978, 149). Hobbes's intention was to deny at any cost the Christian doctrine of inspiration by the work of the Holy Spirit, his goal being the discreditation of the Church, so that later on he could attach it to the subjective interests of the state Leviathan.

That it is why, the thesis of an Orthodox vision of theocracy that we put forward is based first on the ruins of the Hobbesian system, which is, as we have demonstrated, an antidemocratic state model that destroys from the onset human rights in the form left by God through the Law of the Old Testament. In order to shape an ideal society, we insist on supporting the biblical state model, in particular the paradigm of the New Testament (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), in which the State Constitution should be built on the moral values of the Law of God, rulers should be God's faithful servants and the rights of the ordinary people foreseen by the Torah – the Word of the Lord –, should be respected. For this reason, the relation between civil and religious authority must unfold in terms of synchronic collaboration to support the legal framework necessary for attaining holiness and not at all in terms of mutual subordination or in terms of rendering the Church unlawful, according to the totalitarian paradigm. For it is Christian virtues

which are by their nature foundations of social order, transforming into Evangelical depth the very social and political structures – not natural law and its lay derivatives, as proposed by Hobbes.

In fact, this is also the model proposed by the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. Saint John Chrysostom claimed, based on the text from Matt. 22:21, that Caesar and, through him, public authorities deserved everything they asked from us, as long as those things did nothing to harm our Christian faith. He also considered, starting from the text from Rom. 13:1, that God introduced His Law with the purpose of improving the laws of the State and not of overthrowing them. As a consequence, a good Christian is not to engage in conflicts or plots against civil authority, for he does not have the right to wear himself out in all kinds of “foolish and unnecessary battles”. Moreover, Saint John praised the hierarchy left by God in all the structures of His creation, for rule and obedience represent a principle of divine law, which establishes order and harmony, eliminating anarchy forever (Ioan Gură de Aur 1994, 803-804; Ioan Gură de Aur 2005, 210-211). According to Saint Theophylact, in order to maintain this, territorial ruling systems deserve obedience also from bishops, priests or monks, considering that, when the Apostle Paul gave this command, the Apostles themselves showed obedience to the political authorities of the time. Commenting the text from 1 Pet. 2:13-15, Saint Theophylact also conditioned Christian obedience by everyone's obedience to God, for only rulers who do justice deserve obedience and compliance (Teofilact al Bulgariei 2005, 211). Saint Theodoret of Cyrus praised the Apostle Paul's urging in 1 Tim. 2:2, saying that it is worthy in front of God to pray and ask for good things with respect to leaders, even if they are pagans or oppressors, for, by keeping peace with them, we quietly fulfil the Law of God. Saint John Chrysostom added to this by saying that, if priests pray all the time for emperors to end wars and the shedding of innocent blood, lay people are all the more obliged to always pray for the peace of the entire world (Teodoret al Cirului 2015, 182; Ioan Gură de Aur 2005, 34; Teofilact al Bulgariei 2015, 83-84). For example, in order to somewhat temper the reaction of the Christian world to the merciless persecutions of the political power of the first four centuries, Origen said that each Roman rule would be punished by God if it acted according to its lack of faith. On the other hand, Apollinaris of Laodicea claimed that, starting from the rebellion of Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), which the Apostle disfavoured and in order to avoid other such rebellions unspecific to the Christian ethos, he wrote the text in Rom. 13:1-7 as a norm that should never be broken. The explanation of Saint Augustine is also noteworthy. He claimed that the Apostle Paul put down those imperatives related to the relation between the Christian and the Roman political rule precisely to encourage the one who considered himself above the Caesar to be humble and obedient for the simple fact that he was called to be a Christian, an apprentice of Jesus Christ the Lord (Bray and Oden 1998, 324-325).



Consequently, in order to maintain its Orthodox dimension, it must be protected and promoted at a global level (Ps. 97:2; Isa. 65:1; Mic. 1:2; Zech. 13:1), given that human rights signify every person's right to holiness.

#### 4. Conclusions

These laws offered by God (with special regard on Church/State relationship), through their high humanity index, changed the face of mankind for centuries. The Jewish matrix ethics, is a spiritually healthy lifestyle that offers the right framework for the implementation of divine rights, the Jew who remains moral in the relationship with God and his fellow men, manifests himself with reverence for the rights established by the Law of Moses. The freedom of expression of the moral person does not affect the freedom of expression of his neighbor. That is why, a political regime must entrusted these biblical values.

We can say, following this brief overview of the Hobbesian paradigm regarding the relation between Civil and Religious authority, that this "ideal society" dominated by the arrogance of the *Leviathan* power, is not at all ideal for ordinary people. Hobbes' intention was to deny at any cost the Christian doctrine of inspiration by the work of the Holy Spirit, his goal being the discreditation of the Church, so that later on, he could attach it to the subjective interests of the state *Leviathan*. For this reason, like I just said, the relation between civil and religious authority must unfold in terms of synchronic collaboration to support the legal framework necessary for attaining holiness and not at all in terms of mutual subordination or in terms of rendering the Church unlawful. We must preserve the ancient Biblical governmental system.

The thesis of the Jewish-Christian Orthodox vision of Theocracy, that spreads from Hobbesian ruins (which is, as we have demonstrated, an antidemocratic state model that destroys from the onset human rights in the form left by God through the Law of the Old Testament) – in fact, our original way of reinterpreting the databases of biblical statements of the topic – boldes that, Church Father's exegesis, teaches us that public authorities deserved everything they asked from us, as long as those things did nothing to harm our core Christian faith. God introduced Himself His Law (Torah) with the purpose of improving the laws of the State and not of overthrowing them. As a consequence, a good Christian is not to engage in conflicts or plots against civil authority, because he just have to pray and ask for good things with respect to leaders, even if they are pagans or oppressors, for, by keeping peace with them it's the best way of christi-anity. In order to shape an ideal society, we insist on supporting the biblical state model, in particular the paradigm of the New Testament (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Ptr 2:13-17), in which

the State Constitution should be built on the moral values of the Law of God, rulers should be God's faithful servants and the rights of the ordinary people foreseen by the Torah.

In order to avoid a new civil war or a world war, and in pursuit of human peace and happiness, we propose these ancient biblical imperatives related to the relation between the Christian and the Roman political rule precisely to encourage the one who considered himself above the political order to be humble and obedient for the simple fact that he was called to be a good Christian.

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